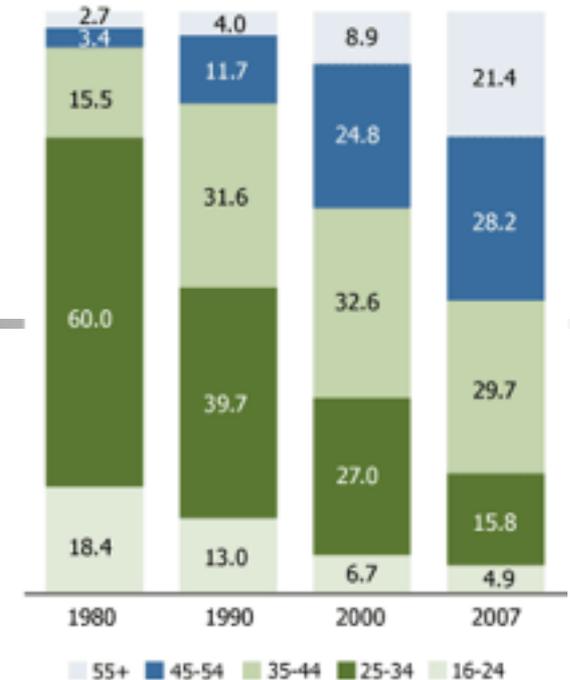


Public Opinion and Political Action

Chapter 6

Introduction

- Some Basics:
- Demography
 - The science of population changes.
- Census
 - A valuable tool for understanding population changes- required every 10 years.
 - 2010 Census (1:35):
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hf1f2MhKLmg>



