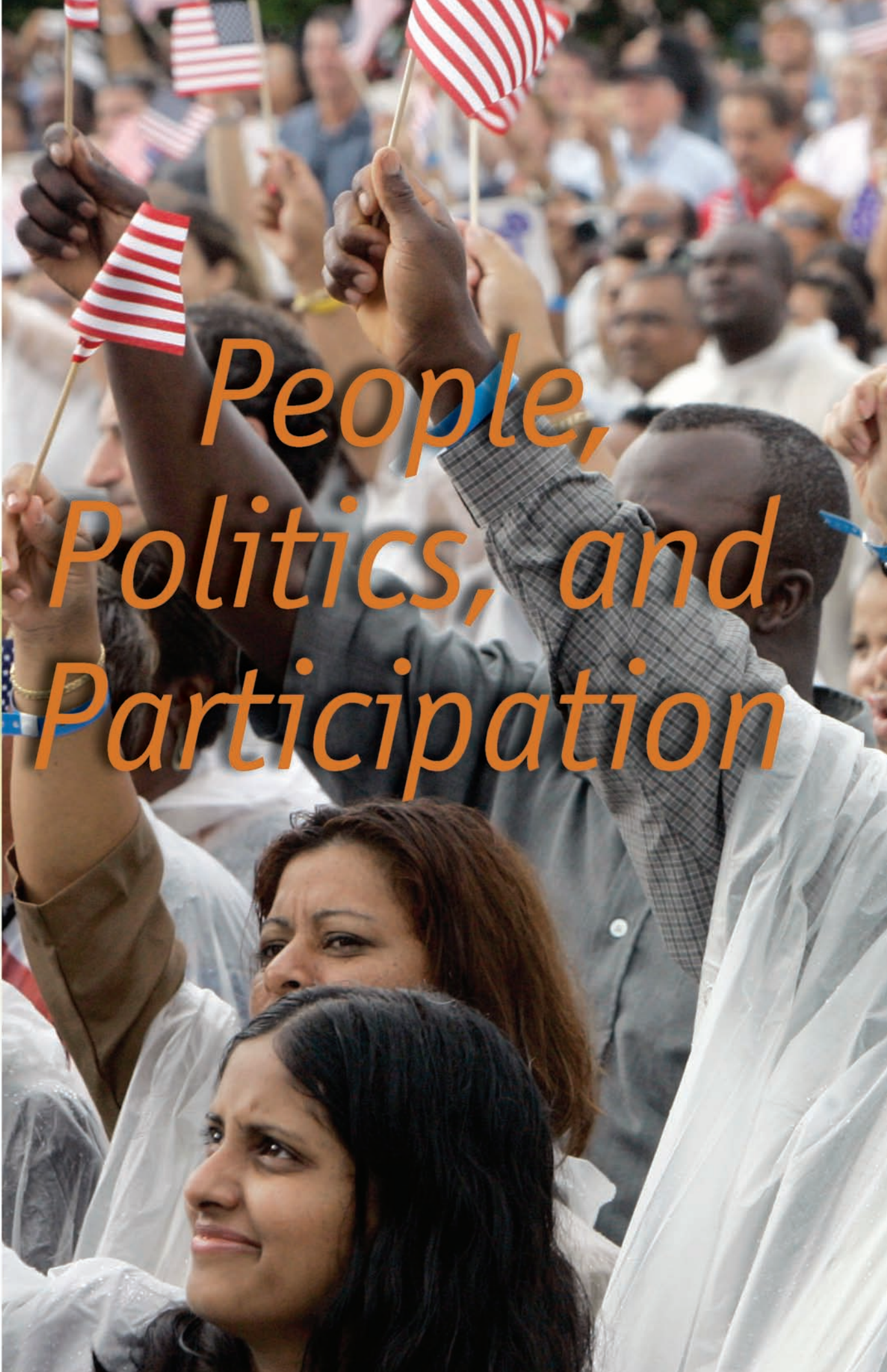


# 1

CHAPTER

# *People, Politics, and Participation*





# THEN

Cynicism, distrust, and apathy characterized Americans' relationship with their government for the past generation.

# NOW



New information technologies, new political leadership, generational politics, and a diversifying population give cause for optimism as the nation responds to the challenges of a new millennium.

# NEXT

Will the present generation break the cycle of cynicism that has pervaded the politics of the recent past?

Will new information technologies facilitate and energize political participation?

Will the face of American politics change as the nation's population grows and shifts?



# The United States was founded

by individuals who believed in the power of democracy to respond to the will of citizens. Historically, citizen activists have come from all walks of life, but they have shared one common attribute: the belief that, in the ongoing conversation of democracy, their government listens to *people like them*. This idea is vital if individuals are to have an impact on their government; people who don't believe they can have any influence rarely try. From the Pilgrims' flight from religious persecution, to the War for Independence, to the Civil War, to the Great Depression, to World War II, and to the great movements for social justice—civil rights, women's liberation, and more—the story of the United States is the story of people who are involved with their government, who know what they want their government to do, and who have confidence in their ability to influence its policies.<sup>1</sup> *American Democracy Now* tells the story of how today's citizen activists are participating in the conversation of democracy—in the politics, governance, and civic life of their communities and their nation during a time of technological revolution and unprecedented global change. This story is the next chapter in America's larger story.

The history of democracy in the United States is rife with examples of ordinary people who have made and are making a difference.<sup>2</sup> Throughout this book, we describe the impact that individuals and groups have had, and continue to have, in creating and changing the country's institutions of government. We also explore how individuals have influenced the ways in which our governments—national, state, and local—create policy.<sup>3</sup> These stories are important not only in and of themselves but also as motivators for all of us who want to live in a democracy that responds to all its citizens.

A fundamental principle underlying this book is that your beliefs and your voice—and ultimately how you use those beliefs and that voice—matter. Whatever your beliefs, it is important that you come to them thoughtfully, by employing introspection and critical thinking. Similarly, however you choose to participate, it is crucial that you take part in the civic life of your community. This book seeks both to inform and to inspire your participation. A sentiment voiced by American anthropologist Margaret Mead expresses a powerful truth: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

## Why should you study American democracy now? Or, Why Should You Study American Democracy Now?

Politics as practiced today is not your parents' brand of politics. **Politics**—the process of deciding who benefits in society and who does not—is a much different process today than it was even a decade ago. Advances in technology have altered the political landscape in many ways, including how voters and candidates communicate with each other, how governments provide information to individuals, how people get their news about events, and how governments administer laws. The political landscape has also changed because of world events. In particular, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq

This chapter provides a framework for your study of American government in this textbook.

**FIRST**, we delve into the basic question, *why should you study American democracy now?*

**SECOND**, we explore *what government does*.

**THIRD**, we explain how political scientists categorize the various *types of government*.

**FOURTH**, we consider the *origins of American democracy*, including the ideas of natural law, a social contract, and representative democracy.

**FIFTH**, we examine *political culture and American values*, which centrally include liberty; equality; consent of the governed; capitalism; and the importance of the individual, the family, and the community.

