

# **Unit Four**

## **American Political Culture**

## POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

ITEM	DESCRIPTION
<b>PUBLIC OPINION</b>	What the public thinks about a particular issue or set of issues at any point in time.
<b>IDEOLOGY</b>	A comprehensive and mutually consistent set of ideas.
<b>THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM</b> (LIBERAL--CONSERVATIVE SPECTRUM)	--Liberal (democrats) is on the left side of the spectrum. --Conservative (republicans) is on the right side of the spectrum. --Moderate is somewhere in the middle of the spectrum. (Most Americans are moderate but often belong to one of the two major parties)
<b>VALENCE ISSUES</b>	Concerns or policies that are viewed in the same way by people with a variety of ideologies. (Examples: Everyone wants a strong economy and national security)
<b>WEDGE ISSUE</b>	Concerns or policies that sharply divide the public. (Examples: People often disagree on abortion and universal health care)
<b>SALIENCY</b>	If an issue is important to someone than it has high saliency. (Often found in wedge issues)

## FACTORS IN POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

FACTORS	DESCRIPTION
<b>FAMILY</b>	This is the single greatest influence on one's political socialization. When children start to inquire about world events or local issues it is the parents who explain it to their children and within this explanation comes the parents' opinion on the issue. (10% of seniors identify with the party opposite of their parents) (60% of adults carry the same party identification as their parents)
<b>EDUCATION</b>	Teachers and peer groups can have a large impact. There is no evidence that obtaining high school diploma or a bachelor's degree will affect ideology. People that graduate with a masters degree or higher are more likely to vote for Democrats and hold liberal attitudes. (Average College faculty claim: 48% liberal;; 14% conservative)
<b>RELIGION</b>	People who attend church (nearly weekly) are more likely to vote on election day. Fundamentalists (believe in literal interpretation of the Holy Bible), Evangelical Christians (promote Christian faith), and Protestants are located primarily in the South and Midwest and they vote conservative (republican). Catholics vote liberal (democrat). Jews (smallest portion of electorate) vote liberal (democrat).
<b>RACE &amp; ETHNICITY</b>	--African Americans have voted for democrats since New Deal and even more since the Civil Rights Movement. -Hispanics (55-65 percent) vote for democrats. -Asians usually vote for republicans. -Whites are more likely to vote for republicans.
<b>LOCATION</b>	-Northeast: liberal -West coast: liberal -West: conservative -South: conservative
<b>GENDER</b>	Women: liberal (especially single women) Men: conservative (especially white men)
<p>--40% to 50% of Americans consider themselves moderate, 30% conservative, and about 20% liberal. Only 37% consider themselves "strongly partisan". How do people determine their ideology? The answer is political socialization.</p> <p>-<b>Political Socialization:</b> The process by which one develops political opinions.</p> <p>-Other books also include: media, region, age, occupation, &amp; wealth.</p> <p>-Other books mention psychological factors: party identification, perception of candidates, &amp; perception of issues</p>	

## POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

### BASIC TERMINOLOGY REGARDING THE

ITEM	DESCRIPTION
<b>ELECTORATE</b>	The people who are entitled to vote in an election.
<b>SUFFRAGE</b>	The right to vote.
<b>FRANCHISE</b>	The right to vote.
<b>DISENFRANCHISE</b>	To take away the right to vote.
<b>VOTING--AGE POPULATION</b>	This refers to people who are 18-years or older (since 1971).
<b>VOTER TURNOUT</b>	The portion of the voting-age public that votes.
<p>-Generally speaking about the eligible adult population: 40% votes regularly, 25% are occasional voters, and 35% rarely or never vote.                      -In 2012, 62% of the eligible electorate voted in the presidential election which was the highest since 1960.</p>	

### EXPANDING THE ELECTORATE

AMENDMENT	YEAR	DESCRIPTION
<b>15TH AMENDMENT</b>	1870	The right to vote will not be denied on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.
<b>19TH AMENDMENT</b>	1920	The right to vote will not be denied on account of sex.
<b>23RD AMENDMENT</b>	1961	Washington D.C. residents have the right to vote in Presidential election (even though they are not in a state)
<b>24TH AMENDMENT</b>	1964	The right to vote will not be denied for failure to pay a tax.
<b>26TH AMENDMENT</b>	1971	The right to vote will not be denied to people at least 18--year--olds due to their age.
<p>--Initially states would bar Women, African Americans, and immigrants from voting. But they also limited white men from voting by imposing religion tests, property taxes, and poll taxes.                      --By 1830 (Jacksonian Era) most states had removed the property requirement for being eligible to vote. (North Carolina was last in 1856)                      --Don't forget the 15th Amendment was ignored by many southern states when they added literacy tests, poll taxes. The Civil Rights Movement lead to national law to address these issues and even fueled some of the amendments on this chart.</p>		