The American People

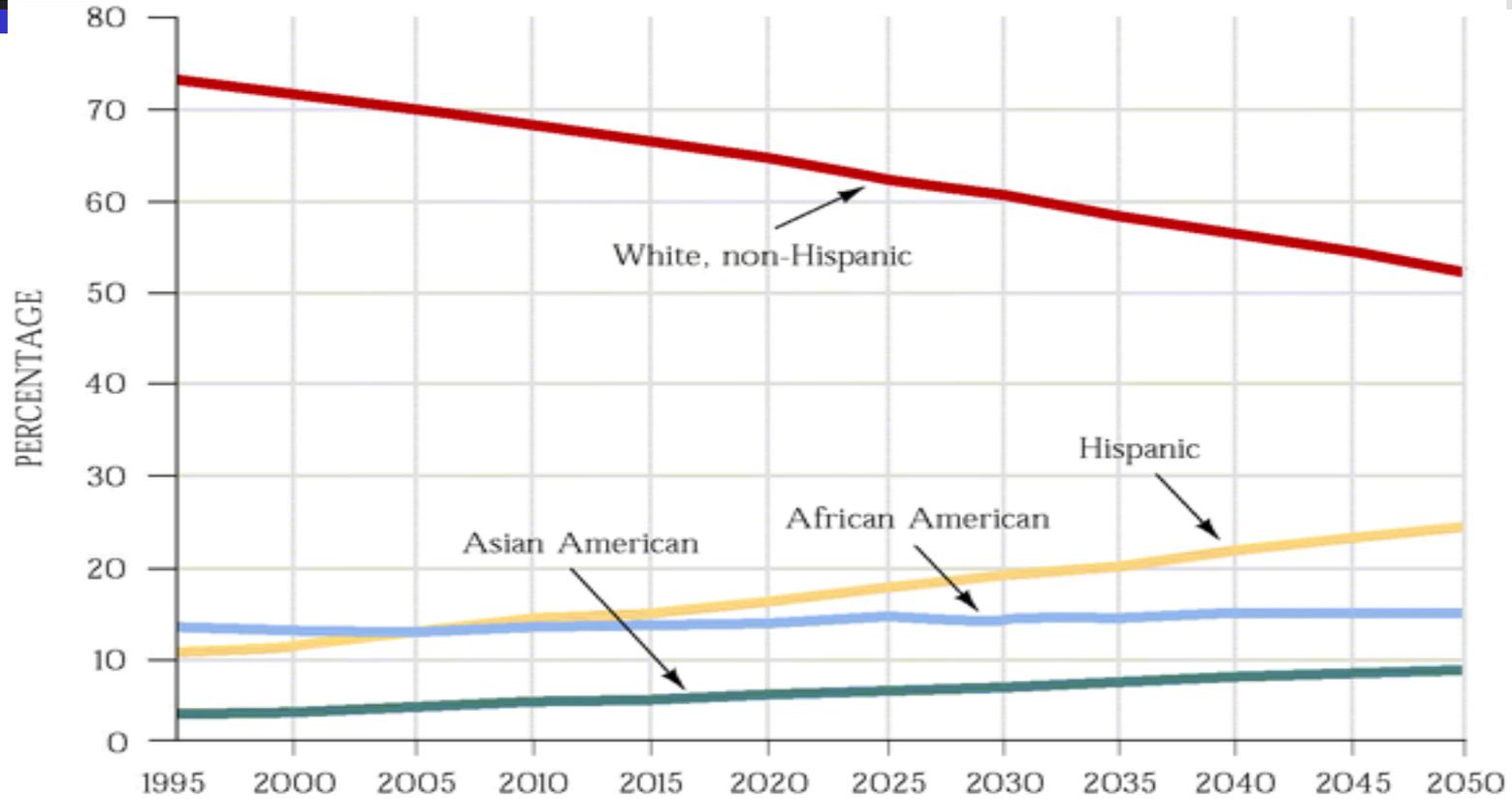
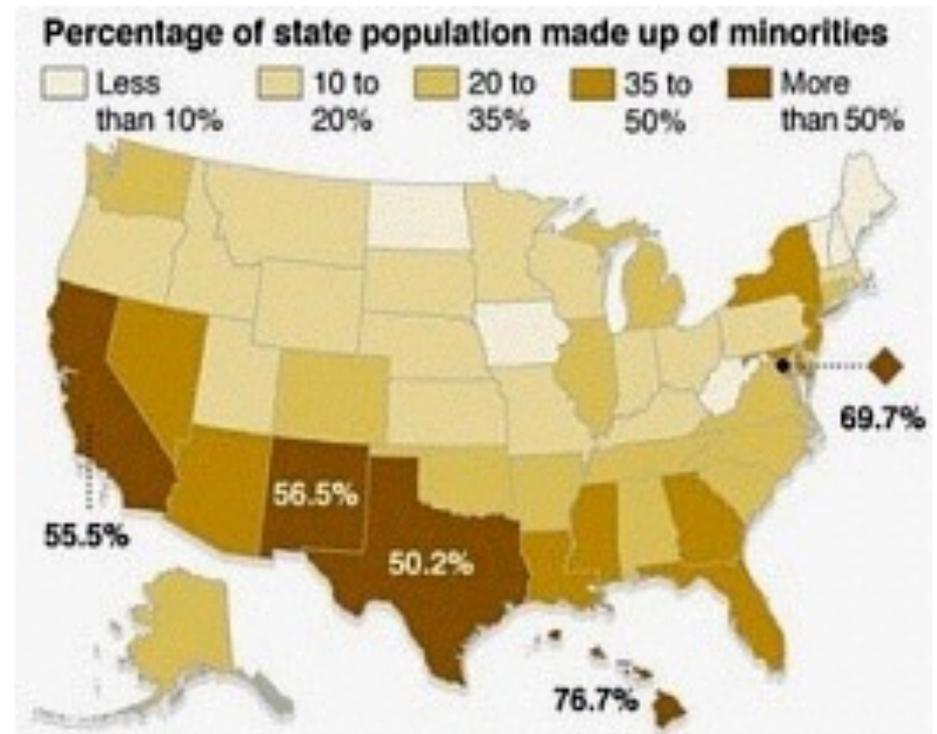


