

## FORMING POLITICAL OPINIONS AND VALUES

### HOW DO WE GET OUR POLITICAL OPINIONS AND VALUES?

Political attitudes are shaped by political socialization, a lifelong process through which an individual acquires opinions through contact with family, friends, coworkers, the media and other group associations. Political attitudes in turn determine how individuals participate, who they vote for, and what political parties they support. Many factors - including family, gender, religion, education, social class, race and ethnicity, and region - all contribute to American political attitudes and behavior.

### SOURCES (AGENTS) OF POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

<b>Family</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Strongest</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Correlation between parent’s party affiliation and child’s party affiliation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Less of a correlation on civil liberties and racial issues</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fairly equal influence of mother and father; When parents differ, child tends to associate w/beliefs of parent with whom he/she more closely identifies</li> </ul>
<b>Schools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Convey basic values (e.g., civic duty, patriotism)</li> </ul>
<b>Religion</b>	<p><b>Protestant</b> Generally more conservative</p> <p><b>Evangelicals</b> - especially, are most conservative on social issues</p> <p><b>Catholic</b> Traditionally more liberal Greater acceptance of Catholics, greater inclusion into mainstream of society, and increasing importance of various social issues (abortion, gay rights) &gt;&gt; greater degree of conservatism. A majority of Catholics voted for Clinton, but Bush 43 won Catholic vote in 2004</p> <p><b>Jewish</b> Liberal influence, support for the Democratic Party</p>
<b>Mass Media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Wide exposure to papers, Internet, movies, TV</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Media provides link between individuals and values/behavior of others</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In 2000 attention was directed to problems of voting systems, Electoral College</li> </ul>

### Varying levels of interest in politics

**Elites**

- Those w/disproportionate amounts of political resources
- Raise issues and help set national agenda
- Influence the resolution of issues

**Attentive public**

- Those with an active interest in gov’t and politics
- Better educated

**Mass public**

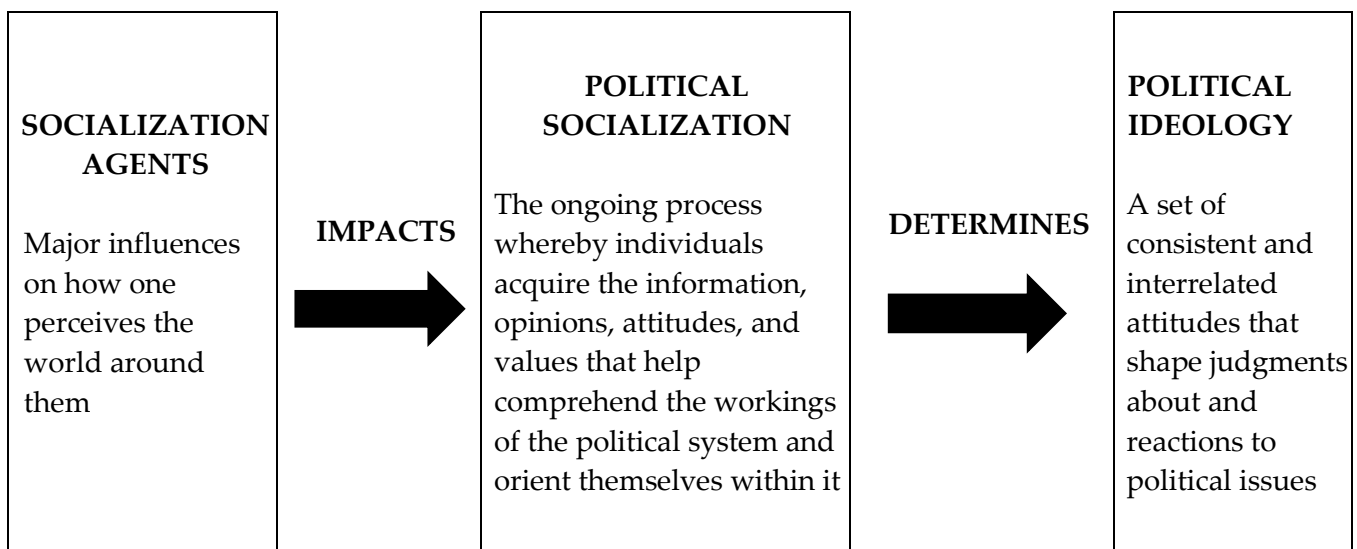
- Those with little interest in gov’t and politics
- Many are nonvoters (subset "political know-nothings")

## AWARENESS AND INTEREST

Political efficacy - belief that one can make a difference in politics by expressing an opinion and acting politically

Internal efficacy - the belief that one can understand politics and therefore participate in politics

External efficacy - the belief that one is effective in making a difference when participating in politics, for example that the government will respond to one's demands



**POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS GOVERNMENT**

**Ideology**

An ideology is a consistent set of beliefs and values that shape a person’s views. A political ideology is a set of beliefs about politics and public policy that creates the structure for looking at government and public policy. Political ideologies can change over time. Differences in ideology generally occur in the arena of political, economic, and social issues.