**SIXTH**, we focus on the *changing face of American democracy* as the population grows and diversifies.

**SEVENTH**, we look at *ideology as a prism* through which American politics can be viewed.

### politics

the process of deciding who benefits in society and who does not

have markedly changed many aspects of American life. Americans have become immune to the latest reports of suicide bombings in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, and they have become all too familiar with reports of local soldiers killed in war. These shifts in how Americans interact with government and in what issues concern them represent distinct changes that make the study of politics today interesting, exciting, and important.

## How Technology Has Changed Politics

It would be difficult to overstate the impact of the technological revolution on politics as it is practiced today. In electoral politics, faster computers and the Internet have revolutionized a process that, until the advent of the personal computer and the Internet, was not very different in 1990 from the way it was carried out in 1890. Today, many voters get much of their information from Internet-based news sites and Weblogs. Campaigns rely on e-mail; instant and text messaging; Web sites; and social-networking pages on MySpace, Facebook, BlackPlanet, Cyloop, and similar sites to communicate with and organize supporters. State governments rely on computers to conduct elections.

But the impact of technology is not limited to elections. Would you like to help your grandfather apply for his Social Security benefits? You no longer need to go to the local Social Security office or even mail an application; instead, you can help him apply online, and his check can be deposited into his bank account electronically. Do you want to communicate your views to your representatives in Congress? You do not need to call or send a letter by snail mail—their e-mail addresses are available online. Do you want to find out which government agencies are hiring recent college graduates? Go to [usajobs.gov](http://usajobs.gov). Do you need to ship a package using the U.S. Postal Service? The postal service Web site provides guidelines.

Because of these unprecedented shifts in the ways politics happens and government is administered, Americans today face both new opportunities and new challenges. How might we use technology to ensure that elections are conducted fairly? How might the abundance and reach of media technology be directed toward informing and enriching us rather than overwhelming us or perpetuating the citizen cynicism of recent years? What privacy rights can we be sure of in the present digital age? Whatever your age, as a student, you are a member of one of the most tech-savvy groups in the country, and your input, expertise, and participation are vital to sorting out the opportunities and obstacles of this next stage of American democracy.

## The Political Context Now

September 11, 2001, and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have had a marked effect on the U.S. political environment. These events have been a catalyst for changes in the attitudes of many Americans, including young Americans, about their government and their role in it.

Since the early 1970s—a decade blemished by the intense unpopularity of the Vietnam War and by scandals that ushered in the resignation of President Richard Nixon in 1974—Americans' attitudes about government have been dismal.<sup>4</sup> Numerous surveys, including an ongoing Gallup poll that has tracked Americans' opinions, have demonstrated low levels of trust in government and of confidence in government's ability to solve problems.<sup>5</sup> Young people's views have mirrored those of the nation as a whole. In 2000, one study of undergraduate college students, for example, showed that nearly two-thirds (64 percent) did not trust the federal government to do the right thing most of the time, an attitude that reflected the views of the larger population.<sup>6</sup> Distrust; lack of **efficacy**, which is a person's belief that he or she has the ability to achieve something desirable and that the government genuinely listens to individuals; and apathy among young people were reflected in the voter turnout for the 2000 presidential election, when only 36 percent of eligible college-age voters went to the polls.

The events of September 11, 2001, jolted American politics and the nation, and the altered political context provoked changes in popular views—notably, young people's opinions. “The attacks of 9/11 . . . changed the way the Millennial Generation thinks about

### **efficacy**

citizens' belief that they have the ability to achieve something desirable and that the government listens to people like them



## Technology and Political Participation

### THEN (1970s)

47 percent of 18- to 20-year-olds voted in the 1976 presidential election.

People got their national news from one half-hour-long nightly news broadcast.

Many people participated in civic life primarily through demonstrations, protests, and voting.

### NOW (2011)

About 53 percent of 18- to 20-year-olds voted in the 2008 presidential election, though that figure dropped in the 2010 congressional midterm elections.

People get their news from an array of sources, including twenty-four-hour news networks and Internet news services available on demand via computers and cell phones.

People still participate through demonstrations and protests but Tea Party activists rely on electronic communications to spread the word about demonstrations and protests. Other forms of political participation, including volunteerism, social networking, and targeted purchasing, characterize civic participation now.

### WHAT'S NEXT?

- How might advancing media technologies further transform the ways that people “consume” their news?
- Will the upswing of voter participation by 18- to 20-year-olds continue?
- What new forms of civic participation will emerge?
- Will the highly competitive 2008 presidential race motivate a new wave of voters to remain active participants in the electoral process?

voters aged 18–21, the largest increases in turnout occurred among 19-year-olds, whose turnout rivaled that of voters in their 30s. Americans are debating the importance of this upswing in turnout over the long haul. (See “Thinking Critically About Democracy” on page 8.) In 2008, that trend continued, with estimates indicating that voters aged 18–20 increased by 2.2 million, surpassing the young voter turnout since 18-year-olds voted for the first time in 1972.

As these statistics demonstrate, lingering media characterizations of a cynical young electorate are off the mark. Evidence indicates that many young people are enthusiastic participants in civic and political life.<sup>10</sup> Witness the strong political support that Barack Obama’s presidential campaign garnered from young people, some of whom packed their bags and traveled with the Obama team during the primary season that led to the Democratic convention in August 2008 (see “Analyzing the Sources”) on page 9. Others are taking part in ways that have not traditionally been thought of, and measured as, participa-

politics. Overnight, their attitudes were more like [those of] the Greatest Generation [the generation of Americans who lived through the Great Depression and World War II],” observed John Della Volpe, a pollster who helped Harvard University students construct a national poll of young people’s views.<sup>7</sup>

As patriotic spirits soared, suddenly 60 percent of college students trusted government to do the right thing. Ninety-two percent considered themselves patriotic. Some 77 percent thought that politics was relevant to their lives.<sup>8</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks, then-President George W. Bush and Congress enjoyed record-high approval ratings. Roughly 80 percent of young people and nearly that same percentage of all Americans supported U.S. military actions in Afghanistan. Beyond opinions, actions changed as well:

- More than 70 percent of college students gave blood, donated money, or volunteered in relief efforts.
- Nearly 70 percent volunteered in their communities (up from 60 percent in 2000).
- Eighty-six percent believed their generation was ready to lead the United States into the future.<sup>9</sup>

Then the political context changed again, over months and then years, as wars in Afghanistan and Iraq wore on, as casualties mounted, and as military spending skyrocketed. Trust in government, particularly of the president, plummeted. The changes after September 11, 2001 continued to affect how Americans, particularly young Americans, participate in politics.

An important trend is visible in one of the most easily measured contexts: voter turnout. Figure 1.1 shows the jump in participation by young voters in the 2004 presidential election. (In contrast, for voters aged 66–74, participation actually *decreased* in 2004.) Among

tion. These include, for example, Internet activism and using one's power as a consumer to send political messages. For many students, that foundation of political participation, volunteerism, or community action has already provided them with a rationale for increasing their knowledge of, and participation in, their communities.

Individuals who engage in politics and civic life experience many benefits. Engaged citizens are knowledgeable about public issues; actively communicate with policy makers and others; press government officials to carry out the people's will; advocate for their own self-interest and the interests of others; and hold public officials accountable for their decisions and actions. You will find that advocating for your own interests or working with others in similar situations will sometimes (perhaps to your surprise) lead to desired outcomes. This is efficacy in action. And you will discover that with experience you will become more effective at advocacy—the more you do, the better you get. Furthermore, you will derive social and psychological benefits from being civically engaged.