Figure 6.1

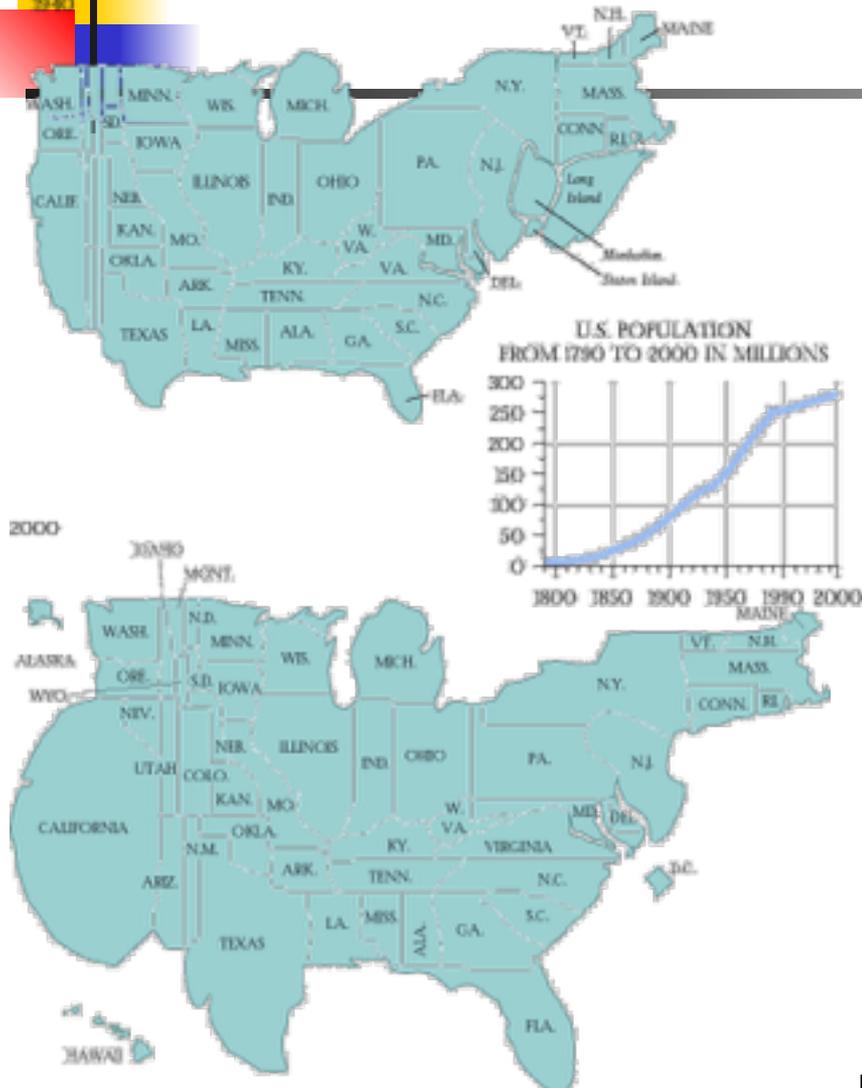
The American People

- Political Culture: An overall set of values widely shared within a society.



Which party will benefit from the minority majority?

