**Public Opinion and Political Socialization:**

**Shaping the People’s Voice**

**Multiple Choice**

1. George Gallup, the founder of the public opinion polling industry in the United States, argued that leaders

a. must be in close touch with public opinion if they are to serve the people’s true interests.

b. should never make a decision without consulting the opinion polls.

c. should keep their distance from the public, since enlightened leadership is a better guide to policy than the public’s passing whims.

d. should pay attention to the polls during election campaigns, but not when formulating policies.

1. should not be overly attentive to public opinion polls.

Answer: a

 2. Public opinion is ordinarily used in reference to the whole society. This perspective is

a. accurate, since Americans are one people and indivisible.

b. less accurate than a view of public opinion based on the majority, since the political system operates on the principle of majority rule.

c. less accurate than the idea that Americans form many publics, which differ greatly in such things as the level of attention they pay to politics.

d. less accurate than a view of public opinion based on what the news media are saying about the public.

1. accurate, because there is little diversity in American public opinion.

Answer: c

 3. In his definition of public opinion, the author claims that the opinions of private individuals become public opinion when they

a. first enter people’s heads.

b. are expressed publicly.

c. become part of the conflict between the Republican and Democratic parties.

d. are measured in opinion polls.

1. become part of the conflict between populists and libertarians.

Answer: b

 4. A member of Congress who wants to act on what the majority of his or her constituency thinks on a particular issue would be advised to respond to which of the following indicators?

a. letters from constituents

b. the editorial positions of newspapers in the constituency

c. public demonstrations by constituents

d. a poll based on a random sample of constituents

1. the number of yard signs on major streets

Answer: d

5. The accuracy of a poll is usually expressed in terms of

a. population density.

b. census parameter.

c. population error.

d. sampling error.

1. interview error.

Answer: d

 6. The key factor in estimating the mathematical accuracy of an opinion poll is

a. population size-if the population is too big, the poll’s accuracy cannot be assessed.

b. sample size-if the sample is too small (less than 1000), the poll’s accuracy cannot be determined.

c. whether the sample was selected from the population by a random method.

d. whether the sample has the same percentage of men and women as the population.

1. whether the sample has the same percentage of African Americans, Latino Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans as are in the population.

Answer: c

 7. Sources of polling error include

a. poorly trained interviewers.

b. unrepresentative samples.

c. respondents’ lack of knowledge or interest.

d. poorly worded questions.

1. All of the answers are correct.

Answer: e

8. In general, polls indicate that American public opinion is

a. highly informed in the sense that most citizens have a lot of accurate information about politics and public affairs.

b. extremely well informed about domestic issues but not very informed about international issues.

c. extremely well informed about international issues but not very informed about domestic issues.

d. highly informed about election campaign issues but otherwise uninformed about political issues.

e. None of the above answers is correct.

Answer: e

 9. The process of political learning in the United States is

a. normally cumulative; political beliefs attained earlier in life tend to be retained to a substantial degree.

b. highly structured; children are subjected to an intense system of government-mandated political indoctrination.

c. highly effective; Americans are the best-informed citizens in the world.

d. extremely narrow; most Americans get nearly all their opinions from a single source.

1. uniform; there are almost no differences in the opinions of various groups, such as northerners and southerners.

Answer: a

10. Dramatic change in public opinion on basic issues is uncommon and is almost always a consequence of

a. a change in the policy position of the president.

b. an extraordinary change in national conditions.

c. popular satisfaction with a government initiative.

d. a change in the law.

1. a Supreme Court ruling.

Answer: b

11. The process by which individuals acquire their opinions is called

a. popular culture.

b. social communication.

c. socio-economic change.

d. political socialization.

1. political assimilation.

Answer: d

12. As an agent of political socialization, the American family has its greatest effect on individuals’

a. party identification.

b. opinion on the presidency.

c. opinion on particular policies.

d. information about particular public policies.

1. opinion on Congress.

