4 PUBLIC
A controversial issue provides a good way to study public opinion. Gay and lesbian rights is a good example. Supporters see the issue in terms of civil rights and human dignity. They want gay men and lesbians to have the same legal rights and privileges as other Americans. Opponents regard the issue as a matter of traditional family values and social permissiveness. They are against granting civil rights protections to gay men and lesbians and oppose any legal recognition of homosexual relationships.

A large majority of Americans (89 percent) believe that gay men and lesbians “should have equal rights in terms of job opportunities,” but the nation is divided on other gay and lesbian rights issues. While a majority of Americans (57 percent) believe that homosexuality is an acceptable alternative lifestyle, Americans are almost evenly divided on whether homosexuality is morally acceptable. Furthermore, a majority of Americans (53 percent) tell researchers that same-sex unions should not be recognized by law.¹

The topic of gay and lesbian rights provides a good introduction to the study of public opinion by raising a number of questions:

• How do scholars measure public opinion? How accurate are opinion surveys, especially on controversial or complex subjects?
• Why do different groups of Americans hold different views? What factors account for individual attitudes and beliefs?
• What is the nature of public opinion in America? What can public opinion tell us about the democratic principles of majority rule and minority rights? Does public opinion vary in intensity and among different groups?
• Finally, to what extent does public opinion influence policy?
after studying chapter 4, students should be able to answer the following:

> What is the process of political socialization, and what are the roles played by genetics, family, school, peer groups, religious institutions, and the media?

> What is the theory and practice of survey research, and how do sampling, question wording, sequencing, phantom opinions, interviewer-respondent interaction, and timing affect the measurement of public opinion?

> What is the level of political knowledge in the United States, and how does this impact the policymaking process? What is the level of political trust and political efficacy in the United States?

> What are liberalism and conservatism? How do the political views of Americans break down based on social class, race and ethnicity, religion, generation, region, and gender?

> What is the role of public opinion in the policymaking process?

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The process through which individuals acquire political knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs is called **political socialization**. Socialization is a learning process, but it does not always take place in a classroom. Informal learning, filling out an income tax return, serving on a jury, and standing for the National Anthem also provide opportunities for political socialization.

### Process of Socialization

Grade school students recognize terms such as Congress, political party, and democracy, but they do not understand their meanings. Many youngsters can name the political party their family supports, but they are unable to distinguish between the two major parties on issues. Almost all young children have a positive attitude toward government and its symbols. Most can distinguish the American flag from other flags, for example, and say they like it best.

In adolescence, young people begin to separate individuals from institutions. They understand, for example, that one can criticize the president while supporting the presidency. Adolescents are aware of processes such as voting and lawmaking, and their general understanding of these processes is more sophisticated.

Attitudes begin to diverge in the adolescent years. For example, many African American children grow less trustful of authority figures, especially police officers. Political events can also drive adolescent socialization. For example, young people gain knowledge and develop party attachments during a presidential campaign. The more intense the political event, the more enduring the political views it creates. The Civil War and the Great Depression had a lifelong impact on generations of Americans.

Political socialization continues in adulthood. Attitudes and basic political knowledge crystallize during early adulthood and tend to persist throughout life. Nonetheless, as adults go to work, start families, and retire, they may change their views on specific political issues.

### Agents of Socialization

**Agents of socialization** contribute to political socialization by shaping formal and informal learning.
**Family.** Children acquire attitudes toward politics from their families. Voters, for example, are usually the children of voters. Children of politically knowledgeable parents are themselves more likely to be well informed about government and politics.

Families influence at least the initial development of political party affiliation. As parents talk with one another and with their children, they are unconsciously constructing a “family identity” that may include party identification. A study of fourth graders found that 60 percent of the youngsters identified with a party even though they had virtually no knowledge of party history, issues, or candidates.

Political similarities between parents and children diminish over time. Young adults frequently change their political and party affiliation in response to new socializing experiences. By the age of 25, young adults often adjust their political party identification to place it in line with the party they prefer on the issues about which they care.

**School.** Civics classes enhance student knowledge of American government and politics. Coursework may lead students to watch news programs or read about current events online. Students may ask their parents more questions about political affairs. Furthermore, community volunteers, fulfilling a high school course requirement, may develop a lifetime habit of participation in community organizations and voting.

Schools teach patriotism. In the classroom, students pledge allegiance to the flag, sing patriotic songs, commemorate national holidays, and study the lives of national heroes. Schools may provide extracurricular activities, including student government organizations. Young people who learn participatory skills in school typically become participatory adults.

Schools teach young people how to work within a power structure. Youngsters inevitably develop attitudes about authority and their roles as participants in a system. Some scholars believe that a primary focus of schools on compliance with rules hinders the development of political participation skills. This phenomenon is particularly true of schools in low-income areas.

College students differ politically from high school graduates. College life does appear to influence political attitudes as students are exposed to a variety of new ideas and people. As a result, they are less likely than non-college graduates to share their family’s political views. However, college-bound youngsters already tended to vary from non-college peers even before they entered college.

**Religious Institutions.** People who are active in religious organizations are more likely to be politically engaged as well. This association between religious and political activism is particularly important for African Americans. Historically, the black church has been an important training ground for political leadership.

People tend to join religious organizations that promote their own political beliefs, but these can also influence political views. This is particularly true for religious groups demanding an intense commitment of faith and a belief in religion as a source of truth. Members who accept the religious organization as the authoritative interpreter of the word of God often respect the political pronouncements of religious leaders as well.

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**What America Believes**

- **Religion very important**
  - US (Nov 2003): 62%
  - Canada (Jan 2003): 43%
  - Great Britain (June 2003): 28%
- **Attended church/synagogue in the past week**
  - US (Nov 2003): 26%
  - Canada (Jan 2003): 17%
  - Great Britain (June 2003): 17%

Sixty percent of Americans tell survey researchers that religion is very important in their lives, and nearly two-thirds belong to a church, synagogue, or another religious body. Americans are more religious than are the people in most other industrialized nations.

