

- A. Public Attitudes toward the Scope of Government
- B. Democracy, Public Opinion, and Political Action

VII. Summary (p. 202)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying Chapter 6, you should be able to:

1. Describe how demographic factors shape who we are politically.
2. Identify the processes through which people learn about politics.
3. Define public opinion, identify how it is measured, explain its role in shaping public policy, and discuss the nature of political information in America.
4. Understand the concept of political ideology in American politics and government.
5. Explain the ways in which people participate in politics and in the policymaking process, and discuss the implications of unequal political participation.
6. Understand the relationship between the scope of government, democracy, public opinion, and political action.

The following exercises will help you meet these objectives:

Objective 1: Describe how demographic factors shape who we are politically.

1. What were the three great waves of immigration to the United States?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
2. What is meant by the term "minority majority"?

3. What was the goal of the Simpson-Mazzoli Act?
4. How have the following demographic changes affected political changes?
 1. Immigration
 2. Regional Shifts
 3. Aging Population

Objective 2: Identify the processes through which people learn about politics.

1. Explain the significance of each of the following as sources for political learning:
 1. Family:
 2. Mass media:
 3. Schools:
2. Name two ways in which aging affects political behavior.
 - 1.
 - 2.

Objective 3: Define public opinion, identify how it is measured, explain its role in shaping public policy, and discuss the nature of political information in America.

1. What is the key to the accuracy of opinion polls?
2. Explain the technique of random-digit dialing.
3. List three criticisms of public opinion polling.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
4. What is the "paradox of mass politics," according to Russell Neuman?

Objective 4: Understand the concept of political ideology in the context of American politics and government.

1. Fill in the following table concerning political ideology.

Ideology	General Beliefs	Typical Demographic Characteristics
Liberals		
Conservatives		

2. Explain how the role of religion influences political ideology in the United States.

3. Fill in the following table on the classification of the ideological sophistication of American voters according to the study *The American Voter*.

Ideological Classification	Definition	Percent

Objective 5: Explain the ways in which people participate in politics and in the policymaking process, and discuss the implications of unequal political participation.

1. List five activities of conventional political participation, placing a star next to the most common activity.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

2. Define civil disobedience and give an example.
3. How does minority group status affect political participation?

Objective 6: Understand the relationship between the scope of government, democracy, public opinion, and political action.

1. What is the public's general attitude about the scope of government?
2. Comment on how Americans' lack of political knowledge and low participation rate affects democracy.

KEY TERMS

Identify and describe:

public opinion

demography

census

melting pot

minority majority

political culture

reapportionment

political socialization

sample

random sampling

sampling error

random-digit dialing

exit poll

political ideology

gender gap

political participation

protest

civil disobedience

Compare and contrast:

demography and census

melting pot and minority majority

public opinion and political ideology

sample, random sampling, and sampling error

random-digit dialing and exit poll

protest and civil disobedience

Name that term:

1. The mixing of cultures, ideas, and peoples.

2. An overall set of values widely shared within a society.

3. This occurs when the 435 seats in the House of Representatives are reallocated to the states based on population changes.

4. The process through which an individual acquires his or her particular political orientations.

5. The distribution of the population's beliefs about politics and policy issues.

6. This technique is the key to the accuracy of public opinion polls.

7. This is the most criticized type of poll.

8. In American politics, this is usually characterized by the liberal-conservative dimension.

9. Ideological differences between men and women have led to this.

10. Voting, running for office, and even violent protest are examples of this.

USING YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Locate the published results of an opinion poll by Gallup, Harris, or one of the news organizations on a topic that is of interest to you. You may want to use polls that focus on the 2000 presidential election, the war on terrorism, or the war on Iraq. Assess the results in terms of the demographic distributions, if any, that are reflected in the results. See if males differed from females, whites from non-whites, and so on. If the results are compared with the findings of an earlier poll, see if public opinion on the topic is changing. Briefly describe what you found and what its implications are for policymaking. Alternatively, design a small questionnaire for your class dealing with questions of information, ideology, and political participation. Have the respondents to your survey provide demographic information. Summarize your findings in a table or two presenting the overall responses and those for particular demographic groups. Keep in mind that you will probably face the problems of a limited sample size and a lack of representativeness for the general population.
2. Conduct a study on the role of unconventional political participation in the United States. Compare and contrast the different types of unconventional political participation. Identify examples of historical events in the United States that exemplify unconventional political participation. Present an analysis of these events in terms of the number of people involved, the type of activity, the target of the activity, and the short-term and long-term results of the activity. In particular, you might want to analyze the protest movements against the war on Iraq. Critically evaluate the effectiveness of unconventional political participation as compared to conventional political participation.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Check ☒ the correct answer:

1. Most Americans view cultural diversity as one of the most appealing aspects of their society.
☐ True
☐ False
2. Demography is the
☐ a. historical analysis of political participation.
☐ b. study of public opinion.
☐ c. science of human populations.
☐ d. enumeration of a population.