Answer: a

13. The American political culture affects public opinion primarily by

a. providing precise responses to emerging policy problems.

b. influencing American’s views of what is politically desirable and acceptable.

c. creating a public dialogue about the proper goals of government.

d. encouraging close attention to news of political issues.

1. stressing the importance of political knowledge in the United States.

Answer: b

14. A consistent pattern of opinion on particular issues that stems from a basic underlying belief is called

a. conservatism.

b. an ideology.

c. socialization.

d. politicization.

1. None of the answers are correct.

Answer: b

15. Most studies on the influence of ideology on public opinion agree that

a. liberalism and conservatism have such imprecise meanings that it is not useful to think about politics in these terms.

b. Americans overwhelmingly identify themselves as liberals.

c. Americans are highly sophisticated in their political thinking.

d. only a minority of Americans understand and apply ideological frames of reference.

1. Americans are highly consistent in their political thinking.

Answer: d

16. Liberals are correctly described by all of the following statements except

a. they favor government activism in the area of economic security.

b. they strongly support civil liberties.

c. they favor more government spending for the poor.

d. they strongly support civil rights.

1. they believe that traditional values should be upheld even at a considerable cost to those citizens who disagree with those values.

Answer: e

17. In comparison to Europeans, Americans’ awareness of public affairs

a. is about the same.

b. is higher.

c. is lower.

d. is higher on domestic issues but lower on international issues.

1. is lower on domestic issues but higher on international issues.

Answer: c

18. As a reference point for their opinions on particular issues, people are most likely to rely on

a. ideology.

b. a group to which they belong or with which they strongly identify.

c. the editorial position of the local newspaper.

d. beliefs acquired while in high school.

1. positions taken by the president.

Answer: b

19. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ rank highest in terms of expressing pride in their nation.

a. Mexicans

b. Germans

c. Americans

d. Russians

1. Italians

Answer: c

20. The only presidential election in which the Gallup Poll erred badly was.

a. 1928 Hoover-Smith.

b. 1936 Roosevelt-Landon.

c. 1948 Truman-Dewey.

1. 1964 Johnson-Goldwater.
2. 2000 Bush-Gore.

Answer: c

21. As an influence on Americans’ political opinions, religious differences are

a. most evident in the context of economic issues, such as poverty programs.

b. not a significant factor.

c. most evident in the context of foreign policy, as evidenced by Americans’ support for Christian nations and opposition to Islamic fundamentalism.

d. most evident in the context of social policy issues, such as school prayer and abortion, where Americans of different religious beliefs hold substantially different opinions.

1. most evident in the context of space exploration and travel.

Answer: d

22. Women are less likely then men to favor

a. affirmative action.

b. abortion rights.

c. higher levels of education spending.

d. the use of force to settle international disputes.

1. All of the answers are correct.

Answer: d

23. In their study of public opinion and policy, Benjamin Page and Robert Shapiro concluded

that

a. there is no relationship between public opinion and policy.

b. when public opinion changes, public policy then tends to change in the same direction.

c. public policy is nothing more than a mirror of what public opinion is at any point in time.

d. policy change tends to follow opinion change, but only on less important issues.

1. U.S. officials are not responsive to public opinion.

Answer: b

24. All of the following ideological types are prevalent in the United States except

a. liberals.

b. conservatives.

c. populists.

d. libertarians.

1. socialists.

Answer: e

25. Compared to citizens of most other industrialized democracies, Americans

a. know more about public affairs.

b. have more national pride.

c. have less national pride.

d. None of the answers are correct.

1. All of the answers are correct.

Answer: b

26 When asked questions such as “How proud are you to be an American citizen?” what is the typical response by American citizens?

a. All Americans except Hispanic Americans are very proud.

b. All Americans except the poor are very proud.

c. Americans of all backgrounds and age levels express a strong attachment to the nation.

d. The young answer “not very proud” or “not proud at all.”

1. All Americans except conservatives are very proud.

Answer: c

27. Which region of the nation has the highest concentration of citizens who call themselves liberals?

a. the Plains states

b. the South

c. the Northeast

d. the Mountain states

1. the Southwest

Answer: c

28. All of the following are ideologies except

a. fascism.

b. communism.

c. socialism .

d. conservatism.