## MODERN SUFFRAGE REQUIREMENTS & LIMITATIONS

CATEGORY	SPECIFIC ITEM	DESCRIPTION
<b>SUFFRAGE REQUIREMENT</b>	Citizenship	Must be a U.S. citizen.
	Residence	Must be a resident from the State you are voting in. (There are absentee ballots if you are away from home)
	Age	Must be 18-years-old to vote.
	Registration	Must be registered with officials in your state to vote. (Except North Dakota)
<b>POSSIBLE VOTING LIMITATIONS</b>	Mental Competency	Some states deny people in mental institutions the right to vote.
	Convicted Felons	Some states deny convicted felons the right to vote. (Some still cannot vote for a number of years even after being released from prison)

## HIGH VOTER TURNOUT AND CORRUPTION

ITEM	DESCRIPTION
<b>PROBLEM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Fraudulent developed in voting in late 19th century (AKA: the late 1800's)</li> <li>--Some estimates show 90% voting participation.</li> <li>--"Vote Early &amp; Vote Often" repeat voters (like in movie: Gangs of New York)</li> <li>--People were bribed with money, alcohol, and threats of being fired.</li> <li>--Ward bosses intimidated voters to vote a certain way.</li> <li>--A generation of machine politics and patronage dominated from the precinct up to the national level.</li> </ul>
<b>SOLUTION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Register to vote (now 30 days prior to an election is most a State can require)</li> <li>--The Australian Ballot -Four key components:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Ballot is printed and distributed at public expense</li> <li>2) Ballot must show all candidates names</li> <li>3) The ballot is only available at the polling place</li> <li>4) The ballot is filled out in private</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
The Australian ballot was first used in Australia in 1872. By 1892, 33 U.S. states adopted it.	

## MEASURING VOTER TURNOUT

OPTION	DESCRIPTION
<b>USE REGISTERED VOTERS</b>	You take the percentage from registered voters. (So if 5 people voted out of 100 registered voters then the voter turnout would be 5%)
<b>USE VOTING--AGE POPULATION</b>	You take the percentage from the voting--age population. (So if 5 people voted out of 1000 people who are old enough then the voter turnout would be .5%)
<p>--Percentage of registered voters that voted in 2008 was 89.6% while the percentage of voting--age population that voted was 63.6%.</p> <p>--Voter turnout refers to the percentage of voting--age population unless otherwise stated. And it has rarely have gone above 60% in since 1970. It usually hovers closer to 50% or 55%.</p>	

## REASONS FOR LOW VOTER TURNOUT

REASON	DESCRIPTION
<b>TOO BUSY</b>	Surveys indicate people have conflicting work or school schedules, were ill, disabled, or had a family emergency. (Researchers have also found no one likes to say that they are uninformed about candidates and issues even though it may be the case)
<b>DIFFICULTY OF REGISTRATION</b>	In the United States voter registration requires individual initiative. It costs people time and effort. (Other nations place the burden on the government and not the people)
<b>DIFFICULTY OF ABSENTEE VOTING</b>	Many states require a person to apply for an absentee ballot in person. The person is probably busy and on the go if they aren't even in their state for elections.
<b>NUMBER OF ELECTIONS</b>	The United States hold twice as many federal elections as other Western Democracies. American federalism leads to many additional elections at the state and local level.
<b>VOTER ATTITUDES</b>	- <b>Voter apathy</b> : a simple lack of concern for the election - <b>Voter efficacy</b> : feeling your vote really counts (some people don't have it) (Some nations inspire people to vote by fining them money if they don't)
<b>WEAKENED INFLUENCE OF POLITICAL PARTIES</b>	The parties were once grassroots organizations that forged strong party--group links with their supporters. Today, candidate--centered campaigns has resulted in a more distant party from the people.
<p>-I feel like Netflix should be included with "too busy" and "voter attitudes".</p> <p>-The United States has the lowest voter participation rates of any nation in the industrialized world: (Examples: 1960: 65%-----1996: 51.5%-----2004: 60%-----2012: 62%)</p>	