3. The enumeration of a population is called
☐ a. an opinion poll.
☐ b. demography.
☐ c. a census.
☐ d. cartography.
4. The Constitution requires an actual enumeration of the population
☐ a. annually.
☐ b. every ten years.
☐ c. every twenty-five years.
☐ d. never.
5. The census is basically a procedural requirement that creates very little controversy.
☐ True
☐ False
6. The third great wave of immigration, after World War II, consisted primarily of
☐ a. northwestern Europeans.
☐ b. southern and eastern Europeans.
☐ c. Africans.
☐ d. Hispanics and Asians.
7. The American "melting pot" refers to the mix of
☐ a. cultures.
☐ b. ideas.
☐ c. people.
☐ d. all of the above.
8. The largest minority group in the United States today is
☐ a. African Americans.
☐ b. Hispanics.
☐ c. Asians.
☐ d. American Indians.
9. The Hispanics in the United States tend to be concentrated in the cities.
☐ True
☐ False

10. The Simpson-Mazzoli Act
- ☐ a. allowed employers to employ illegal immigrants.
 - ☐ b. required documentation of the citizenship of all employees.
 - ☐ c. provided for legal discrimination against minority workers.
 - ☐ d. put an end to all immigration from Mexico.
11. The most highly skilled immigrant group in American history is
- ☐ a. African Americans.
 - ☐ b. Hispanic Americans.
 - ☐ c. Asian Americans.
 - ☐ d. Eastern European Americans.
12. Over the last fifty years, much of America's population growth has been concentrated
- ☐ a. north of the Mason-Dixon line.
 - ☐ b. east of the Mississippi River.
 - ☐ c. in the West and South.
 - ☐ d. in the Midwest.
13. Reapportionment can lead to
- ☐ a. an increase in the number of members of the House of Representatives.
 - ☐ b. power shifts among the states.
 - ☐ c. an increase or decrease in the number of Senators from each state.
 - ☐ d. none of the above.
14. The biggest reapportionment winner in the most recent census has been
- ☐ a. California.
 - ☐ b. New York.
 - ☐ c. Florida.
 - ☐ d. Ohio.
15. The fastest growing age group in America is composed of citizens
- ☐ a. over the age of 65.
 - ☐ b. under the age of 18.
 - ☐ c. between the ages of 19 and 35.
 - ☐ b. between the ages of 36 and 55.
16. By the year 2020 the Social Security system will be solvent and self-sufficient.
- ☐ True
 - ☐ False

17. The process of acquiring political orientations is called political socialization.
☐ True
☐ False
18. Which of the following statements regarding political socialization is FALSE?
☐ a. Only a small portion of Americans' political learning is formal.
☐ b. Most of what Americans learn about politics is acquired from high school civic courses.
☐ c. As one becomes more socialized with age, one's political orientations grow firmer.
☐ d. Governments largely aim their socialization efforts at the young.
19. Formal learning about politics is far more important than informal learning.
☐ True
☐ False
20. Which of the following statements about political socialization and the family is FALSE?
☐ a. The influence of families is central to socialization because of time and emotional commitment.
☐ b. One can predict how the majority of young people will vote simply by knowing the political leanings of their parents.
☐ c. Family influence on socialization is mostly informal.
☐ d. The generation gap is a well-proven phenomenon.
21. According to many observers, the "new parents" are
☐ a. the mass media.
☐ b. peer groups.
☐ c. schools.
☐ d. government agencies.
22. One of the most obvious intrusions of the government into Americans' socialization is
☐ a. political parties.
☐ b. schools.
☐ c. television.
☐ d. the military.

23. As people grow older,
☐ a. political party attachment declines.
☐ b. political participation rises steadily.
☐ c. voting declines.
☐ d. political learning ends.
24. (bonus) The public opinion poll was perfected by
☐ a. Abraham Lincoln.
☐ b. the *Literary Digest*.
☐ c. George Gallup.
☐ d. Alf Landon.
25. Which of the following statements is FALSE?
☐ a. As long as a survey is large enough, representativeness is not important.
☐ b. All surveys have sampling error.
☐ c. A sample of about 1,000 to 1,500 people can represent faithfully the "universe" of potential voters.
☐ d. Random-digit dialing costs about a fifth of the cost of person-to-person interviewing.
26. The key to the accuracy of opinion polls is the
☐ a. number of people interviewed.
☐ b. technique of random sampling.
☐ c. use of telephones for interviewing.
☐ d. use of computers.
27. The *Literary Digest* poll of 1936 wrongly predicted the results of the presidential election because
☐ a. they did not interview enough people.
☐ b. they used exit polls to predict the election results.
☐ c. most of the people they interviewed did not vote.
☐ d. they did not interview a random sample of voters.
28. Most polling today is done through
☐ a. random-digit dialing.
☐ b. door-to-door interviews.
☐ c. exit polls.
☐ d. mail surveys.
29. Public opinion polling is almost exclusively an American phenomenon.
☐ True
☐ False