In addition, and importantly, local communities, states, and the nation benefit from an engaged populace. Governments are more effective when people voice their views. As we explore throughout this book, American democracy provides citizens and others more opportunities to influence governmental action than at any other time in history. If you have the knowledge and tools, you should be able to make the most of these opportunities.

## Civic Engagement: Acting on Your Views

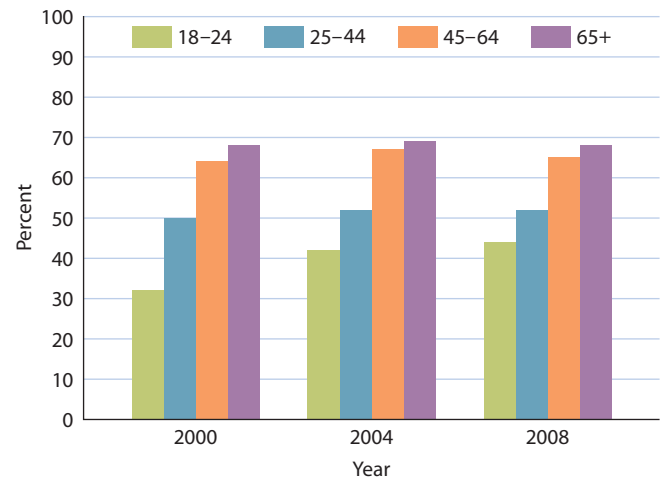
One vitally important goal of this book is to encourage you to engage in a respectful, continuing conversation about your views and to make the connection between having ideas and opinions and acting on them. Political scientist Michael Delli Carpini has defined **civic engagement** as

individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern. Civic engagement can take many forms, from individual voluntarism to organizational involvement to electoral participation. It can include efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem or interact with the institutions of representative democracy.<sup>11</sup>

The possibilities for citizen involvement are so broad and numerous that the idea of civic engagement encompasses a range of activities. Civic engagement might include everything from tutoring an underprivileged child to volunteering at a conservative think tank. In this book, we focus in particular on civic engagement that takes the form of **political engagement**—that is, citizen actions that are intended to solve public problems through political means. As you will find as you read the book, a wide variety of political actions are possible, from boycotting and *buycotting* (buying goods produced by companies whose policies you agree with) to running for office.

We hope that this book not only empowers you by teaching you about the institutions, policies, and processes of the government but also inspires you to become civically and politically engaged. You can take part in your democracy by organizing a fund-raising event, joining a volunteer group,

**Voter Turnout by Age, 2000–2008**



**FIGURE 1.1** ■ **VOTER TURNOUT IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS (2000–2008) BY VOTER AGE** How has the turnout rate changed over time for voters aged 18–24? For other age groups?

SOURCE: [www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/historical/index.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/historical/index.html).



### civic engagement

individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern

### political engagement

citizen actions that are intended to solve public problems through political means



➤ One way in which individuals articulate their political views is through the products they choose to purchase. By purchasing “fair trade” coffee, consumers use their purchasing power to express their political viewpoints. Have you ever boycotted or buycotted a manufacturer based on your political view?



# THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT DEMOCRACY

## DOES THE YOUTH VOTE MATTER?

**The Issue:** During the 2008 presidential election, much emphasis was placed on the importance of the youth vote. Many pollsters and pundits, noting the strong support among younger voters for candidate Barack Obama, asserted that the youth vote had the potential to determine the outcome of that year's presidential race.

To that end, we saw a plethora of individuals from politicians to rappers to clothing designers urging young people to come out and vote. The national political parties took notice too: because Americans aged 18–29, drawn exclusively from the vast millennial generation, constitute a larger cohort than similar age brackets, the parties sought to tap the potential of this potential sleeping giant in the 2008 election.

**Yes:** The youth vote did matter in 2008, and it will continue to play an important role in future elections. The 2008 presidential election saw near-historic participation by young Americans: about 44 percent of those aged 18–24 voted. And although that is not a turnout rate comparable to that of older segments of the population (whose turnout rate ranged from 52 to 68 percent, depending upon age), it was the highest turnout for younger Americans in nearly forty years, when turnout was bolstered in the first presidential election in which 18–20 year-olds could vote. But the significance of the higher turnout rate was magnified by the large proportion of young Americans who voted for Barack Obama. Fully 66 percent of those aged 18–29 voted for Obama. This breakdown was the first sign of a new era of generational politics, and those who came of age politically in the era of Obama will be loyal to the Democratic party for years to come.

**No:** The turnout of young Americans, though increasing historically, will not be the determining factor in federal elections. The low

participation rate by young Americans in 2010 indicates that the Obama phenomenon was a flash-in-the-pan occurrence, and that Democrats cannot count young Americans among their loyal party supporters. As a candidate, Barack Obama relied upon a message and an electronic medium that was attractive to young Americans, but those tactics are difficult to replicate in the complicated process of governing, and the 2010 turnout among young people is indicative of a disenchantment with both President Obama in particular and politics in general by those young voters.

**Other Approaches:** Younger voters were attracted to Obama's brand of politics, and they will remain loyal to him in 2012. But as the 2010 turnout indicated, that support does not translate into support for other Democratic candidates. Nonetheless, today's younger voters—millennial voters—will become the determining constituency in federal elections in years to come, both because of the size of their generation and because of the unique set of political viewpoints they bring to the political table as a result of being socialized in a post-September 11 world.

## What do you think?

- ① How did the impact of the youth vote in 2010 compare with that of 2008?
- ② What issues motivate young voters to vote? What kinds of candidates motivate younger voters?
- ③ Do the positions of millennial voters differ from those of older voters?

### government

the institution that creates and implements policies and laws that guide the conduct of the nation and its citizens

### citizens

members of the polity who, through birth or naturalization, enjoy the rights, privileges, and responsibilities attached to membership in a given nation

volunteering for a campaign, calling or writing to an elected official, or even participating in a protest march, to name just a few of the many options available to you. Consider which potential volunteer activities pique your interest. Think about what might best suit your schedule, lifestyle, and personal and professional goals. By taking part, you will ensure that your voice is heard, and you will derive the satisfaction of knowing that your community and the nation benefit from your actions as well.

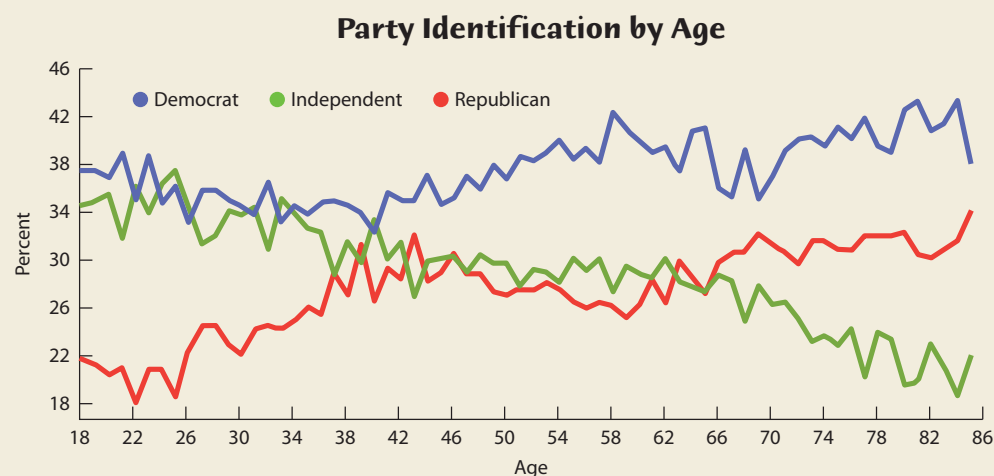
## What Government Does

In this section, we look at the nature of government and the functions a government performs. **Government** is an institution that creates and implements the policy and laws that guide the conduct of a nation and its citizens. **Citizens** are those members of a political community—town, city, state, or country—who, through birth or naturalization, enjoy the rights, privileges, and responsibilities attached to membership in a given nation. **Natural-**

# ANALYZING THE SOURCES

The figure below shows the results of a Gallup poll that measures party identification by age. Notice that there are significant differences between people of various ages when it comes to their party identification.