1. All of the answers are ideologies.

Answer: e

29. Which of the following is true about American public opinion?

a. American public opinion can be contradictory.

b. Americans believe that tax rates are too low.

c. Americans believe that too much money is spent on education.

d. Americans believe that too much money is spent on environmental protection.

1. Americans believe that too much money is spent on public health.

Answer: a

30. The fact that Americans want more government services but also want tax reduction shows that opinions are frequently

a. motivated by emotion.

b. contradictory.

c. consistent.

d. based upon careful thought.

1. based on extensive research.

Answer: b

31. Which of the following is not a common ideal in America?

a. liberty

b. equality

c. individualism

d. self-government

1. collectivism

Answer: e

32. About two-thirds of adults call themselves, in terms of party identification,

a. liberals.

b. Republicans or Democrats.

c. Republicans.

d. Independents.

* 1. Democrats.

Answer: b

33. As an influence on what happens in American politics, public opinion can be described as a(n) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ force.

a. elusive

b. powerful

c. inexact

d. contradictory

1. All of the answers are correct.

Answer: e

34. In general, public opinion

a. determines government action.

b. is unrelated to government action.

c. sets broad limits on government action.

d. affects government action only on election issues.

1. is only important during a presidential election.

Answer: c

35. Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann’s spiral of silence theory contends that

a. most individuals are reluctant to speak out against dominant opinion held by peers and others with whom they associate..

b. people tend not to express their views until asked.

c. people holding deviant opinions tend to be more vocal, and hence silence

the majority.

d. most individuals like to challenge dominant opinions.

1. None of the answers are correct.

 Answer: a

36. Which of the following ideological types favor government activism in the economic realm?

a. liberals and populists

b. populists and libertarians

c. conservatives and liberals

d. populists and conservatives

1. liberals and libertarians

Answer: a

37. The most powerful religious force in contemporary American society is/are

a. Protestants.

b. the religious right.

c. Catholics.

d. Jews.

1. Muslims.

Answer: b

38. The theorist who was originally an advocate of government by enlightened rulers, but came to believe that the public’s views had to be taken into account if leaders were to govern properly is

a. Jeremy Bentham.

b. Plato.

c. James Madison.

d. Thomas Hobbes.

1. John Dewey.

Answer: a

39. Three-fourths of Ivy-League students surveyed could not identify \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as the author of the phrase, “a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.”

a. George Washington

b. James Madison

c. George Gallup

d. Abraham Lincoln

1. Thomas Jefferson

Answer: d

40. Which of the following is true about public opinion polling?

a. Polls are the most relied-upon method of measuring public opinion.

b. Polls can be erroneous at times.

c. Most large news organizations have their own in-house polls.

d. The Gallup pollsters have correctly predicted the winner of presidential elections most of the time since 1936.

1. All of the answers are correct.

Answer: e

41. Which of the following is a means of judging public opinion?

a. a citizen’s letter to the editor

b. activities of lobbyists

c. crowds demonstrating on the street

d. yard signs

1. All of the answers are correct.

Answer: e

42. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ significantly changed American attitudes about the role of the federal government in the economy.

a. The War of 1812

b. The Spanish-American War

c. The California Gold Rush

d. The Great Depression

1. The Civil War

Answer: d

43. If the sampling error in a properly conducted poll is plus or minus 4 percent, and the poll indicates that candidate X has the support of 60 percent of the respondents, then the probability is high that candidate actually has the support of

a. 60 percent of the voters.

b. between 56 and 64 percent of the voters.

c. no less than 60 percent of the voters.

d. no more than 60 percent of the voters.

1. None of the answers are correct.

Answer: b

44, Roughly what proportion of Americans prefer to identify themselves as an Independent

 rather than as a Democrat or Republican?

 a. about two-thirds

b. more than half but less than two-thirds

c. about half

d. about a third

1. None of the answers are correct.

Answer: d

45. That Americans have a different view toward universal health care in comparison to the Europeans is probably due to Americans’ deep-rooted belief in

a. individualism.

b. democracy.

c. self-government.

d. equality.