**Peer Groups.** Friends and coworkers also shape political attitudes and beliefs. Those who know gays or lesbians are more supportive of gay rights.\(^\text{17}\) Studies show that discussions among friends are more important than the media in influencing voter decisions.\(^\text{18}\) When adults change jobs or neighborhoods, new peer groups may change their political views as well.\(^\text{19}\)

People are more likely to share the values of a group that is important to them. Nonetheless, people may choose to remain in a group even when they disagree with its values. A study of conservative Christian churches found that nearly 40 percent of women members held feminist views contrary to those of their church. The feminist women remained in the church because they perceived little connection between their religious and political views.\(^\text{20}\)

**Media.** Political participation is closely associated with media usage, especially newspaper and news-magazine readership. Nearly everyone who votes reads a newspaper. Young people who use media frequently understand American government and are more supportive of American values, such as free speech.\(^\text{21}\)

The media, especially television, have been shown to determine the importance Americans attach to issues. Television news stories influence Americans’ priorities.\(^\text{22}\) Media reports also shape public opinion of a president. The more media focus on a policy issue, the more the public incorporates its knowledge of that issue into its overall judgment of a president.\(^\text{23}\)

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**Should churches and other religious institutions take positions on political issues and candidates?**

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survey research, the measurement of public opinion, is a familiar part of the American scene. Businesses use market surveys to assess public tastes for their products and services. Political campaigns employ polls to plan strategy. Public officials use surveys to assess public understanding of problems and issues. The media use opinion surveys to gauge public reaction to political events and assess the popularity of officeholders and candidates.

Sampling
In survey research, a universe is the population researchers wish to study. It may consist of all adult Americans, or Californians, or likely voters. Survey research enables scholars to examine the characteristics of a large group.

A sample is a subset, or smaller part of a universe. It must be chosen carefully to reflect its universe. A sample will allow for a margin of error (or sample error), a statistical term that refers to the accuracy of a survey. The margin of error's size depends on the size of the sample. The table to the right lists the margin of error for various sample sizes for a large universe. The margin of error decreases as the sample size increases and vice versa. The margin of error for samples of under 100 is so large as to make the survey meaningless. Researchers can reduce the margin of error by increasing the sample size. However, they can never eliminate error unless they survey every member of the universe. In practice, most professional survey research firms aim for a margin of error of plus or minus 3 to 4 percentage points.

The margin of error for a sample of 1,065 persons out of a universe of 500,000 or more is a plus or minus 3 percentage points, 95 percent of the time. For example, suppose that we know that 10 percent of all adults are left-handed. Sampling theory tells us that, 95 percent of the time, a randomly selected sample of 1,065 people will include 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, or 13 percent left-handers, that is, plus or minus 3 percentage points from 10, or the true proportion of left-handed people in this universe. Five percent of the randomly selected samples of 1,065 persons will produce an error that is greater than 3 percentage points. In other words, 5 samples out of 100 will contain a proportion of left-handed people less than 7 percent or more than 13 percent.

Survey research is not exact. Suppose one survey shows that Candidate X is leading Candidate Y by a 48 percent to 46 percent margin, while another survey indicates that Candidate Y is leading by 49 percent to 45 percent. The margin of error in each survey is a +/-4 percentage points. Statistically, the surveys show the same result—support for the two candidates is within the margin of error. Neither candidate is actually ahead. Statistical chance dictates that 5 percent of samples taken will have a margin greater than the margin of error. For example, even if two candidates are actually tied in voter support, an occasional sample will show one or the other with a lead greater than the margin of error. Over the course of an election campaign, sur-
Surveys may show a good deal of small voter movement between candidates, or an occasional major shift in public support even though no actual change in voter support for the two candidates has taken place.

For accuracy, a sample must be representative of its universe. If researchers are interested in the views of all Americans, a sample of a thousand people from Atlanta, a thousand women, or a thousand callers to a radio talk show would not likely be representative. An unrepresentative sample is a biased sample, that is, a sample that tends to produce results that do not reflect the true characteristics of the universe because it is unrepresentative of the universe.

Internet polls are unreliable because the sample consists of people who choose to participate, sometimes more than once.

A biased sample led to one of the most famous polling mistakes in history. Beginning in 1916, Literary Digest conducted presidential polls every four years. In 1936, the magazine mailed 10 million ballots to names taken from telephone directories and automobile registration lists. About two million people responded, and Literary Digest predicted that Republican Alf Landon would defeat Democrat Franklin Roosevelt. In fact, Roosevelt was re-elected by the largest landslide in American history!

What went wrong? Literary Digest’s sample did not represent the universe of voters. At the height of the Great Depression, the people with telephones and automobiles were middle- and upper-income, usually Republican, voters. Poor and working-class people could not afford cars and telephones, but they could vote, and they voted for Roosevelt.

The ideal approach is to employ a random sample. A random sample gives each member of a universe an equal likelihood of being included; it is unbiased. Researchers could select a random sample by picking names from a student list, for example, if the universe were students of a particular college. It is not always this easy. A random sample of voters in an upcoming election is difficult because no master list exists. Identifying likely voters is especially challenging because people don’t like to admit they may not vote. Surveys conducted before low turnout elections are frequently inaccurate because pollsters are unable to separate actual voters from nonvoters.

National survey research firms generate samples starting from a list of names that are unbiased, although the list may not be entirely representative. Internet polls are unreliable because the sample consists of people who choose to participate, sometimes more than once. For example, People magazine once conducted an online poll to select the Most Beautiful Person of the Year. When Howard Stern, a nationally syndicated radio talk show host, heard about the poll, he encouraged his listeners to vote for Hank, the Angry, Drunken Dwarf. Wrestling fans also flooded the People website with votes for Ric “Nature Boy” Flair, a professional wrestler. Hank, the Angry, Drunken Dwarf won the vote as People’s Most Beautiful Person and Flair finished second.26
of all telephone exchanges in the United States and an estimate of the number of households served by each exchange. A computer creates a master list of telephone numbers and then selects a random sample from its list. The computer creates a list of possible numbers rather than using actual telephone numbers so that unlisted telephone numbers will be as likely to be included as listed numbers. To correct for the possible bias of including only people who are usually home and answer their telephones, polling firms call back repeatedly at different times over several days. Once someone answers, the researchers do not necessarily interview that person. They ask for all the adults in the household and then randomly select a name.

Many people refuse to participate in opinion polls. The response rate for major national surveys is less than 30 to 40 percent. It is even less for snapshot polls taken overnight. Cell phones are another problem for survey researchers. Because wireless carriers charge users by the minute, cell phone users are less likely to participate than people using landlines. Scholars are concerned that low response rates may make surveys inaccurate. Researchers attempt to compensate for differing response rates by adding men, young adults, and other demographic groups, which would otherwise be underrepresented in the sample.