Democrats currently enjoy a party identification advantage over Republicans among Americans at every age between 18 and 85. The Democrats' greatest advantages come from those in their 20s and from baby boomers in their late 40s and 50s. Republicans, on the other hand, come closest to parity with Democrats among Generation Xers in their late 30s and early 40s and among seniors in their late 60s.



SOURCE: [www.gallup.com/poll/118285/Democrats-Best-Among-Generation-Baby-Boomers.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/poll/118285/Democrats-Best-Among-Generation-Baby-Boomers.aspx).

## Evaluating the Evidence

- ① Describe the party breakdown of the millennial generation. Which party are members of that generation most likely to identify with? The least likely to identify with? Why do you think this is the case?
- ② Among which generation are there likely to be nearly equal proportions of Democrats and Republicans?
- ③ Which voters are least likely to be Independents? Why do you think this might be the case?

**ization** is the process of becoming a citizen by means other than birth, as in the case of immigrants. Although governments vary widely in how well they perform, most national governments share some common functions.

To get a clear sense of the business of government, consider the following key functions performed by government in the United States and many other national governments:

- **To protect their sovereign territory and their citizenry and to provide national defense.** Governments protect their *sovereign territory* (that is, the territory over which they have the ultimate governing authority) and their citizens at home and abroad. Usually they carry out this responsibility by maintaining one or more types of armed services, but governments also provide for the national defense through counter-terrorism efforts.

In the United States, the armed services include the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and Coast Guard. In 2008, the U.S. Department of Defense budget was approximately \$480 billion. This excludes about \$235 billion in emergency appropriations for military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, plus about \$38 billion in funding for the Department of Homeland Security.

Governments also preserve order domestically. In the United States, domestic order is preserved through the National Guard and federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.

## naturalization

the process of becoming a citizen by means other than birth, as in the case of immigrants



# GLOBAL CONTEXT

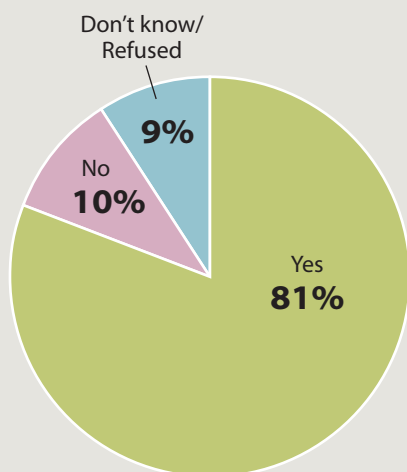
## CHALLENGES FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF AFGHANISTAN

When Barack Obama was elected president of the United States in November 2008, many Americans applauded, others were disappointed, but acceptance of the election results as a free and fair expression of the will of the American people was near universal. Contrast that with the Afghani elections held in August 2009. In the aftermath of those elections, both international and domestic critics charged that the elections were corrupt, thereby tainting the reelection of Afghan president Hamid Karzai, and calling into question the legitimacy of the Afghani government. In fact, when the Gallup polling organiza-

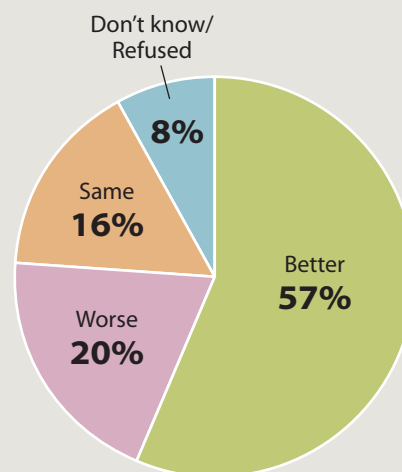
tion surveyed 1,000 Afghans in June 2009, it found that eight in ten Afghans had asserted that corruption was widespread.

Because of the pervasive perception of corruption, the government's ability to perform other functions, including preserving order and stability and establishing a legitimate legal system, also suffers. Nonetheless, many Afghans view the current situation as an improvement over earlier times.

SOURCE: Gallup World Poll, [http://74.125.155.132/search?sourceid=navclient&ie=UTF-8&rlz=1T4DKUS\\_enUS304US304&q=cache:http%3A%2F%2Fwww.gallup.com%2Fpoll%2Fworld.aspx](http://74.125.155.132/search?sourceid=navclient&ie=UTF-8&rlz=1T4DKUS_enUS304US304&q=cache:http%3A%2F%2Fwww.gallup.com%2Fpoll%2Fworld.aspx).



**Is Corruption Widespread Throughout the Government of Afghanistan, or Not?**



**Afghans' View on Life Since the Fall of the Taliban**

### legitimacy

a quality conferred on government by citizens who believe that its exercise of power is right and proper

- **To preserve order and stability.** Governments also preserve order by providing emergency services and security in the wake of disasters. For example, after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast and the city of New Orleans in August 2005, the National Guard was sent in to provide security in the midst of an increasingly dangerous situation (though in the eyes of many critics, including local and state elected officials, the action came too late to preserve order). Governments also maintain stability by providing a political structure that has **legitimacy**: a quality conferred on government by citizens who believe that its exercise of power is right and proper.<sup>12</sup> (See “Global Context.”)
- **To establish and maintain a legal system.** Governments create legal structures by enacting and enforcing laws that restrict or ban certain behaviors. In the United States, the foundation of this legal structure is the federal Constitution.<sup>13</sup> Govern-

ments also provide the means to implement laws through the actions of local police and other state and national law enforcement agencies. By means of the court system, governments administer justice and impose penalties.

- **To provide services.** Governments distribute a wide variety of services to their citizens. In the United States, government agencies provide services ranging from inspecting the meat we consume to ensuring the safety of our workplaces. Federal, state, and local governments provide roads, bridges, transportation, education, and health services. They facilitate communication, commerce, air travel, and entertainment.

Many of the services governments provide are called **public goods** because their benefits, by their nature, cannot be limited to specific groups or individuals. For example, everyone enjoys national defense, equal access to clean air and clean water, airport security, highways, and other similar services. Because the value and the benefits of these goods are extended to everyone, government makes them available through revenue collected by taxes. Not all goods that government provides are public goods, however; some goods, such as access to government-provided health care, are available only to the poor or to older Americans.