1. collectivism.

Answer: a

46. Libertarians are opposed to governmental intervention in

a. both the economic and social spheres.

b. the economic sphere, but not the social sphere.

c. the social sphere, but not the economic sphere.

d. neither the social nor the economic spheres.

1. only affirmative action.

Answer: a

47. A conservative is opposed to government intervention in

a. both the economic and social spheres.

b. the economic sphere, but not the social sphere.

c. the social sphere, but not the economic sphere.

d. neither the social nor the economic spheres.

1. only affirmative action.

Answer: b

***Essay/Short Answer***

1. Identify and discuss the frames of reference that Americans rely upon when forming their political opinions.

 Answer: The four frames of reference are cultural thinking, ideological thinking, group thinking, and partisan thinking. Cultural thinking refers to the influence upon public opinion of ideals that define American political culture. These ideals, such as individualism, equality, and self-government, affect what people will regard as politically desirable and acceptable. Ideological thinking is a less-common means of opinion formation. Opinions within this frame of reference are formed on the basis of an individual’s ideology, which is a consistent pattern of opinion on particular issues that stems from a basic underlying belief or beliefs. In contemporary American politics, liberalism and conservatism are examples of ideologies. Group thinking has been found to be a more important frame of reference for opinion formation for most people than is ideological thinking. Group thinking entails viewing politics through the shared perceptions of a group to which individuals belong or with which they identify. Some of the more significant group orientations include religion, income, occupation, region, race, and gender. Partisan thinking is the major frame of reference by which many people make their political judgments. Personal loyalty to the Democratic or Republican party is a strong influence on how Americans view political issues, leaders, and developments.

2. Discuss the major characteristics of the political socialization process through which Americans acquire their political opinions.

 Answer: A first characteristic of political socialization is that most people’s political outlook rigidifies with age, despite the fact that socialization continues throughout life. A second characteristic is that political socialization tends to be fairly uncritical. Individuals rarely examine their political preferences closely once they are formed and accept socialization without much scrutiny. A third characteristic of political socialization in the United States is that it is relatively casual. Socialization occurs through subtle means such as everyday communication. Americans are not subject to rigid programs of political indoctrination.

3. Define what is meant by a political ideology. Why is ideology important to consider when discussing the political thinking of the American people?

 Answer: Political ideology is a consistent pattern of opinion on particular issues that stems from a basic underlying belief or beliefs. However, these are relatively sophisticated patterns of belief, and most citizens do not think about politics in such a consistent fashion. Only a minority—perhaps as few as a tenth and no more than a third—do so. Nonetheless, ideology is still important politically. One reason is that the proportion of citizens who think ideologically is sizable even though it is a minority. Also, this proportion increases when the political alternatives are more ideological than is normal. A second reason is that ideology is concentrated among those who are the most politically vocal and visible—the political activists. These activists tend to play a disproportional role in American politics.

4. Discuss the general relationship between public opinion and the actions of government.

 Answer: Public opinion has a powerful though inexact influence on government. Although public opinion rarely determines exactly what government will do, public opinion serves to constrain the policy choices of officials. Some policy actions are beyond the range of possibility because the public will not accept change in existing policy or will not support policy that clearly conflicts with basic values. In addition, officials must anticipate the public response to policy, since people may react negatively to policies that fail or are followed by unfavorable developments. Evidence indicates officials are reasonably attentive to public opinion, particularly on highly visible issues of public policy.

5. How informed is American public opinion? Explain.

 Answer: The American public has a generally low level of knowledge about politics and public affairs. Most citizens routinely flunk current affairs tests administered by pollsters. Yet the public’s lack of information about specific issues is not as significant a factor as some might perceive. Citizens do not necessarily need to be well-informed about a particular issue to have a reasonable opinion about it.