

Public Opinion & Mass Media

Public Opinion

the feelings of a large number of people on a certain issue

Political Opinion

Public opinion on political issues

How is public opinion formed?

Political Socialization

the process by which people acquire their political beliefs & attitudes

family

school & community values

peer groups

socioeconomic status

mass media

Measurement of Public Opinion

Public opinion polls

samples

must be representative & random

census tracts

geographic areas based on U.S. census

types of polls

in person

mail

telephone

internet

problems with polls

biased samples

misuse of polls

reliability

wording of questions

The Mass Media

TV, Radio, Newspapers, Magazines, Internet, Movies, Books

Issues of Bias

Selectivity

Prominence

Emotional Impact

Competition

Monopolies

Propaganda

media designed to encourage a particular point of view

glittering generalities

testimonials

name-calling/negative advertising

plain-folks

card-stacking

bandwagon effect
fallacy

Interest Groups

everyone falls into many different interest groups
IG don't run candidates for office
allow citizens to more effectively communicate with gov.
utilize numbers to gather power & influence

Types of interest groups

business

MLB

labor

NEA/AFT, UAW, AFL-CIO

agriculture

farmer's associations

professionals

ABA, AMA

environmentalists

Sierra Club, Greenpeace

social causes

Ralph Nader – consumer safety

governmental

military

How do interests groups influence policy?

Lobbying & Lobbyists

access & influence are key traits

Functions of lobbyists

Provide information

Draft bills

Provide election support

Media campaigns

letters & advertising

Court actions

Lobbyists are very loosely regulated by government

only have to register as a lobbyist, no oversight

Political Action Committees

Interest groups use PAC's to funnel money to functions

Affiliated PAC's

AMA, ABA, etc

Independent PAC's

not affiliated with organization, just general cause

SuperPAC's

new structure that allows corporations to contribute

Strategies for gaining influence with money

incumbents

provide financial support for immediate influence

elections

provide support for all legitimate sides
guarantees access after election