- **To raise and spend money.** All the services that governments provide, from national protection and defense to health care, cost money.<sup>14</sup> Governments at all levels spend money collected through taxes. Depending on personal income, between 25 and 35 cents of every dollar earned by those working in the United States and earning above a certain level goes toward federal, state, and local income taxes. Governments also tax *commodities* (commercially exchanged goods and services) in various ways—through sales taxes, property taxes, sin taxes, and luxury taxes.
- **To socialize new generations.** Governments play a role in *socialization*, the process by which individuals develop their political values and opinions. Governments perform this function, for example, by providing funding for schools, by introducing young people to the various “faces” of government (perhaps through a police officer’s visiting a school or a mayor’s bestowing an honor on a student), and by facilitating participation in civic life through institutions such as libraries, museums, and public parks. In these ways, governments transmit cultural norms and values such as patriotism and build commitment to fundamental values such as those we explore later in this chapter. For a detailed discussion of political socialization, see Chapter 6.

### public goods

goods whose benefits cannot be limited and that are available to all



➤ Children are socialized to the dominant political culture from a very early age. When children emulate firefighters, for example, they begin the process of learning about the functions governments perform.

# Types of Government

When social scientists categorize the different systems of government operating in the world today, two factors influence their classifications. The first factor is *who participates in governing or in selecting those who govern*. These participants vary as follows, depending on whether the government is a monarchy, an oligarchy, or a democracy:

## monarchy

government in which a member of a royal family, usually a king or a queen, has absolute authority over a territory and its government

## oligarchy

government in which an elite few hold power

## democracy

government in which supreme power of governance lies in the hands of its citizens

## totalitarianism

system of government in which the government essentially controls every aspect of people's lives

## authoritarianism

system of government in which the government holds strong powers but is checked by some forces

## constitutionalism

government that is structured by law, and in which the power of government is limited

## limited government

government that is restricted in what it can do so that the rights of the people are protected

- In a **monarchy**, a member of a royal family, usually a king or a queen, has absolute authority over a territory and its government. Monarchies typically are inherited—they pass down from generation to generation. Most modern monarchies, such as those in Great Britain and Spain, are *constitutional monarchies*, in which the monarch plays a ceremonial role but has little actual say in governance, which is carried out by elected leaders. In contrast, in traditional monarchies, such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the monarch is both the ceremonial and the governmental head of state.
- In an **oligarchy**, an elite few hold power. Some oligarchies are *dictatorships*, in which a small group, such as a political party or a military junta, supports a dictator. North Korea and Myanmar (formerly Burma) are present-day examples of oligarchies.
- In a **democracy**, the supreme power of governance lies in the hands of citizens. The United States and most other modern democracies are *republics*, sometimes called *representative democracies*, in which citizens elect leaders to represent their views. We discuss the republican form of government in Chapter 2.

Social scientists also consider *how governments function* and *how they are structured* when classifying governments:

- Governments that rule according to the principles of **totalitarianism** essentially control every aspect of their citizens' lives. In these tyrannical governments, citizens enjoy neither rights nor freedoms, and the state is the tool of the dictator. Totalitarian regimes tend to center on a particular ideology, religion, or personality. North Korea is a contemporary example of a totalitarian regime, as was Afghanistan under the Islamic fundamentalist regime of the Taliban.
- When a government rules by the principles of **authoritarianism**, it holds strong powers, but they are checked by other forces within the society. China and Cuba are examples of authoritarian states because their leaders are restrained in their exercise of power by political parties, constitutions, and the military. Individuals living under an authoritarian regime may enjoy some rights, but often those rights are not protected by the government.
- **Constitutionalism**, a form of government structured by law, provides for **limited government**—a government that is restricted in what it can do so that the rights of the people are protected. Constitutional governments can be democracies or monarchies. In the United States, the federal Constitution created the governmental structure, and this system of government reflects both the historical experiences and the norms and values of the founders.

The Constitution's framers (authors) structured American government as a *constitutional democracy*. In this type of government, a constitution creates a representative democracy in which the rights of the people are protected. We can trace the roots of this modern constitutional democracy back to ancient times.

# The Origins of American Democracy

The ancient Greeks first developed the concept of a democracy. The Greeks used the term *demokratia* (literally, "people power") to describe some of the 1,500 *poleis* ("city-states"; also the root of *politics*) on the Black and Mediterranean seas. These city-states were not democracies in the modern sense of the term, but the way they were governed provided the philosophical origins of American democracy. For example, citizens decided public issues using majority rule in many of the city-states. However, in contrast to modern democracies, the Greek

city-states did not count women as citizens. The Greeks also did not count slaves as citizens. American democracy also traces some of its roots to the Judeo-Christian tradition and the English common law, particularly the ideas that thrived during the Protestant Reformation.<sup>15</sup>

## Democracy's Origins in Popular Protest: The Influence of the Reformation and the Enlightenment

We can trace the seeds of the idea of modern democracy almost as far back as the concept of monarchy—back to several centuries ago, when the kings and emperors who ruled in Europe claimed that they reigned by divine sanction, or God's will. The monarchs' claims reflected the political theory of the **divine right of kings**, articulated by Jacques-Benigne Bossuet (1627–1704), who argued that monarchies, as a manifestation of God's will, could rule absolutely without regard to the will or well-being of their subjects. Challenging the right of a monarch to govern or questioning one of his or her decisions thus represented a challenge to the will of God.

At odds with the theory of the divine right of kings was the idea that people could challenge the crown and the church—institutions that seemed all-powerful. This idea took hold during the Protestant Reformation, a movement to reform the Catholic Church. In October 1517, Martin Luther, a German monk who would later found the Lutheran Church, posted his *95 Theses*, criticizing the harmful practices of the Catholic Church, to the door of the church at Wittenberg Castle. The Reformation continued throughout the sixteenth century, during which time reform-minded Protestants (whose name is derived from *pro-test*) challenged basic tenets of Catholicism and sought to *purify* the church.

In England, some extreme Protestants, known as Puritans, thought that the Reformation had not gone far enough in reforming the church. Puritans asserted their right to communicate directly with God through prayer rather than through an intermediary such as a priest. This idea that an individual could speak directly with God lent support to the notion that the people could govern themselves. Faced with persecution in England, congregations of Puritans, known to us today as the Pilgrims, fled to America, where they established self-governing colonies, a radical notion at the time. Before the Pilgrims reached shore in 1620, they drew up the Mayflower Compact, an example of a **social contract**—an agreement between people and their leaders, whereby the people give up some liberties so that their other liberties will be protected. In the Mayflower Compact, the Pilgrims agreed to be governed by the structure of government they formed, thereby establishing consent of the governed.

In the late seventeenth century came the early beginnings of the Enlightenment, a philosophical movement that stressed the importance of individuality, reason, and scientific endeavor. Enlightenment scientists such as Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727) drastically changed how people thought about the universe and the world around them, including government. Newton's work in physics, astronomy, math, and mechanics demonstrated the power of science and repudiated prevalent ideas based on magic and superstition. Newton's ideas about **natural law**, the assertion that the laws that govern human behavior are derived from the nature of humans themselves and can be universally applied, laid the foundation for the ideas of the political philosophers of the Enlightenment.