The American People



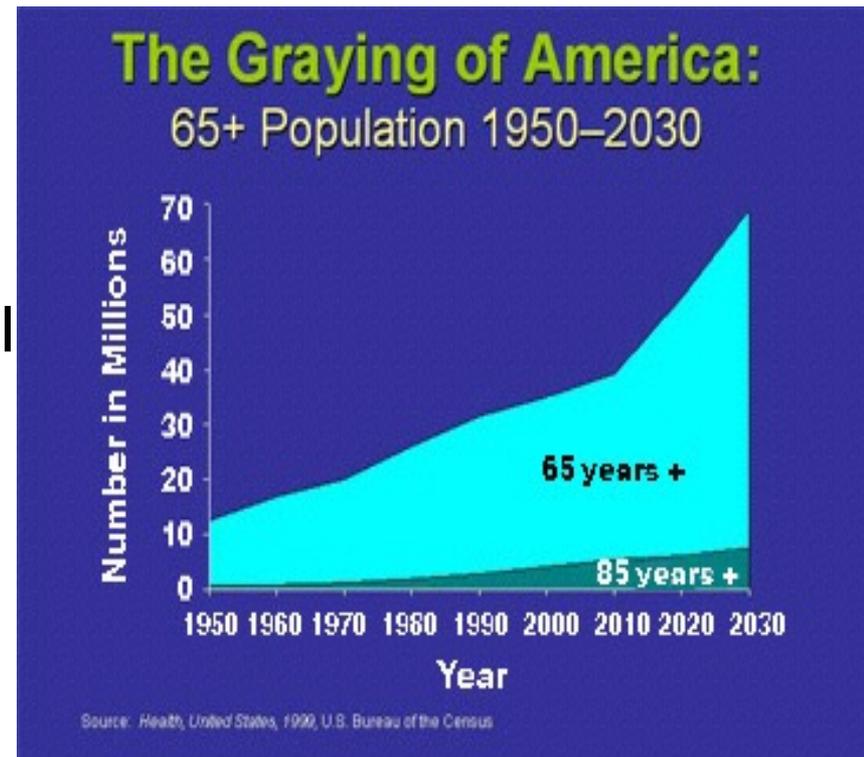
- The Regional Shift
 - Reapportionment: The process of reallocating seats in the House of Representatives every 10 years on the basis of the results of the census.
 - Redistricting is done by state legislatures.

Figure 6.2

The American People



- The Graying of America
 - Fastest growing group is over 65
 - Potential drain on Social Security by 2020 Why?
 - “Gray Power”
 - One advantage that no other group has- we are all going to get older



How Americans Learn About Politics: Political Socialization



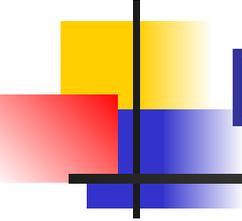
- **Political Socialization:**
the process through which an individual acquires his or her political orientation
- **The Process of Political Socialization**
 - **The Family**
 - Time & emotional commitment
 - Political leanings of children often mirror their parent's leanings



How Americans Learn About Politics: Political Socialization

- The Process of Political Socialization
 - The Mass Media
 - Generation gap in TV news viewing
 - School / Education
 - Used by government to socialize the young into the culture and government





Demographics and Voter Turnout

- The following increase the chance that someone will vote:
- Higher income
- Older
- Well educated
- White (sort of)
- Northerner
- Union member
- Government employee

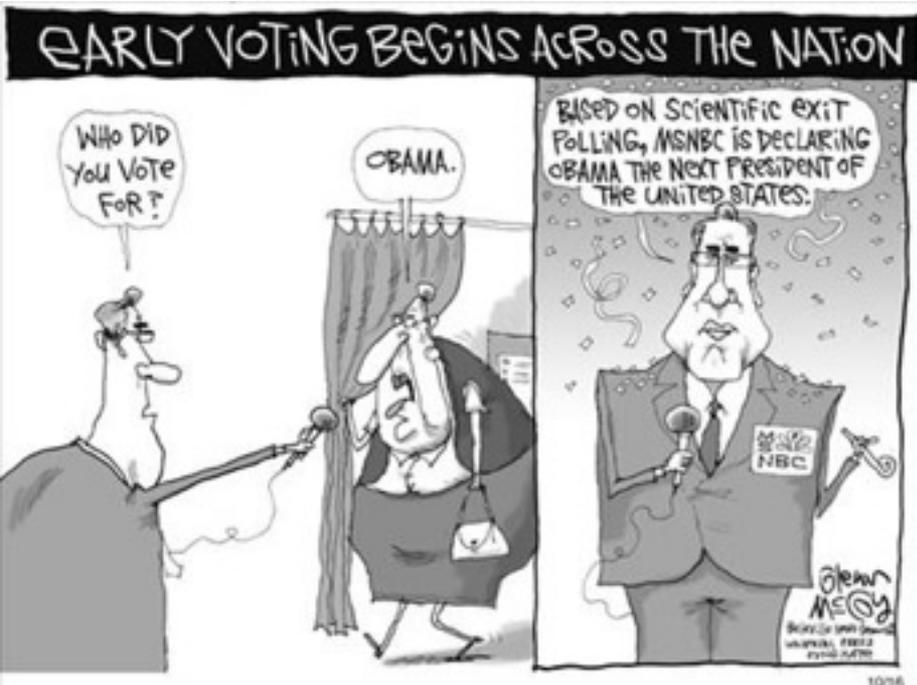
Measuring Public Opinion and Political Information