Measuring public opinion on controversial issues is especially difficult. Respondents may not answer questions honestly when they have to do with race, for example, because they do not want to appear prejudiced. Researchers have found voter preferences in contests between African American and white candidates typically overestimate the vote for the African American candidate because white voters may misreport their candidate preferences.

**Question Wording**

Question wording can affect survey responses because it provides a frame of reference for a question. For example, a majority of Americans say that they oppose gay marriage, yet the nation is evenly divided on whether homosexual couples should be allowed “to legally form civil unions, giving them some of the legal rights of married couples.” If the wording mentions “health-care benefits and Social Security survivor benefits,” approval rises to more than 60 percent. Many Americans react negatively to the use of the word marriage because it has a religious frame of reference. In contrast, questions that mention healthcare and Social Security benefits frame the issue in a legal rather than a religious context.

**btw...**

In 1948, Democratic President Harry Truman was running for election against Thomas Dewey, the Republican Party nominee. Throughout the summer and early fall, the polls showed Dewey well ahead and it was generally assumed that Dewey would win. In fact, the major polling firms stopped surveying voters more than a week before the election. They missed a late voter shift in favor of President Truman. Consequently, Truman’s election victory was a surprise to many, including the editors of the *Chicago Tribune* who rushed to press on election night with the famous headline: “Dewey Defeats Truman.”
BARACK OBAMA’S HISTORIC BID for the presidency has spawned many political theories, one of which is that he could fall victim to the “Bradley Effect.”

Even a cursory media database search finds dozens of recent references to the term, usually in conjunction with Obama’s somewhat lackluster standing in the polls vis-a-vis rival John McCain, such as this one from NBC pundit Chris Matthews: “I mean, is this going to be something we can’t even interpret through polling? We can talk about the Bradley Effect because of what happened to Tom Bradley when he ran for governor of California and won in the polls twice and lost the governorship twice on Election Day.

I’ve seen theories about this, that unless the African American candidate is able to get . . . the election number he needs, he won’t get it that day. He has to get it in the polling, and Barack hasn’t cracked about 45 percent.”

Or this one from a Wall Street Journal article on political polling: “Pollsters look for the Bradley Effect, the idea that some white voters are reluctant to say they support a white candidate over a black candidate. The phrase refers to California’s 1982 gubernatorial election, when the late Tom Bradley, a black Democratic mayor of Los Angeles, led in exit polls against white Republican George Deukmejian. Mr. Bradley lost the election. The conclusion: Some voters hid their true choice from pollsters.”

The effect, which has circulated in California political circles for decades, has gone national. But there’s one problem—it probably isn’t true.

Did some Californians vote against Bradley because he was black? Of course. But did hidden racism decide one of the closest gubernatorial elections in California history, which Deukmejian won by fewer than 100,000 votes? It’s highly unlikely.

The basis for the theory is that Bradley was leading in the polls right up to Election Day, yet lost the election. What Bradley Effect theorists miss is that the polls were actually quite accurate—as far as they went. Bradley won among voters who cast ballots on Election Day, as “exit polling” of voters confirmed. Based on those polls, in fact, many news outlets immediately declared Bradley the winner.

Bradley lost narrowly, however, when absentee votes mailed before the election were counted. The Deukmejian campaign had exploited newly liberalized absentee voting rules and organized a vote-by-mail turnout campaign that was especially effective among gun owners opposed to a gun control measure on the same ballot.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS:
• What is the Bradley Effect?
• Do you know people who voted for or against Obama because of his race?
• The essay above was published before the 2008 presidential election. Do you think the author was correct in his assessment?
Question Sequencing
The order of survey questions may also affect a survey’s results. Question order can shape the context of responses. For example, asking about presidential job performance after questions about a particular government policy may affect a president’s popularity if that policy is perceived as successful or unsuccessful. Professional researchers try to control this effect by rotating the order in which questions are asked.32

Attitudes, Non-Attitudes, and Phantom Opinions
Professional pollsters offer respondents an opportunity to confess that they have not heard of an issue or do not have an opinion. Some survey researchers also ask respondents to indicate the intensity with which they hold their views and take that intensity into account in interpreting survey results.

Phantom opinions are made-up responses from respondents who do not want to appear uninformed.33 A survey sponsored by the Washington Post asked a national sample of Americans this question: “Some people say the 1975 Public Affairs Act should be repealed. Do you agree or disagree that it should be repealed?” The survey found that 24 percent of the sample agreed, while 19 percent said that it should not be repealed. The other 57 percent had no opinion. Ironically, the people with no opinion were the best informed. The Public Affairs Act did not exist. Survey researchers made it up in order to test how many respondents would express an opinion on an issue about which they could obviously have no knowledge.34

Interviewer-Respondent Interaction
The race or gender of an interviewer can affect survey results. For example, a survey measuring racial attitudes found black respondents were much more likely to say that white people could be trusted when the interviewer was white than when asked the same question by an African American.35 Similarly, women are more likely to give pro-choice responses to questions about abortion to female interviewers than they are to male interviewers.36

Timing
Even the most carefully conducted survey is only a snapshot of public opinion on the day of the poll. In March 1991, for example, following the American victory in the first Gulf War, the Gallup Poll showed that the approval rating of the first President Bush was 89 percent. Political observers predicted the president would win reelection easily. By August 1992, however, Bush’s popularity rating had fallen below 35 percent, and three months later, he was defeated.37

FRAMING THE QUESTION
...and the problems with these survey questions:

1. If you are now covered by Medicare, or if you soon will be, would you be willing to pay higher premiums, deductibles, or income tax surcharges for the following?
   a) Catastrophic hospital coverage
   b) Catastrophic nursing home coverage
   c) Both
   d) Neither

2. Do you believe abortion should be legal?
   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) No opinion

3. Should scientists and doctors be allowed to pursue stem cell research for the treatment of Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, diabetes, spinal cord injuries, and other tragic conditions?
   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) Not sure

A biased question is a survey question that produces results tilted to one side or another. The question is biased because it misstates the issue. The policy debate over stem cell research is not over whether scientists should be allowed to conduct research but whether federal funds should support it. Furthermore, the question is biased because it ignores the concerns of stem cell research opponents while calling attention to the “tragic conditions” that stem cell research might be able to help.
Political scientist W. Russell Neuman divides the public into three groups based on their knowledge and interest in government and politics. At one end of the spectrum, a large group of people, about a fifth of the population, is indifferent to politics; they have no opinions. At the other end are political junkies, a small group, probably less than 5 percent of the population, who are very interested and informed. The great majority of Americans fits in the middle category. They follow politics halfheartedly. They have opinions on some issues, but their views on many issues are vague and incomplete.38