**Ideology: A Political Spectrum**

- **radical:** favors rapid, fundamental change in existing social, economic, or political order; may be willing to resort to extreme means, even violence or revolution to accomplish such change (extreme change to create an entirely new social system)
- **liberal:** supports active government in promoting individual welfare and supporting civil rights, and accepts peaceful political and social change within the existing political system
- **moderate:** political ideology that falls between liberal and conservative and which may include some of both; usually thought of as tolerant of others' political opinions and not likely to hold extreme views on issues
- **conservative:** promotes a limited governmental role in helping individuals economically, supports traditional values and lifestyles, favors a more active role for government in promoting national security, and approaches change cautiously
- **reactionary:** advocates a return to a previous state of affairs, often a social order or government that existed earlier in history (may be willing to go to extremes to achieve their goals)

	<b>CARDINAL ATTRIBUTES OF LIBERALISM</b>	<b>CRITICISMS OF LIBERALS</b>
<b>LIBERALISM GENERALLY DEMOCRATS</b>	Positive uses of government to bring about justice and equality of opportunity (larger government) such as social programs in the past Emphasis on protection of individual rights and liberties Emphasis on human rights in issues regarding foreign aid Less emphasis on military spending Higher taxes for the rich than for the poor Larger government Believe in possibility of progress, better future, equality of opportunity, minimum income level Liberals charge that conservatives act in self-interest, concerned with rich; Liberals concerned government should take care of weak Liberal view holds all people equal; wish to lesson impact of great inequalities of wealth Corporations seen as chief threat to liberty; Need for a strong central govt. to “smooth out the rough edges of capitalism.” Set up programs to help criminals	Too much reliance on governmental solutions, higher taxes, and bureaucrats Forgets that government has to be limited When government grows too big, it tends to start dictating us Too many governmental controls and too much taxation undermine the self-help ethic Welfare and regulatory state pushed by liberals will destroy true equality of economic opportunities

<b>CONSERVATISM GENERALLY REPUBLICANS</b>	<b>CARDINAL ATTRIBUTES OF CONSERVATISM</b>	<b>CRITICISMS OF CONSERVATIVES</b>
	<p>Private property rights and belief in free enterprise (free market economy) Keep government small except in the area of national defense; Strong defense budget</p> <p>Government needs to ensure order; more pessimistic about human nature</p> <p>Preference for the status quo and desire change only in moderation</p> <p>Taxes should be low for everyone</p> <p>Prayers in public schools should not be banned</p> <p>Abortion is the murder of a fetus</p> <p>Don't make America a welfare state</p> <p>Lock up criminals for crimes</p> <p>Government social activism has been expensive and counterproductive; Human needs cared for by families/charities</p> <p>Emphatically pro-business</p> <p>Favor dispersing power broadly to avoid concentration of power at the national level</p> <p>Subordinate economic and social equality to liberty and freedom</p> <p>In 2000 campaign, Bush built upon churches in providing aid to needy but also tried to avoid hostility to all government assistance ("compassionate conservatism")</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hostility to government as counterproductive and inconsistent</li> <li>• Conservatives have a selective opposition to government</li> <li>• Government deficits grew during the 1980s when conservatives were in control</li> <li>• Insensitivity to the social needs of the homeless and mentally ill</li> <li>• Too much faith in our market economy</li> <li>• Failure to acknowledge and endorse policies that deal with racism and sexism</li> </ul>

## LIBERTARIANISM

- An ideology that cherishes individual liberty and insists on a sharply limited government (Federal government should only be used for national defense); Preaches opposition to government and just about all its programs
- Opposes all government regulation (end government subsidies for businesses and farmers, no gun laws, no drug laws, no gambling laws)

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"><b>POLITICAL PARTY AFFILIATION</b></p>	<p><b>Probably the strongest predictor of voting</b></p> <p>More people now “vote the man, not the party” than in the past - increase in Independents</p> <p>Straight ticket voting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Voting for candidates from the same political party for every office on the ballot</li> <li>○ Easier to do with party-column ballot</li> <li>○ Decline in recent years (“vote the man, not the party”) Split ticket voting</li> <li>○ Voting for candidates from two different political parties</li> <li>○ Increase in recent years (“vote the man, not the party”)</li> <li>○ Harder to do with office-column ballot</li> </ul>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"><b>GEOGRAPHY</b></p>	<p>South: Solidly Republican (<b>because of Civil Rights Acts in 60s</b>)</p> <p>Great Plains: Republican</p> <p>Rocky Mountain Region: Republican (Colorado swinging democratic)</p> <p>New England: Democratic</p> <p>West Coast: Democratic</p> <p>Great Lakes Region: Democratic</p> <p>Metropolitan/Urban Centers: Democratic</p> <p>Rural Areas: Republican</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"><b>OTHER FACTORS</b></p>	<p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Women are more likely to vote Democratic, especially if they are single <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More liberal on issues such as military action, capital punishment, gun control, social programs such as Social Security, education funding, and environmental initiatives</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Men are more likely to vote Republican</li> <li>○ Sex-sensitive issues (e.g., abortion, pornography, gun control, war) provoke different views among the different genders</li> <li>○ Gender gap – in voting refers to the difference in the percentage of women and the percentage of men voting for a given candidate.</li> </ul> <p>Race</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Whites: more conservative, greater support for Republicans</li> <li>○ Blacks: more liberal, <b>STRONGEST SUPPORTERS</b> of Democratic Party (&gt;90% Dem. in recent presidential elections)</li> <li>○ Hispanics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans more liberal and supportive of Democrats</li> <li>Cubans more conservative and supportive of Republicans</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Asians: supportive of Democrats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Obama won 62% in 2008 and 73% in 2012 elections)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Social class</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lower: more likely than upper to vote Democratic</li> <li>○ Upper: more likely than lower to vote Republican</li> </ul>

- Religion
  - Protestant: more likely to vote Republican
  - Catholic: more likely to vote Democratic, but some slippage in
  - Jewish: more likely to vote Democratic
- Issues (state of the economy -> can be good or bad; war -> rally point is good)
- Retrospective voting: looking back on whether or not things have gotten better or worse since the last election
- Prospective voting: looking at the candidates' views on the issues, and how they will accordingly handle the office if elected
- Candidate appeal – how voters feel about a candidate's background, personality, leadership ability, and other personal qualities
- Time
  - **Midterm elections:** party in power has lost seats in Congress every year since 1938 (except 1998 & 2002)