How Polls Are Conducted



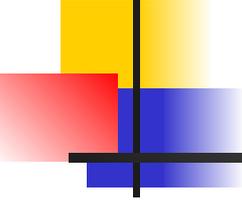
- Random Sampling: The key technique employed by sophisticated survey researchers; operates on the principle that everyone should have an equal probability of being selected for the sample
- Representative Sample: Draws from all groups
- Sample size 1500
- Sampling Error: The level of confidence in the findings of a public opinion poll, $\pm 3\%$

Measuring Public Opinion and Political Information



- Role of Polls in American Democracy
 - Help politicians figure out public preferences.
 - Exit Polls- used by the media to predict election day winners.
 - Wording of question makes a difference.
 - Polls reflect the policy agenda— problems the people inside and outside of government believe must be addressed.

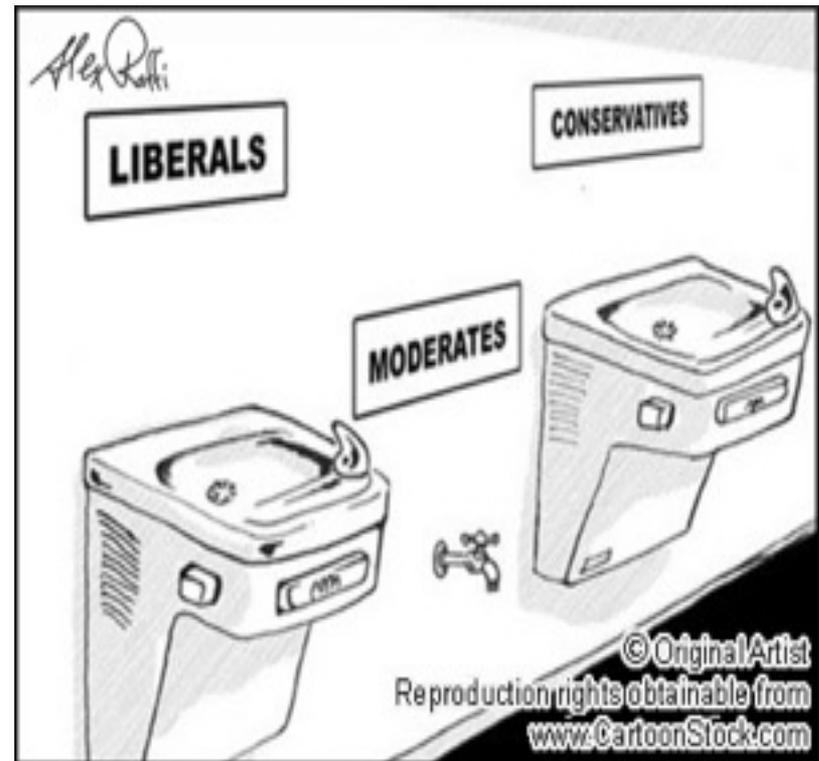
Measuring Public Opinion and Political Information

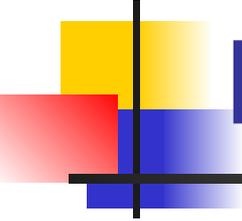


- What Polls Reveal About Americans' Political Information
 - Americans don't know much about politics.
 - Americans may know their basic beliefs, but not how that affects policies of the government.
- The Decline of Trust in Government
 - Now only about 25% of the public trust the government most of the time or always.

