

Unit 2 Outline: Political Participation by Groups

Unit Chapters

- 6: Public Opinion and Political Action
- 7: The Mass Media and the Political Agenda
- 8: Political Parties
- 10: Interest Groups

Unit Essential Questions

1. Why do you believe what you believe and what got you to those beliefs?
 2. How do citizens and policymakers communicate ideas?
 3. How do organized groups affect the democratic process?
 4. How do government officials know what you are thinking about certain issues?
 5. Do the media inform or distract the public?
 6. How does money play a role in policymaking?
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Chapter 6 Details

Key Terms

Public Opinion	Bandwagon Effect	Gender Gap
Census	Exit Poll	Ideologues
Political Socialization	Political Ideology	Political Participation
Random Sampling	Liberal	Conventional Participation
Sampling Error	Conservative	Protest Participation

Focus Questions

1. Explain what regional shifts have occurred in the U.S. over the past 60 or so years. How has this affected reapportionment in the House?
2. How does the family affect your political socialization? The mass media? Your schooling?
3. How do political ideologies change with age?
4. Explain what benefits politicians receive from polling the American public.
5. What was the problem with exit polls in the 2000 presidential election (and can still be a problem even today)?
6. Why do critics point to the wording of questions in polls as the main challenge to their validity?
7. Aside from a measuring tool for politicians, explain what polls reveal about the extent of Americans' political knowledge. Use supporting evidence.

8. Looking at Table 6.3, who tends to be more liberal and conservative by each of the following: sex, age, race, income level, and religion? Why do you think that is in each case?

Chapter 7 Details

Key Terms

Mass Media	“Feeding Frenzy”	News Leak (Trial Balloon)
Media Event	Print Media	Sound Bite
7 Principles of Reagan’s News Management	Broadcast Media	Media Bias
Spin (define beyond text)	Narrowcasting	

Focus Questions

1. How does the mass media serve as a linkage institution in politics?
2. Which constitutional amendment (specific clause) secures the right of the media to serve a linkage institution in American politics?
3. Explain briefly how Vietnam and the Watergate scandal changed press coverage of the government to this day?
4. Why has investigative journalism contributed to public cynicism about American politics? What do Thomas Patterson and James Fallows say about this?
5. How does narrowcasting contribute to the political ignorance of the public?
6. Why is the symbiotic relationship between reporters and their sources so important to the maintenance of good government?
7. If sound bites allow more news moments to be presented in a given program, why is there such criticism of them? More news is better, right?
8. What is the predominant bias in how news is covered, according to the text?
- 9.** How does the mass media fulfill the agenda setting role in politics? Include policy entrepreneurs in your answer.

Chapter 8 Details

Key Terms

Political Party	Closed Primary	New Deal Coalition
Rational Choice Theory	Open Primary	Divided Government
Party Identification	Blanket Primary	Party Dealignment
Party in the Electorate	National Convention	Third Party
Party Organization	Critical Election	
Party in Government	Party Platform	
Party Machine	Party Realignment	

Focus Questions

1. Explain the five basic functions of political parties.
2. How do political parties fulfill the role of a linkage institution in American politics?
3. How did party machines organize (or perhaps coerce) the vote in local (city) elections historically? What factors led to the rise of machines? Why is it no longer a factor in party organization today?
4. Why are party platforms a good predictor of policy implementation?
5. The Constitution makes no mention of political parties. When and how did they first develop? Would the founding fathers be pleased or upset at the creation of political parties?
6. We can look at the New Deal Coalition as the most significant party realignment of the 20th Century. How did it develop and who composed its ranks?
7. Why do you think party dealignment makes it harder for one party to gain control of government?
8. Describe how a strong third party might play a “spoiler role” in an election by “sending a message” to the two major parties?
9. Which constitutional amendment (specific clause) protects political parties’ role as a linkage institution between citizens and the government?

Chapter 10 Details

Key Terms

Interest Group	Lobbying/Lobbyist	“Big Business”
Iron Triangles	Electioneering	“The Environmentalists”
Free-Rider Problem	Political Action Committee	Public Interest Lobby
Olsen’s Law of Large Groups	Litigation	
Single-Issue Groups	“Big Labor”	

Focus Questions

1. Pluralist theorists argue positively for a group theory of politics. Explain what this means.
2. How do elite theorists debunk the pluralist theory of competing interests in government?
3. A corollary of hyperpluralism is the formation and function of subgovernments within the national government. Describe how this system works in detail. Why is this a bad thing according to the hyperpluralists? (3 main problems)
4. Explain why organized small interest groups tend to be more successful than large groups by contrasting their strengths with the weaknesses of large groups. Make at least two distinctions.
5. “Intensity” is another way of talking about how the “vocal minority” gets more political attention than the “silent majority.” Explain why. Can you think of anything in your own life that proves this?
6. Lobbyists get a “bad rap.” Nevertheless, what positive benefits do politicians receive from lobbyists’ efforts? Can the public benefit from lobbyists?
7. Why do interest groups use the federal courts (litigation) to achieve their goals? What groups have been particularly skilled at using the courts to their advantage?