Some groups of Americans are more knowledgeable than others. Men know more about politics than women. Whites are better informed than African Americans. Wealthy people are more knowledgeable than the poor. Republicans know more than Democrats. Well-educated people are better informed than people with less formal schooling.39

Knowledgeable Americans vote and cast an informed ballot. In 1994, 70 percent of well-informed survey respondents reported voting in that year’s congressional elections. Only 25 percent of less knowledgeable respondents voted. Furthermore, knowledgeable respondents voted for candidates whose views on issues coincided with their own. In contrast, there was almost no relationship between the political issues that low-knowledge voters said mattered to them and the issue positions of the candidates for whom they voted.40

Some observers believe political ignorance has led to a “dumbing down” of campaigns, and to negative advertising in particular. Political scientist Samuel Popkin says that candidates now conduct two campaigns: one at informed voters, stressing issues and policy positions, the other directed at less well-informed voters, attacking the character of their opponents.41

Support for Democratic Principles

Survey data on gay and lesbian rights raise questions about public support for basic democratic principles of majority rule and minority rights.

### what didn’t AMERICA KNOW?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Knew it</th>
<th>Blew it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Who delivered the Gettysburg Address?</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Who was the first president of the U.S.?</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What is the name of the national anthem?</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Two of the three branches of the U.S. government are called the executive and the legislative branches. What is the third branch called?</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How many U.S. senators are there from each state?</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. In what document are these words found? “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Who wrote the “Letter from Birmingham Jail”?</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. What are the first 10 amendments of the U.S. Constitution called?</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Who is the current vice president of the U.S.?</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Who is the current chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court?</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although some Americans are quite knowledgeable about public affairs, a majority of the nation’s adults cannot accurately name their own representative in Congress or even one of the U.S. senators from their state. Most Americans are unable to identify the Bill of Rights. Less than a fifth can name the current Chief Justice of the United States.


Americans believe that “homosexuals should . . . have equal rights in terms of job opportunities” by a substantial 87 percent to 11 percent margin. However, the survey found that 43 percent oppose hiring gays and lesbians as elementary school teachers and 47 percent oppose homosexuals in the clergy.42

Do Americans support the democratic principles of majority rule and minority rights? Political scientists have studied this question for decades. During the 1950s, Professor Samuel Stouffer conducted a study to evaluate public opinion toward individual rights. He found a high level of intolerance toward persons with unpopular views. For example, only 27 percent of the persons interviewed would permit “an admitted communist” to make a speech.43

In 1960, political scientists James W. Prothro and C. W. Grigg published what has become a classic study of political tolerance. Survey respondents overwhelmingly endorsed the election of public officials by majority vote and stated that people with minority opinions should have the right to express their views. In more specific questions, however, researchers found dramatically less support for minority rights. Respondents said that a communist should not be allowed to take office. Others stated that atheists should not be allowed to speak publicly against religion.44 Later research has confirmed that Americans are more tolerant of political diversity. Using questions almost identical to Stouffer’s of two decades before, researchers found significantly more Americans willing to tolerate atheists, socialists, and communists. Some concluded that this trend reflected the views of a younger, more urban, and better-educated population.46

More recent research contradicts this conclusion. Attitudes toward socialists, communists, and atheists have become more tolerant, but many Americans express intolerant attitudes toward racists and persons advocating military rule. Americans are apparently no more tolerant of persons with unpopular views today than they were in the 1950s. The targets of intolerance have changed, and there are fewer unpopular groups than 50 years ago.47

Civil liberties are the protections of the individual from the unrestricted power of government. People may respond to questions about civil liberties based on their perception of a particular group’s threat. In the 1950s, many Americans favored limiting free speech for communists. Americans today feel less threatened by communists than by racist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan. When answering survey questions, they express more tolerance for communists than for members of the Klan.48 In sum, Americans favor civil liberties for groups they like; they oppose civil liberties for groups they dislike.

This seeming indifference of many Americans to civil liberties disturbs observers. Tolerance for people of other races, ethnicities, religions, and political beliefs is an abstract. One study found that a majority of Americans opposed many of the specific guarantees of individual rights found in the Bill of Rights.45

A number of studies conducted in the 1970s concluded that Americans were more tolerant of political diversity. Using questions almost identical to Stouffer’s of two decades before, researchers found significantly more Americans willing to tolerate atheists, socialists, and communists. Some concluded that this trend reflected the views of a younger, more urban, and better-educated population.46

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American opinion polls

1824 | The first American poll says Andrew Jackson will defeat John Quincy Adams for the presidency. (He doesn’t!)  
1892 | George Gallup conducts his first opinion surveys.  
1916 | The Literary Digest prints the first of its presidential polls. Its predictions prove accurate.  
1932 | George Gallup conducts his first opinion surveys.  
1936 | The Literary Digest gets it wrong when FDR defeats Landon for reelection.  
1948 | All major opinion polls (including the Gallup Poll) predict that New York Governor Thomas Dewey will defeat Harry Truman. (He doesn’t!)
important underpinning of democracy. Many political theorists believe that a free society requires a high degree of popular support for civil liberties. How, then, can we explain the stability of our democracy when research has often found a lack of support for the fundamental principles of democracy?

Political scientists identify three factors accounting for the preservation of political freedom in the United States. First, the Constitution protects individual rights. These legal guarantees provide an important foundation for individual rights. Second, Americans do not agree on their feared target groups. Some people worry about communists, but others want to silence members of the Klan. Since Americans cannot agree on target groups, they are unable to unite behind undemocratic public policies. Finally, a number of political scientists believe that the attitudes of the general public about civil liberties issues are not nearly as important as the views of political elites, the people who exercise a major influence on the policymaking process. Support for democratic principles is stronger among people who are politically active and well informed than it is among individuals who are politically uninvolved. Democracy endures because those who make policy—political elites—understand and support the principles of majority rule and minority rights.

Political Trust and Political Legitimacy

Political legitimacy is the popular acceptance of a government and its officials as rightful authorities in the exercise of power. Democracy depends on the voluntary cooperation of its citizens. People pay taxes and obey laws because they accept the authority of the government. They seek political change through the electoral process and peacefully accept the outcomes of election contests. If a significant proportion of the population loses trust in the political system, the quality of democracy declines. Tax evasion and disrespect for the rule of law increase. The potential for a revolutionary change in the political order may develop.