### divine right of kings

the assertion that monarchies, as a manifestation of God's will, could rule absolutely without regard to the will or well-being of their subjects

### social contract

an agreement between people and their leaders in which the people agree to give up some liberties so that their other liberties are protected

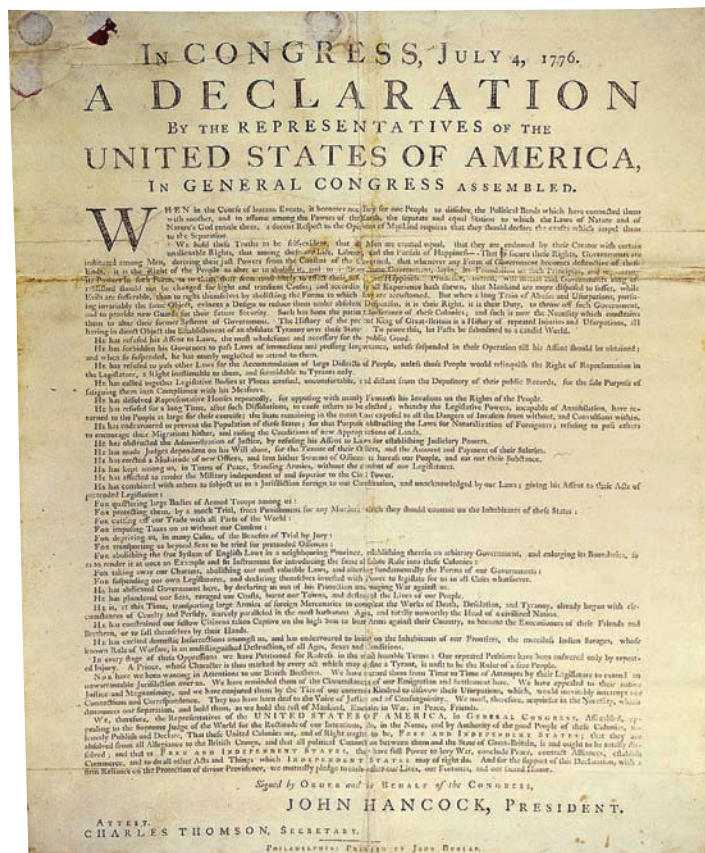
### natural law

the assertion that standards that govern human behavior are derived from the nature of humans themselves and can be universally applied

➤ In his scientific work, Sir Isaac Newton demonstrated the power of science to explain phenomena in the natural world and discredited prevalent ideas based on magic and superstition. Newton's ideas laid the foundation for the political philosophers of the Enlightenment.

## The Modern Political Philosophy of Hobbes and Locke

The difficulty of individual survival under the rule of an absolute monarch is portrayed in British philosopher Thomas Hobbes' book *Leviathan* (1651). Hobbes (1588–1679), who



believed in the righteousness of absolute monarchies, argued that the strong naturally prey upon the weak and that through a social contract, individuals who relinquish their rights can enjoy the protection offered by a sovereign. Without such a social contract and without an absolute monarch, Hobbes asserted, anarchy prevails, describing this state as one lived in “continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.”<sup>16</sup>

John Locke (1632–1704) took Hobbes’s reasoning concerning a social contract one step further. In the first of his *Two Treatises on Civil Government* (1689), Locke systematically rejected the notion that the rationale for the divine right of kings is based on scripture. By providing a theoretical basis for discarding the idea of a monarch’s divine right to rule, Locke paved the way for more radical notions about the rights of individuals and the role of government. In the second *Treatise*, Locke argued that individuals possess certain unalienable (or natural) rights, which he identified as the rights to life, liberty, and property, ideas that would prove pivotal in shaping Thomas Jefferson’s articulation of the role of government and the rights of individuals found in the Declaration of Independence. Locke, and later Jefferson, stressed that these rights are inherent in people as individuals; that is, government can neither bestow them nor take them away. When people enter into a social contract, Locke said, they do so with the understanding that the government will protect their natural rights. At the same time, according to Locke, they agree to accept the government’s authority; but if the government fails to protect

the inherent rights of individuals, the people have the right to rebel.

The French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) took Locke’s notion further, stating that governments formed by social contract rely on **popular sovereignty**, the theory that government is created by the people and depends on the people for the authority to rule. **Social contract theory**, which assumes that individuals possess free will and that every individual possesses the God-given right of self-determination and the ability to consent to be governed, would eventually form the theoretical framework of the Declaration of Independence.

## The Creation of the United States as an Experiment in Representative Democracy

The American colonists who eventually rebelled against Great Britain and who became the citizens of the first thirteen states were shaped by their experiences of living under European monarchies. Many rejected the ideas of absolute rule and the divine right of kings, which had been central to rationalizing the monarchs’ authority. The logic behind the rejection of the divine right of kings—the idea that monarchs were not chosen by God—was that people could govern themselves.

In New England, where many colonists settled after fleeing England to escape religious persecution, a form of **direct democracy**, a structure of government in which citizens discuss and decide policy through majority rule, emerged in *town meetings* (which still take place today). In every colony, the colonists themselves decided who was eligible to participate in government, and so in some localities, women and people of color who owned property participated in government well before they were granted formal voting rights under amendments to the federal Constitution.

Beyond the forms of direct democracy prevalent in the New England colonies, nearly all the American colonies had councils structured according to the principle of representative democracy, sometimes called **indirect democracy**, in which citizens elect representatives

**popular sovereignty**  
the theory that government is created by the people and depends on the people for the authority to rule

**social contract theory**  
the idea that individuals possess free will, and every individual is equally endowed with the God-given right of self-determination and the ability to consent to be governed

**direct democracy**  
a structure of government in which citizens discuss and decide policy through majority rule

**indirect democracy**  
sometimes called a *representative democracy*, a system in which citizens elect representatives who decide policies on behalf of their constituents

who decide policies on their behalf. These representative democracies foreshadow important political values that founders such as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison would incorporate into key founding documents, including the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

## Political Culture and American Values

On September 11, 2002, the first anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the United States, the *New York Times* ran an editorial, “America Enduring,” that described how the United States and its residents had weathered the difficult year after 9/11. “America isn’t bound together by emotion. It’s bound together by things that transcend emotion, by principles and laws, by ideals of freedom and justice that need constant articulation.”<sup>17</sup> These ideals are part of American **political culture**—the people’s collective beliefs and attitudes about government and the political process. These ideals include liberty, equality, capitalism, consent of the governed, and the importance of the individual (as well as family and community).

### Liberty

The most essential quality of American democracy, **liberty** is both freedom from government interference in our lives and freedom to pursue happiness. Many of the colonies that eventually became the United States were founded by people who were interested in one notion of liberty: religious freedom. Those who fought in the War for Independence were intent on obtaining economic and political freedom. The framers of the Constitution added

**political culture**  
the people’s collective beliefs and attitudes about government and political processes

**liberty**  
the most essential quality of American democracy; it is both the freedom from governmental interference in citizens’ lives and the freedom to pursue happiness

➤ Thomas Jefferson’s ideas about the role of government shaped the United States for generations to come. In 1999, descendants of Thomas Jefferson, including those he fathered with his slave, Sally Hemings, posed for a group photo at his plantation, Monticello, in Charlottesville, Virginia.