What Americans Value: Political Ideologies

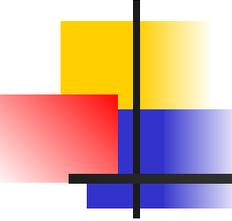
- Political Ideology:
 - A coherent set of beliefs about politics, public policy, and public purpose.





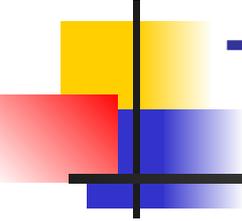
Demographics and Ideology

- The Republican Party Coalition
 - Rural voters/farmers
 - White males
 - Business owners
 - Conservative Christians
 - College Educated



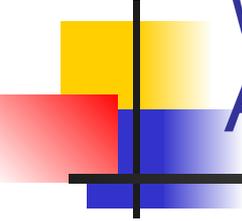
Demographics and Ideology

- Democratic Coalition
- Urban dwellers
- Union members
- Hispanics and African Americans
- High School Diploma
- Advanced Degree



The Gender Gap

- Women vote for the Democratic candidates at higher rates than Republican candidates.



What Americans Value: Political Ideologies

A few examples:

- Liberals:

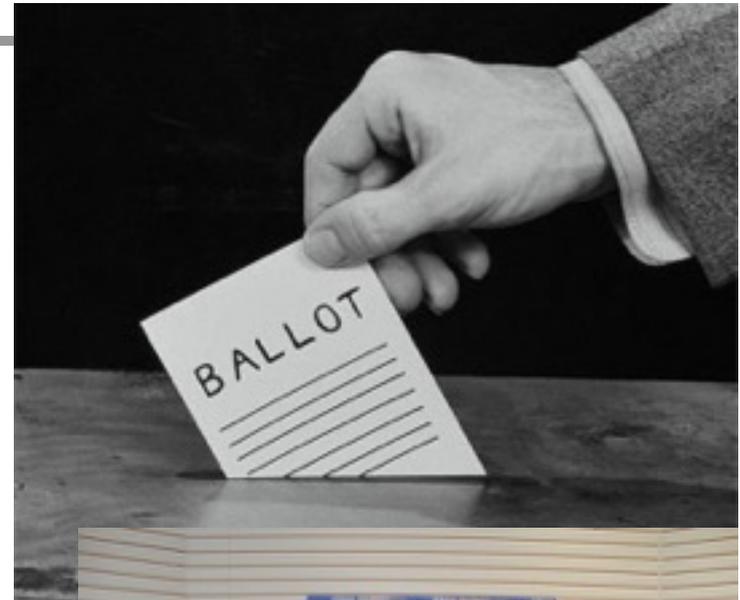
- More domestic spending
- Pro-choice
- Favor affirmative action
- Favor progressive taxation
- Pro gay marriage

- Conservatives:

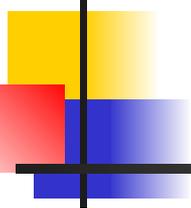
- More military spending
- Pro-life
- Oppose affirmative action
- Keep taxes low
- Support traditional marriage

How Americans Participate in Politics

- Political Participation:
 - All the activities used by citizens to influence the selection of political leaders or the policies they pursue.
- Conventional Participation
 - Voting in elections
 - Working in campaigns / running for office
 - Contacting elected officials



How Americans Participate in Politics



■ Protest as Participation

- Protest: A form of political participation designed to achieve policy changes through dramatic and unconventional tactics.
- Civil disobedience: A form of political participation that reflects a conscious decision to break a law believed to be immoral and to suffer the consequences.