30. Exit polls allow television networks to project all but very close races before the polls close.
☐ True
☐ False
31. Which of the following statements is NOT a criticism of public opinion polling?
☐ a. Public opinion polling makes politicians more concerned with following than leading.
☐ b. Polls can weaken democracy by distorting the election process.
☐ c. Polling is a fad that should not be taken seriously.
☐ d. Pollsters can often get the results they want by altering the wording of questions.
32. Thomas Jefferson believed that
☐ a. education is irrelevant to good citizenship.
☐ b. the people are "a great beast."
☐ c. a majority of people will exercise good sense.
☐ d. people lack a capacity for self-government.
33. (bonus) Who said, "Your people, sir, are a great beast"?
☐ a. Abraham Lincoln
☐ b. Thomas Jefferson
☐ c. Alexander Hamilton
☐ d. Winston Churchill
34. One thing that public opinion polls have shown is that the
☐ a. United States is becoming more liberal.
☐ b. level of public knowledge about politics is dismally low.
☐ c. American people have strong opinions about political issues.
☐ d. American people are becoming more ideologically oriented.
35. Public opinion polls have shown that the majority of Americans
☐ a. can name the chief justice of the Supreme Court.
☐ b. can explain their opinion on major political issues.
☐ c. can locate Bosnia on a map.
☐ d. recognize commercial slogans better than the names of political figures.
36. According to Russell Neuman, the paradox of mass politics is that the American political system works as well as it does given the
☐ a. discomforting lack of public knowledge about politics.
☐ b. high degree of ideologically oriented people in the United States.
☐ c. lack of opinions on major issues in American politics.
☐ d. none of the above.

37. Political ideology consists of views that are simply "gut reactions."
☐ True
☐ False
38. A liberal ideology favors
☐ a. a strong central government.
☐ b. greater reliance on the private sector.
☐ c. smaller government.
☐ d. passive government.
39. Conservatives would tend to support all of the following EXCEPT
☐ a. a strong military.
☐ b. school prayer.
☐ c. low taxes.
☐ d. affirmative action.
40. No significant difference has ever been found between the ideological orientations of men and women.
☐ True
☐ False
41. Which of the following statements regarding religion and ideology is FALSE?
☐ a. Most Jews tend to be more conservative than liberal.
☐ b. The ideological gap between Catholics and Protestants is smaller than the gender gap.
☐ c. Born-again Christians are the most conservative demographic group.
☐ d. People who have no religious affiliation are more liberal than conservative.
42. Researchers in the 1950s found that the largest share of the electorate consisted of
☐ a. no-issue-content voters.
☐ b. nature-of-the-times voters
☐ c. highly ideological voters.
☐ d. group-benefits voters.
43. When identical methods were used to update the analysis of the 1956 study *The American Voter* in 1988, researchers found
☐ a. a majority of the people identified as ideologues in 1988.
☐ b. a huge increase in the no-issue-content group in 1988.
☐ c. just six percent more ideologues in 1988 than in 1956.
☐ d. a disappearance of the nature-of-the-times voters in 1988.

44. Election results often indicate the movement of the public either to the left or right.
☐ True
☐ False
45. Political participation
☐ a. is aimed at influencing the selection of political leaders and the policies they pursue.
☐ b. is higher in the U.S. than anywhere in the world.
☐ c. consists exclusively of voting and campaigning.
☐ d. excludes unconventional political actions such as protest.
46. When it comes to political participation, the common denominator among political activists is
☐ a. campaigning.
☐ b. protesting.
☐ c. voting.
☐ d. contacting.
47. Protest is a form of political participation that loses its effectiveness because the media are unwilling to cover unusual activities.
☐ True
☐ False
48. The conscious decision to break a law believed to be immoral and suffer the consequences is called
☐ a. protest.
☐ b. civil disobedience.
☐ c. political participation.
☐ d. activation.
49. Nearly every study of participation in America has concluded that citizens of higher social and economic status participate more in politics.
☐ True
☐ False
50. Income and education being equal, African Americans and Hispanics participate in politics
☐ a. the same as whites.
☐ b. more than whites.
☐ c. less than whites.
☐ d. none of the time.

51. For most of the population, questions about the scope of government
- ☐ a. elicit no or little opinion.
 - ☐ b. guide their ideological leanings.
 - ☐ c. are consistent with their policy choices.
 - ☐ d. produce strong emotional responses.
52. Even if people only vote according to the nature of the times with no knowledge of the issues, they are holding public officials accountable for their actions.
- ☐ True
 - ☐ False

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. What is demography, and why is it important to understanding political changes? What demographic changes have occurred in the United States and what are their political and public policy consequences?
2. What is political socialization? What is the difference between formal and informal learning? Which do you think is most important and why? Give examples to support your answer.
3. Explain how public opinion is measured. What scientific techniques are used to measure public opinion? What are the arguments against public opinion polling?
4. Contrast the views of Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton on the political sophistication of the American electorate. Be sure to include a discussion of political information and ideology in your answer. Based on the available evidence, defend one view over the other.
5. To what extent is ideology important in the United States? Explain the main differences between liberals and conservatives. What are the public's attitudes on the scope of government?
6. What are some of the ways in which people participate in politics? Compare conventional and unconventional participation. How do they affect policy in different ways?
7. Why is participation in America unequal? What are the political and policy implications of unequal participation?