➤ Many Americans began to change their views about their country on September 11, 2001, when terror attacks killed more than 2,700 people with the destruction of the World Trade Center, the crash at the Pentagon, and United Airlines Flight 93 in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Here, a woman and child look over the flowers in the reflecting pool at Ground Zero during a memorial ceremony on September 11, 2009 in New York City. Nearly a decade later these views are still evolving.

to the structure of the U.S. government many other liberties,<sup>18</sup> including freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of association.<sup>19</sup>

There is evidence all around us of ongoing tensions between people attempting to assert their individual liberty on the one hand and the government's efforts to exert control on the other. For example, issues of religious freedom are in play in school districts where some parents object to the teaching of the theory of evolution because the theory contradicts their religious beliefs. The struggle for privacy rights—and how those rights are defined—continues unabated as the government's counterterrorism efforts result in officials' seeking greater access to our communications.

Throughout history and to the present day, liberties have often conflicted with efforts by the government to ensure a secure and stable society by exerting restraints on liberties. When government officials infringe on personal liberties, they often do so in the name of security, arguing that such measures are necessary to protect the rights of other individuals, institutions (including the government itself), or society as a whole. As we consider in Chapter 4, these efforts include, for example, infringing on the right to free speech by regulating or outlawing hate speech or speech that compels others to violence. Governments may also impinge on privacy rights; think of the various security measures that you are subject to before boarding an airplane.

The meaning of liberty—how we define our freedoms—is constantly evolving. In light of September 11 and the digital revolution, difficult questions have arisen about how much liberty Americans should have and how far the government should go in curtailing liberties to provide security. Should law enforcement officers be allowed to listen in on an individual's phone conversations if that person is suspected of a crime? Or should they be required to get a warrant first? What if that person is suspected of plotting a terrorist attack—should the officer be required to obtain a warrant first in that situation? What if one of the suspected plotters is not a U.S. citizen?

## Equality

The Declaration of Independence states that “all men are created equal . . .” But the founders' notions of equality were vastly different from those that prevail today. Their ideas of equality evolved from the emphasis the ancient Greeks placed on equality of opportunity. The Greeks envisioned a merit-based system in which educated freemen could participate in democratic government rather than inheriting their positions as a birthright. The Judeo-Christian religions also emphasize the idea of equality. All three major world religions—Christianity, Judaism, and Islam—stress that all people are equal in the eyes of God. These notions of equality informed both Jefferson's assertion about equality in the Declaration of Independence and, later, the framers' structuring of the U.S. government in the Constitution.<sup>20</sup>

The idea of equality evolved during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the early American republic, all women, as well as all men of color, were denied fundamental rights, including the right to vote. Through long, painful struggles—including the abolition movement to free the slaves; the suffrage movement to gain women the right to vote; various immigrants' rights movements; and later the civil rights, Native American rights, and women's rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s (see Chapter 5)—members of these disenfranchised groups won the rights previously denied to them.

Several groups are still engaged in the struggle for legal equality today, notably gay and lesbian rights organizations and groups that advocate for fathers', children's, and immigrants' rights. And historic questions about the nature of equality have very modern im-

plications: Are certain forms of inequality, such as preventing gay couples from enjoying the rights of married heterosexual couples, acceptable in American society? Are the advantages of U.S. democracy reserved only for citizens, or should immigrants living legally in the United States also enjoy these advantages?

Beyond these questions of legal equality, today many arguments over equality focus on issues of economic equality, a concept about which there is substantial disagreement. Some in the United States believe that the government should do more to eliminate disparities in wealth—by taxing wealthy people more heavily than others, for example, or by providing more subsidies and services to the poor. Others disagree, however, and argue that although people should have equal opportunities for economic achievement, their attainment of that success should depend on factors such as education and hard work, and that success should be determined in the marketplace rather than through government intervention.

## Capitalism

Although the founders valued the notion of equality, capitalism was equally important to them. **Capitalism** is an economic system in which the means of producing wealth are privately owned and operated to produce profits. In a pure capitalist economy, the marketplace determines the regulation of production, the distribution of goods and services, wages, and prices. In this type of economy, for example, businesses pay employees the wage that they are willing to work for, without the government's setting a minimum wage by law. Although capitalism is an important value in American democracy, the U.S. government imposes certain regulations on the economy: it mandates a minimum wage, regulates and inspects goods and services, and imposes tariffs on imports and taxes on domestically produced goods that have an impact on pricing.

One key component of capitalism is **property**—anything that can be owned. There are various kinds of property: businesses, homes, farms, the material items we use every day, and even ideas are considered property. Property holds such a prominent position in American culture that it is considered a natural right, and the Constitution protects some aspects of property ownership.

### capitalism

an economic system in which the means of producing wealth are privately owned and operated to produce profits

### property

anything that can be owned

## Consent of the Governed

The idea that, in a democracy, the government's power derives from the consent of the people is called the **consent of the governed**. As we have seen, this concept, a focal point of the rebellious American colonists and eloquently expressed in Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, is based on John Locke's idea of a social contract. Implicit in Locke's social contract is the principle that the people agree to the government's authority, and if the government no longer has the consent of the governed, the people have the right to revolt.

The concept of consent of the governed also implies **majority rule**—the principle that, in a democracy, only policies with 50 percent plus one vote are enacted, and only candidates who attain 50 percent plus one vote are elected. In the United States and other democracies, often the candidate with a plurality (the most votes, but not necessarily a majority) wins. Governments based on majority rule include the idea that the majority has the right of self-governance and typically also protect the rights of people in the minority. A particular question about this ideal of governing by the consent of the governed has important implications for the United States in the early twenty-first century: Can a democracy remain stable and legitimate if less than a majority of its citizens participate in elections?

### consent of the governed

the idea that, in a democracy, the government's power derives from the consent of the people

### majority rule

the idea that, in a democracy, only policies with 50 percent plus one vote are enacted, and only candidates that win 50 percent plus one vote are elected

## Individual, Family, and Community

Emphasis on the individual is a preeminent feature of American democratic thought. In the Constitution, rights are bestowed on, and exercised by, the individual. The importance of the individual—an independent, hearty entity exercising self-determination—has powerfully shaped the development of the United States, both geographically and politically.

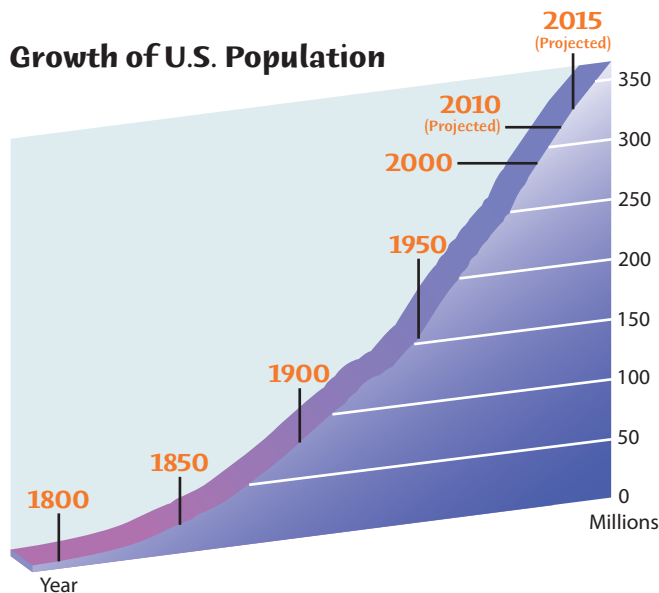


Family and community have also played central roles in the U.S. political culture, both historically and in the present day. A child first learns political behavior from his or her family, and in this way the family serves to perpetuate the political culture. And from the earliest colonial settlements to today's blogosphere, communities have channeled individuals' political participation. Indeed, the intimate relationship between individualism and community life is reflected in the First Amendment of the Constitution, which ensures individuals' freedom of assembly—one component of which is their right to form or join any type of organization, political party, or club without penalty.