How Americans Participate in Politics

- Class, Inequality, and Participation

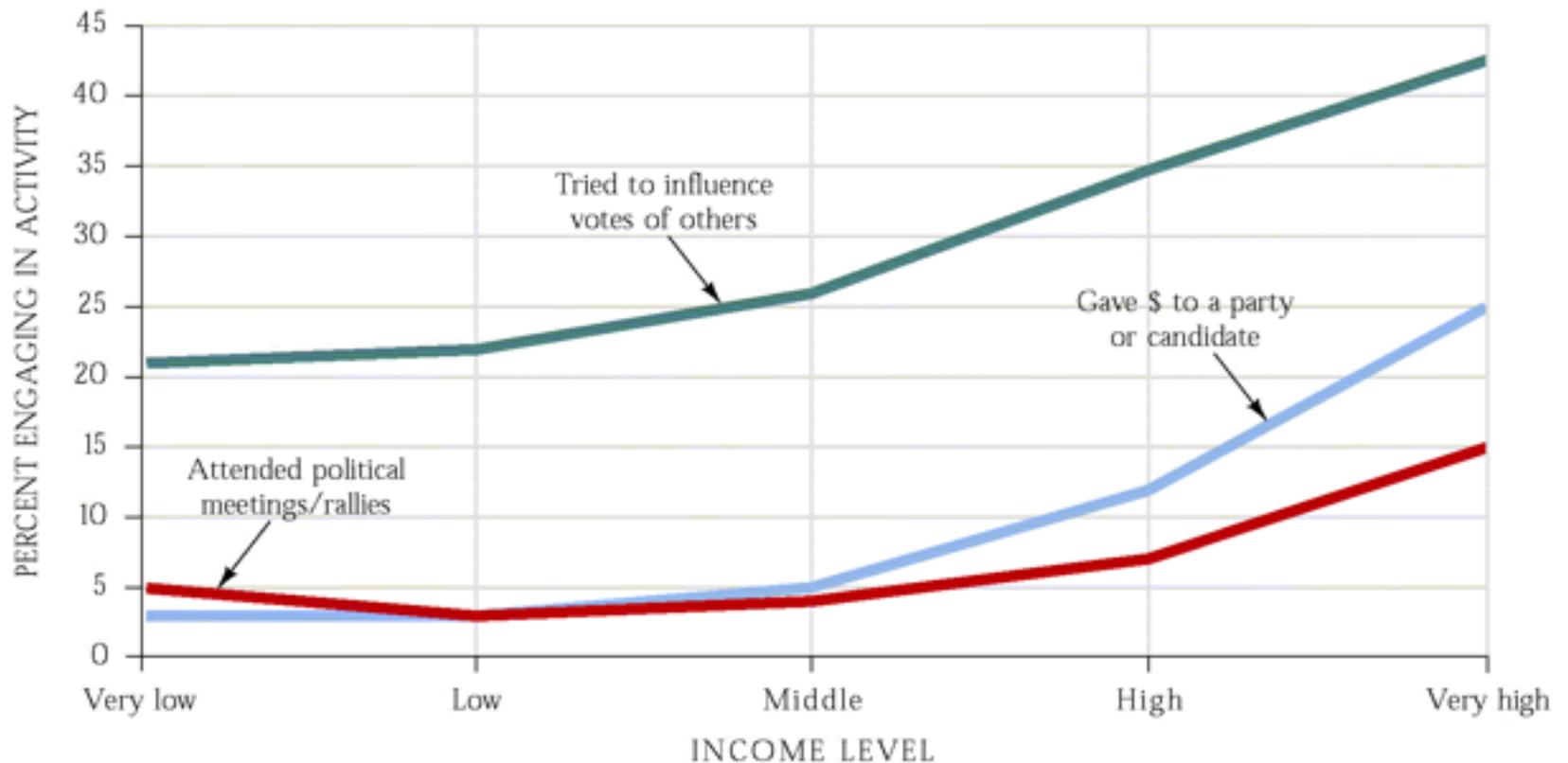


Figure 6.5