## EFFORTS TO IMPROVE VOTER TURNOUT

IDEA	DESCRIPTION
<p><b>EASIER REGISTRATION &amp; CONVENIENCE VOTING</b></p>	<p>--Same day (as election) registration states have higher voter turnout.                      --Some people think 18 year olds should be automatically registered.                      --Oregon eliminated poll places and did all-mail balloting.</p>
<p><b>MAKE AN ELECTION DAY HOLIDAY</b></p>	<p>This could make it easier for people to get out of work. Better keep election day on a Tuesday or people might go on long weekends.</p>
<p><b>STRENGTHEN PARTIES</b></p>	<p>Political parties have recently been putting more time, effort, and resources into areas that have had lower turnout. It has helped somewhat.</p>
<p><b>OTHER SUGGESTIONS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Hold fewer elections</li> <li>--Use a proportional representation system for congressional elections to encourage 3rd parties</li> <li>--Change election day to Saturday or Sunday</li> <li>--Making voting mandatory</li> <li>--Provide a tax credit for voters</li> <li>--Have an election week instead of an election day</li> <li>--Allow people to vote over the internet</li> <li>--Have more polling places (some places have people waiting for hours)</li> </ul>

## CONGRESS AND NATIONAL VOTING REGULATIONS

ITEM	DESCRIPTION
<p><b>NVRA</b> (NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION ACT)</p>	<p>In 1993, Congress passed this law to help citizens register to vote at any state--run agencies, such as the bureaus of motor vehicles. Hence the “<b>motor--voter law</b>” nickname.</p>
<p><b>HAVA</b> (HELP AMERICA VOTE ACT)</p>	<p>In 2002, Congress created a national standards for voting and election management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--All States had to upgrade voting systems to electronic format</li> <li>--People with disabilities must have easy access to polling places</li> <li>--Registered voters must provide a driver's license or the last four digits of their social security number.</li> </ul>
<p>--HAVA was passed in response to the Bush--Gore election. In Florida there was a confusing punch--card ballot in which pieces of paper called “chads” made counting ballots difficult.</p>	

## VOTING BLOCKS AND BEHAVIOR

VOTING BLOC		TURNOUT %	DESCRIPTION
G E N D E R	MALES	61.5	--Slightly less likely to vote than women. --Believe in harsher punishments & are more fiscally conservative
	FEMALES	65.7	--Slightly more likely to vote than men. --More likely to vote democrat (especially if single) --Oppose harsh punishments & are less war-prone. --Support welfare systems.
R A C E	WHITES	66.1	More likely to vote conservatively.
	BLACKS	64.1	--Since New Deal vote for democrats. --Support money for poor areas rather than on foreign policy. --Have a less favorable view of the justice system.
	HISPANIC	49.9	--Side with democrats on urban, minority, & labor issues. --43 million voters (fastest growing minority population)
	ASIAN	47.6	--Tend to vote for conservatives
A G E	18--24 (YOUNG VOTERS)	48.5	--Low voterturnout. --Might be uninformed because houses, careers, family, and running a business is all in the future for them.
	65--74 (SENIOR CITIZENS)	72.4	--High voterturnout. --Have more experience and understanding of the political process because they are likely to have much at stake: social security, Medicare, taxes, & inheritance.
S C H O O L	NO HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA	39.4	--The less education you obtain the less likely you are to vote.
	OBTAINED A MASTERS DEGREE	N/A	--The more education you obtain the more likely you are to vote.



## VOTER BLOCKS AND BEHAVIORS

DEMOGRAPHIC	VOTE LIBERAL	VOTE CONSERVATIVE
<b>GENDER</b>	Women	Men
<b>RACE</b>	African Americans Hispanics	Whites Asians
<b>RELIGION</b>	Catholic Jews	Protestants Evangelicals Mormons
<b>REGION</b>	East Coast West Coast	South West
<b>EDUCATION</b>	Obtaining a masters	The rest of educational attainment is pretty split between the two parties.
<b>OCCUPATION</b>	Wage earner Craftsman Factory line workers	Business community Entrepreneurs Shareholders

--Obviously these are just statistical majorities. There is no way to know how a person votes just because of their demographics. In some instances it is like 55 % of these people vote like this. Well 45% of them still vote for the other side. So don't go nuts with this stereotypical data. But you might need an example or two on the AP test.

-Party identification is still the strongest indicator as how someone will vote.

-Also in terms of the electoral college, many states in certain regions vote consistently.