Political scientists attempt to measure the level of political trust in society through a set of questions developed by the Center for Political Studies (CPS), a social science research unit at the University of Michigan. The questions probe the degree to which citizens believe that government leaders are honest and competent.

Political scientists average the answers to various questions to create a Trust Index. The index fell during the 1960s and 1970s, rose in the 1980s, fell again in the 1990s, increased dramatically after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and then dropped yet again.

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Political scientists disagree on interpreting the data. Some believe that the figures show Americans have lost confidence in their government. Other political scientists argue that public support for American democracy remains solid. They believe that the survey questions may be poorly worded; they actually measure public approval (or disapproval) of current government officials rather than support for the political system.
Civil Unions in Denmark

In 1989, Denmark became the first country in the world to grant legal recognition to same-sex relationships. The Danish arrangement, which is a form of civil union, is known as registered partnership. Since Denmark adopted registered partnerships, five nations (Belgium, Spain, Canada, South Africa, and the Netherlands) have approved same-sex marriage. More than a dozen other countries allow civil unions or registered partnerships, including France, Germany, and the United Kingdom.

The debate over the Danish Registered Partnership Act resembled the current debate over gay marriage in the United States. The proponents of the legislation spoke of the importance of the nation treating all couples equally under the law. They argued that legal recognition of gay unions would promote the development of stable relationships. By discouraging sexual promiscuity, registered partnership would reduce the spread of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. In contrast, opponents of the measure warned that government recognition of same-sex partnerships would weaken support for traditional marriage. The government should protect traditional marriage, they said, by reserving it for traditional couples.

The Danish Registered Partnership Act passed the Danish parliament by a vote of 71 to 47. “Two people of the same sex may have their partnership registered,” the law declared. Whenever the word “marriage” or the word “spouse” appears in Danish law, it is construed to include registered partners. For all intents and purposes, then, registered partners are married in the eyes of Danish law.

Nearly 6,000 Danes were classified as registered partners in 2005 compared with more than 2 million married people. Although the number of registered partners has been rising, most gay men and lesbians are not involved in partnerships. About a sixth of same-sex couples are raising children.

Registered partnerships have apparently had no appreciable effect on the marriage rate in Denmark. The long-term trend in countries throughout the region, a trend that predates registered partnerships and same-sex marriage, has been toward lower marriage rates, higher divorce rates, and higher birthrates outside of marriage. In Denmark, the marriage rate was higher in 2000 than it was in 1989 when the registered partnership act was adopted. The divorce rate was roughly the same.

Questions

1. Are registered partnerships (or civil unions) second-class marriages or are they an acceptable compromise between the proponents and opponents of same-sex marriage?

2. Would you expect the adoption of same-sex marriage throughout the United States to have an impact on traditional marriage rates? Why or why not?

3. Why do you think most gay men and lesbians in Denmark are not involved in registered partnerships?

civil union a legal partnership between two men or two women that gives the couple all the benefits, protections, and responsibilities under law that are granted to spouses in a traditional marriage.
Political Efficacy

Political efficacy is the extent to which individuals believe they can influence the policymaking process. Political efficacy is related to participation. People who believe that they can affect government policies are more inclined to participate politically than those who do not.

Internal political efficacy is the assessment by an individual of his or her personal ability to influence the policymaking process. The concept addresses knowledge of the political system and ability to communicate with political decision-makers. Scholars measure internal political efficacy by asking this agree/disagree question: “Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can’t really understand what’s going on.” Agreement with the statement indicates a low level of internal political efficacy. In 2000, 60 percent agreed with the statement compared with 32 percent who disagreed. Internal political efficacy rose during the 1980s and 1990s, when voting turnout was in decline. So it appears that the concept is not related to voter participation. Low levels of internal political efficacy may explain why many Americans do not participate politically in other ways, but they apparently do not account for changes in voter participation rates.

External political efficacy refers to the assessment of an individual of the responsiveness of government to his or her concerns. This concept deals with an individual’s evaluation of the willingness of government officials to respond to the views of ordinary citizens. Political scientists have created a Government Responsiveness Index based on responses to questions such as the following: “Over the years, how much attention do you feel the government pays to what the people think when it decides what to do?” The index generally declined from the mid-1960s through the early 1980s, but it has subsequently increased. Scholars believe that external political efficacy is associated with voter participation.

FAMILY POLITICS >>

Political scientists believe that families play an important role in the socialization process. Politically active families typically raise children who become politically active adults. Families also pass along their party identification to their offspring, at least initially. Young adults may eventually change their party allegiance to join the party that more closely matches their adult policy preferences.

How did your family impact your political socialization, particularly your level of political involvement and your party identification? Your instructor is going to conduct a class discussion on this topic during an upcoming class session. Prepare to join in the discussion by taking the following steps:

1. Jot down some information about your own level of political involvement and party affiliation. Are you registered to vote? Are you a regular voter? Have you ever joined a political group or participated in a political campaign? How closely do you follow current events? Do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, an independent, or a supporter of another political party? Have you always had the same party affiliation?

2. Record your recollections of your family’s political involvement and party loyalties. Were your parents or the adults who raised you politically active? What was their political party allegiance?

3. Speak with your parents or other members of your family to verify the accuracy of your recollections. Do their memories match your recollections?

4. Finally, consider the role your family played in your personal political socialization and be prepared to discuss the topic in class.
political
PHILOSOPHY

In American politics, the terms liberalism and conservatism are used to describe political philosophy. Liberalism is a political philosophy that favors the use of government power to foster development of the individual and promote the welfare of society. Liberals believe that the government should defend the traditional values of society. The terms right and left are also used to describe political ideology. The political right refers to conservatism, the political left to liberalism. Similarly, right wing means conservative; left wing means liberal. Liberals and conservatives approach the problems of the nation differently. Liberals advocate government action to assist disadvantaged groups. They generally support programs such as Social Security, Medicare, and affirmative action programs. In contrast, conservatives argue that government, especially the national government, is too inefficient to solve the nation’s social problems. They believe that government should reduce spending on social programs and cut taxes to promote economic growth, which, the conservatives argue, will benefit everyone.

Liberals support government regulation of business. They support environmental-protection laws, consumer-protection regulations, and occupational safety and health standards. Liberals are more likely than conservatives to endorse trade restrictions on foreign companies. Conservatives fear that government reg-

Few issues in the United States are as divisive as the issue of abortion.

amendment against abortion, and the enactment of an amendment permitting school prayer. Conservatives oppose assisted suicide, most stem cell research, and the legalization of same-sex marriage. Liberals prefer that government stay out of these questions except to protect the rights of the individual.

Ironically, both liberals and conservatives criticize government. Liberals say that the government does not act strongly enough to help disadvantaged groups gain economic and political power and that government favors the interests of the rich and powerful. Conservatives, on the other hand, criticize government for interfering with the efficient working of the free enterprise system. Conservatives believe that government economic intervention hurts everyone.

The usefulness of the terms liberalism and conservatism is limited. Real-life differences between liberals and conservatives are often matters of degree rather than dramatic contrast. In addition, a number of issues do not fit neatly into liberal/conservative divisions. Finally, few Americans are consistently liberal or conservative. Most Americans hold conservative views on some issues, liberal opinions on others.

Are Americans Liberal or Conservative?
Public opinion surveys typically find more self-identified conservatives than liberals. Nonetheless, studies have found that many Americans cannot accurately define liberalism or conservatism. Furthermore, research shows that relatively few people structure their thinking along liberal-conservative lines.

A different way to assess political philosophy is to inquire about the

global warming the gradual warming of the Earth’s atmosphere caused by burning fossil fuels and industrial pollutants.
role of government. When asked to choose between “more government services and more spending” or “fewer services to reduce spending,” survey respondents favored the former 43 percent to 20 percent, with the rest either in the middle or declaring they don’t know.57

Surveys show that few Americans favor decreasing or ending federal government involvement in consumer protection, medical research, financing college education, or job training for low-income people.58

Survey researchers Albert H. and Susan Davis Cantril’s Cantril Index shows that many Americans have mixed feelings about government, but more people support an active government than oppose it. The Cantrils classify 39 percent of adult Americans as steady supporters of government compared to 10 percent who are steady critics. They classify 12 percent of their sample as ambivalent supporters of government and 20 percent as ambivalent critics. Eleven percent of the sample could not be classified.59

### Opinion Differences Among Groups

Surveys show that political attitudes vary based on factors such as social class, race, and gender. For example, support for gay and lesbian rights is strongest among women, younger adults, people who live in either coast, college graduates, higher-income groups, people who live in urban and suburban areas, Democrats and independents, self-identified liberals, and Catholics. Opposition is greatest among men, older adults, Southerners, people with relatively little formal education, lower-income groups, self-identified conservatives, Republicans, and Protestants.60

**Social Class.** On social welfare issues, lower-income people tend to be more liberal than middle- and upper-income Americans. In contrast, lower-income individuals are often more conservative than other income groups on such non-economic issues as women’s rights and the rights of defendants. Lower-income whites are also less supportive of civil rights for African Americans than are middle-income whites.

**Isolationism** is the view that the United States should stay away from the affairs of other nations. Lower-income individuals are more isolationist but also more supportive of using military force to deal with other nations. Working-class people often oppose free trade, fearing the loss of jobs to international competition. Middle- and upper-income people are less isolationist, favoring free trade, foreign aid, and negotiated settlements of disputes.61

**Race & Ethnicity.** African Americans and Latinos favor activist government. Members of both minority groups typically support affirmative action, a program designed to ensure equal opportunities in employment and college admissions for racial minorities and women. African Americans, in particular, perceive widespread racial discrimination in

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**ARE AMERICANS LIBERAL OR CONSERVATIVE?**

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According to the National Election Studies (NES), 23% of Americans described themselves as slightly liberal, liberal, or extremely liberal in 2004 compared with 32% who said they were slightly conservative, conservative, or extremely conservative. Meanwhile, 26% described themselves as moderate or middle of the road.

society and believe that it is the major reason that many African Americans have trouble finding good jobs and adequate housing. They want government to play an active role in the quest for racial equality.

Many whites believe that African Americans have already achieved equality. (In fact, African Americans continue to lag behind whites in employment, income, education, and access to healthcare.) Whites who believe that African Americans are as well off as white Americans are opposed to government programs designed to assist blacks to improve their status.62

Although African Americans and Latinos are less likely to support the death penalty than whites, they are more likely to hold conservative views on the issues of abortion and gay marriage. African American and Latino conservatism on these issues reflects relatively high rates of church attendance for both minority groups.63

**Religion.** The *religious left* refers to those who hold liberal views because of their religious beliefs, whereas the phrase *religious right* refers to those who hold conservative views because of their religious beliefs. Both groups feel motivated by their religious beliefs to participate in politics. Most members of the religious left are associated with mainline Protestant Christian churches, such as the Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Church of Christ (Disciples), or with the Jewish faith. It also includes Buddhists and many people who declare that they are “spiritual” but not associated with organized religion.64 Christian conservatives tend to be associated with white evangelical Protestant churches, such as Assemblies of God and the Southern Baptist Convention.65

Not all religious groups are left or right. Roman Catholics, for example, oppose abortion and gay marriage, positions associated with the religious right, but also oppose the death penalty, support civil rights and immigrant rights, and favor government efforts to end poverty.

In contemporary American politics, the religious right has more influence than the religious left. Whereas most mainline Protestant churches have been losing members for years, conservative evangelical churches are growing. Furthermore, church attendance is higher among conservative evangelicals.66

African Americans are relatively conservative on the issues of abortion and gay and lesbian rights, reflecting their high rates of church attendance.
Taking Sides

Media and Public Opinion

Should the media report the results of their own polls as news? Isn’t this the same as “creating” news rather than reporting it?

Should government officials be responsive to public opinion polling?

Overview: The First Amendment was ratified in order to protect free (political) speech, freedom of the press, the right to petition the government for redress of grievances (the right to directly approach and criticize the government), and the right to peaceably assemble. These freedoms are essential if citizens are to engage in the open debate and national discussion necessary for self-rule and democratic politics.

The Founders were not blind to the fact that a free and open press (for our purposes, we will use the term “media”) would be partisan, at times wrong, and would attempt to mobilize and change public opinion. Contentious and acrimonious public debate is considered to be part of the essence of political freedom. Those at the time of the American founding, however, could not foresee the incredible change in technology and society that today causes citizens to suffer from “information overload.” We seek sources of information that can be consumed quickly, accurately, and at little cost.

Historically, the news media has prided itself on providing unbiased and relevant information through which Americans can make informed decisions. Part of this information has been the reporting of political polling, especially in political campaign seasons. A new trend, though, is developing which has political and media analysts concerned with the quality and bias in reporting public opinion polling data. From Fox News to the New York Times, there is concern that editorial positions are being authenticated by self-selected polls which are then reported as “news” in attempts to sway public opinion based on demonstrably false journalism. How is the average, busy citizen to get his or her information? Does this new practice harm the credibility of a necessary, informal political institution?

Polling for public opinion is a legitimate source of news. In order to make informed decisions, citizens must have access to the same polling data that inform the political and policymaking class.

Polling for public opinion provides the American people an insight into the politics of the day. Reporting polling data allows individuals to know what their fellow citizens think and desire, where they are in the ideological spectrum, and whether or not government is adequately addressing these issues.

Polling organizations make their data available on the Internet. Today, most polling organizations make their questions and data available online. This allows citizens to fact-check research and draw conclusions for themselves.

Against the use of polling data as news

Polling data may be misrepresented to support a media outlet’s editorial position. For example, in March 2007, an ABC/BBC poll reported findings on how Iraqis viewed the war in Iraq. In this poll they neglected to mention an oversampling of Sunni Arabs, and this dramatically skewed the poll’s result.

Polling samples may be skewed to provide a predetermined outcome. Sometimes poll samples determine the outcome of a poll. A case in point would be a poll commissioned by the Los Angeles Times in which the sample was heavily skewed toward one political party, with the effective poll result favoring the candidate of that oversampled party.

Polling for public opinion assumes American democratic government should be responsive to public opinion. The Founders designed the Constitutional institutions and principles to “slow down” and moderate the effects of public opinion on political institutions with a view to the idea that majority opinion can be unjust. Take, for example, the discriminatory, legal doctrine of “separate but equal.”
Studies find no evidence that people grow more conservative with age. Instead, age-related differences in political views reflect the impact of socializing events common to a generation. Younger Americans may also be more tolerant because they are better educated than previous generations.

Region. In general, people from the East and West coasts are more liberal than people from the South, Midwest, or Rocky Mountain regions. Most regional differences can be explained by class, race, and religion, but some genuine regional variations based on unique cultural and historical factors may also play a role.

Gender. The phrase gender gap refers to differences in party identification and political attitudes between men and women. Women are more likely to vote for Democratic candidates and to favor government programs to provide healthcare and education, and to protect the environment. Women are less likely than men to favor increased defense spending and to support the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. They hold similar views on the issues of abortion rights, women’s equality, and gay marriage.

Younger Americans are more tolerant of ethnic, racial, and social diversity than older adults. People below the age of 30 are more sympathetic to affirmative action and are more likely to favor gay and lesbian rights.

PUBLIC OPINION & PUBLIC POLICY

Public opinion affects every stage of the policymaking process.

Agenda Building
Candidates and officeholders tend to focus on the issues that interest voters. If polls show that voters are concerned about healthcare, then politicians discuss healthcare. If polls indicate that immigration is a major concern, politicians talk about immigration. Some issues become part of the policy agenda because of the actions of interest groups or public officials. Nonetheless, government officials are unlikely to ignore any issue that is important to a large part of the general public.

Policy Formulation and Adoption
Years ago, political scientist V.O. Key, Jr. introduced the concept of latent opinion to explain the relationship between public opinion and policy formulation and adoption. Latent opinion is not what voters think about an issue today, but what public opinion would be by election time if a political opponent made a public official’s position on the issue the target of an attack. Elected officials make thousands of policy decisions, and public officials consider public opinion during policy formulation and adoption because they recognize that a future political opponent could raise the issue during an election campaign.

Contemporary political scientist James A. Stimson introduced the
concept of a *zone of acquiescence*, which is the range of policy options acceptable to the public on a particular issue. Stimson says that some policy options are either too conservative or too liberal to be acceptable to a majority of the public. The zone of acquiescence encompasses policy options that lie between the two extremes. The size of the zone varies from issue to issue and may change if public opinion grows more conservative or more liberal. Policy-makers tend to choose policy options within the zone of acquiescence; otherwise they risk electoral defeat.74

The zone of acquiescence highlights important points about the relationship between public opinion and public policy. First, public opinion affects policy by limiting options. On most issues, the zone of acquiescence is broad enough to include a number of options from which public officials may choose. Public opinion sets this range of acceptable alternatives, but it does not determine which options are selected. Other factors, including the influence of interest groups and political parties, come into play.

Second, the zone of acquiescence does not imply that policies selected will not arouse controversy. The zone of acquiescence is based on majority preferences, but may alarm minorities. Although abortion is legal in the U.S., for example, it remains controversial for many Americans.

Third, the zone of acquiescence is affected by the policymaker’s constituency. A **constituency** is the district from which an officeholder is elected. **Constituents** are the people an officeholder represents. A member of Congress elected from a district with a majority of African American constituents, for example, faces a more liberal zone of acquiescence on economic issues than does one whose constituents are mostly upper-income whites. The president, meanwhile, must deal with a nationwide constituency.

Fourth, the zone of acquiescence for an issue changes with public opinion. During the 1980s, public opinion grew more conservative on law and order issues. The range of acceptable policy options available to officials grew more conservative as well. States adopted laws giving harsher sentences to violent criminals, and more states began implementing the death penalty. On other issues, public policy became more liberal as public opinion grew more liberal, especially in large urban areas whose residents are more likely to hold liberal views on the issue than people living in small towns and rural areas.75

### Policy Implementation and Evaluation

Policymakers consider public opinion, at least indirectly, in policy implementation. Officials enforce policies that enjoy broad public support. As public sentiment has mounted against drunk driving, officials have adopted tougher DWI laws, and enforced them more aggressively. In contrast, the Supreme Court’s decision against state-sponsored prayer in schools enjoys relatively little public support. Many school officials ignore violations until parents complain.

Finally, public opinion influences evaluation. Public officials are more likely to scrutinize policies that have proved unpopular or lack strong public support. Congress and the press are more likely to investigate a program that is perceived as ineffective or that is unpopular with the public, as well.

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**latent opinion** what public opinion would be at election time if a political opponent made a public official’s position on the issue the target of a campaign attack.

**zone of acquiescence** the range of policy options acceptable to the public on a particular issue.

**constituency** the district from which an officeholder is elected.

**constituents** the people an officeholder represents.

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visit [www.mypoliscilab.com](http://www.mypoliscilab.com) for more resources on:

> SIMULATION: You Are a Polling Consultant
> DEBATE: Are You a Liberal or a Conservative?
> ABC NEWS VIDEO: Why Pollsters Got It Wrong
> TIMELINE: War, Peace, and Public Opinion
> VISUAL LITERACY: Who Are Liberals and Conservatives? What’s the Difference?
> COMPARATIVE: Comparing Governments and Public Opinion
1. The process whereby individuals acquire political attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs is known as which of the following?
   A. Political efficacy
   B. Political socialization
   C. Political trust
   D. Political science

2. Which of the following statements about the socialization process is NOT true?
   A. Political socialization ends when individuals reach their early 20's.
   B. Young children typically identify with the same political party as their parents.
   C. Schools historically have taught the children of immigrants to be patriotic Americans.
   D. Personal involvement in religious organizations is associated with political participation.

3. Which of the following agents of socialization plays an important role in shaping the party identification of youngsters?
   A. Family
   B. School
   C. Peers
   D. Media

4. The universe for a study designed to measure the attitudes of college students would be which of the following?
   A. The individuals who are interviewed for the study
   B. All college-age adults
   C. All college students
   D. All Americans

5. How often will a professionally administered survey differ from the universe by more than 3 percentage points merely on the basis of chance?
   A. Never. If the sample is truly random, it will never differ by more than the margin of error.
   B. One time in 20. Even a perfectly drawn sample will be outside the margin of error 5 percent of the time.
   C. 3 percent of the time. The margin of error indicates the error factor built into a survey.
   D. One time in five. A well-conducted survey will be wrong 20 percent of the time.

6. A public opinion poll taken a month before the election has a margin of error of 3 percentage points. The poll shows Candidate A ahead of Candidate B 46 percent to 44 percent, with the rest undecided. What is the best analysis of the result of the poll?
   A. Candidate A is ahead by at least 2 percentage points but may actually be ahead by 5 percentage points.
   B. Candidate A is ahead but it is impossible to know by how much.
   C. Candidate B is actually ahead because Candidate A did not reach the 50 percent support level.
   D. The candidates are in a statistical tie because the difference in their support is within the margin of error.

7. A major Internet provider regularly conducts online polls. Sometimes tens of thousands of people participate. Would the results of these polls be accurate?
   A. Yes. Everyone has a chance to participate.
   B. No. The sample size is too small.
   C. No. The sample size is too large.
   D. Probably not. It is unlikely that the sample is a representative sample of the universe.

8. A survey conducted October 1 shows Candidate A with 55 percent support and Candidate B with 40 percent. What is the best evaluation of the survey?
   A. Candidate A is ahead today but surveys can't predict the future.
   B. Neither candidate is ahead because the survey is within the margin of error.
   C. Candidate A will win by a 15-percentage-point margin.
   D. Candidate A will win by a margin of 11 to 19 percentage points.

9. Which of the following statements is NOT true about political knowledge?
   A. Only a minority of Americans is especially knowledgeable about politics and government.
   B. Knowledgeable Americans are more likely to vote than people who lack political information.
   C. Young people are more knowledgeable about politics and government than are older adults.
   D. Well-informed voters are more likely to support candidates whose views on issues of importance to them coincide with their own than are voters who are poorly informed.

10. An opinion survey includes this question: “Professor ABC at State University has written that the United States deserved the 9-11 attacks because it supports Israel and undemocratic Arab governments. Should the professor be fired?” What would you expect the survey to show?
    A. A majority would oppose firing the professor because most Americans support freedom of speech.
    B. A majority would support firing the professor because most Americans oppose freedom of speech.
    C. A majority would support firing the professor because they are outraged by his position on 9-11 and aren't considering the civil liberties issue.
    D. A majority would oppose firing the professor because they agree with his point of view.
11. Which of the following groups would you expect to express the highest level of support for civil liberties?
   A. Low income people
   B. Political elites
   C. People who seldom, if ever, vote
   D. Recent immigrants

12. The popular acceptance of a government and its officials as rightful authorities in the exercise of power is a good definition of which of the following?
   A. Political efficacy
   B. Political tolerance
   C. Political legitimacy
   D. Opinion leaders

13. Which of the following would be a likely result of a low level of political legitimacy in a society?
   A. Election turnout would be high.
   B. Most people would voluntarily obey laws and regulations.
   C. People wanting political change would turn to the electoral system rather than violence to bring about change.
   D. None of the above.

14. Latent opinion becomes important only if:
   A. A voter understands how the government works.
   B. A voter thinks that government is not interested in his or her views.
   C. Men and women agree on a political position.
   D. A political opponent makes an issue of a politician’s position.

15. Which of the following statements reflects a high level of internal political efficacy?
   A. “I don’t believe that government officials care what I think.”
   B. “I have a good understanding of how the government works.”
   C. “I think that most of the people running the government are crooks.”
   D. “Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can’t understand it.”

16. The assessment of an individual of the responsiveness of government to his or her concerns is a definition of which of the following?
   A. Political trust
   B. External political efficacy
   C. Internal political efficacy
   D. Political legitimacy

17. Which of the following positions would be most likely to be taken by a conservative?
   A. “Government has a responsibility to ensure that all Americans have access to affordable healthcare.”
   B. “Government should act aggressively to adopt regulations to slow global warming.”
   C. “Government has a responsibility to protect the unborn by limiting access to abortion.”
   D. “Government should address the problem of homelessness by providing more public housing.”

18. Which of the following statements reflects a liberal ideology?
   A. The government that governs least is best.
   B. Government regulations often do more harm than good.
   C. The government has no business telling women that they must carry a fetus to term.
   D. All of the above.

19. Which of the following statements about the gender gap is correct?
   A. Women are more likely than men to vote Republican.
   B. Women are more likely than men to be pro-choice.
   C. Women are more likely than men to favor American military intervention abroad.
   D. Women are more likely than men to favor government programs to provide healthcare and education.

20. How would Professor James Stimson explain the relationship between public opinion and the policymaking process?
   A. Elected officials can adopt any policy because most Americans are too uninformed to know or care.
   B. Policymakers must follow public opinion closely or risk being voted out of office.
   C. Public opinion sets limits on policymakers, but within those limits policymakers are free to act.
   D. If selected policies turn out badly, voters punish the officials who adopted them by voting them out of office.

**Know the Score**

18–20 correct: Congratulations! You are well-informed!
15–17 correct: Your political knowledge is a bit low—be sure to review the key terms and visit MyPoliSciLab.
<14 correct: Reread the chapter more thoroughly.
Chapter 4: Notes

21. Ibid., p. 185.
32. Asher, Polling and the Public, p. 61.
36. Asher, Polling and the Public, p. 96.