## The Changing Face of American Democracy

Figure 1.2 shows how the U.S. population has grown since the first census in 1790. At that point, there were fewer than 4 million Americans. By 2000, the U.S. population had reached 281 million, and it will soar well over 300 million by the next census, in 2010.

Immigrants have always been part of the country's population growth, and over the centuries they have made innumerable contributions to American life and culture.<sup>21</sup> Immigrants from lands all around the world have faced the kinds of struggles that today's undocumented immigrants encounter. Chinese Americans, for example, were instrumental in pioneering the West and completing the construction of the transcontinental railroad in the mid-nineteenth century, but the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1881 prevented them from becoming U.S. citizens. Faced with the kinds of persecution that today would be considered hate crimes, Chinese Americans used civil disobedience to fight against the so-called Dog Tag Laws that required them to carry registration cards. In one incident, in 1885, they fought back against unruly mobs that drove them out of the town of Eureka, California, by suing the city for reparations and compensation.<sup>22</sup>



### POLITICAL INQUIRY

**FIGURE 1.2** ■ From 1790 to 1900, the population of the United States increased gradually, and it did not reach 100 million until the second decade of the twentieth century. What factors caused the steep rise during the twentieth century? How will these forces continue to affect the size of the U.S. population during this century?

SOURCE: U.S. Census, [www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0056.html](http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0056.html), and [www.census.gov/compendia/statab/cats/population/estimates\\_and\\_projections\\_by\\_age\\_sex\\_raceethnicity.html](http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/cats/population/estimates_and_projections_by_age_sex_raceethnicity.html).

## A Population That Is Growing—and on the Move

Between 1960 and 2000, the population of the United States increased by more than 50 percent. As the population increases, measures of who the American people are and what percentage of each demographic group makes up the population have significant implications for the policies, priorities, values, and preferred forms of civic and political participation of the people. All the factors contributing to U.S. population growth—including immigration, the birth rate, falling infant mortality rates, and longer life spans—influence both politics and policy as the ongoing debate about immigration reform shows. Generational differences in preferred methods of participation are yet another, as is the national conversation about the future of Social Security.

Accompanying the increase in population over the years has been a shift in the places where people live. For example, between 1990 and 2000, 684 of the nation's 3,142 counties, most of them in the Midwest and Plains states, reported a loss in population. But 80 counties, primarily in the West and the South, had population growth of more than 50 percent. In five counties, two in Georgia and three in Colorado, the population jumped by more than 100 percent.

## An Aging Population

As the U.S. population increases and favors new places of residence, it is also aging. Figure 1.3 shows the distribution of the population by age and by sex as a series of three pyramids for three different years. The 2000 pyramid shows the “muffin top” of the baby boom-

ers, who were 36 to 55 years old in that year. A quarter-century later, the echo boom of the millennials, who will be between the ages of 30 and 55 in 2025, is clearly visible. The pyramid evens out and thickens by 2050, showing the effects of increased population growth and the impact of extended longevity, with a large number of people (women in particular) expected to live to the age of 85 and older.

Some areas of the United States are well-known meccas for older Americans. For example, the reputation of Florida and the Southwest as the premier retirement destinations in the United States is highlighted in Figure 1.4 on page 20, which shows that older Americans are concentrated in those areas, as well as in a broad north-south band that runs down the United States' midsection. Older people are concentrated in the Midwest and Plains states because of the high levels of emigration from these areas by younger Americans, who are leaving their parents behind to look for opportunity elsewhere.

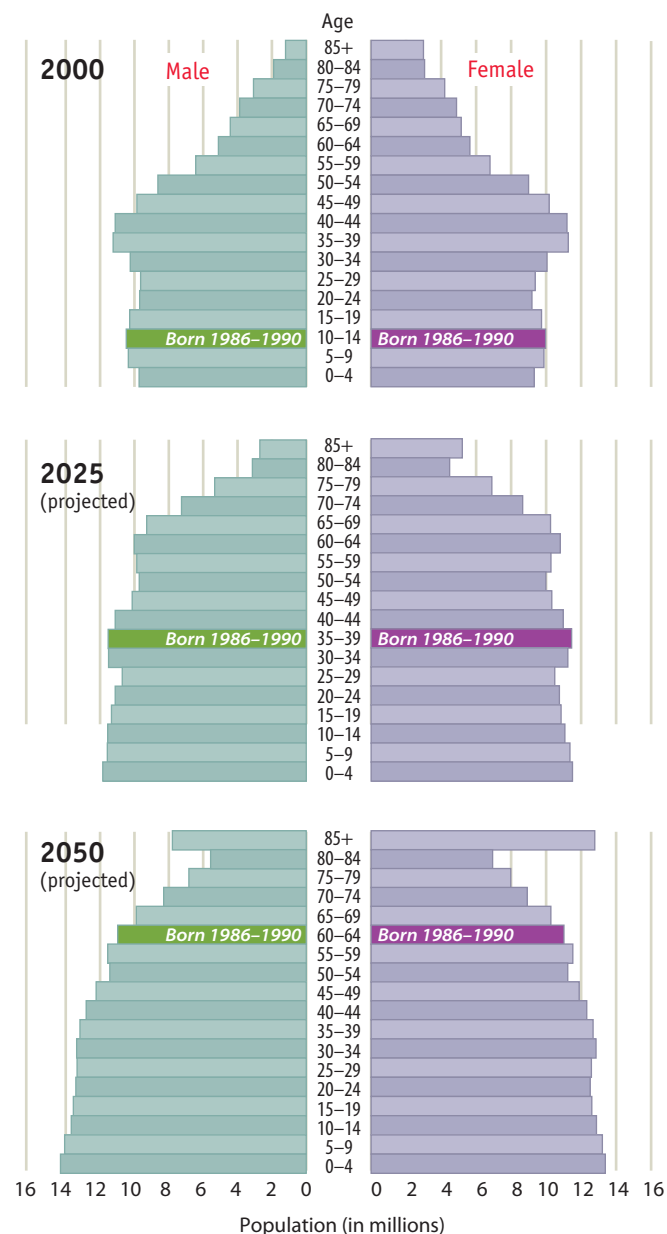
## A Changing Complexion: Race and Ethnicity in the United States Today

The population of the United States is becoming not only older but also more racially and ethnically diverse. Figure 1.5 on page 20 shows the racial and ethnic composition of the U.S. population in 2010. Notice that Hispanics\* now make up a greater proportion of the U.S. population than do blacks. As Figure 1.5 also shows, this trend has been continuous over the past several decades. Figure 1.5 also indicates that the percentage of Asian Americans has more than doubled in recent decades, from just over 2 percent of the U.S. population in 1980 to over 4 percent today. The Native American population has increased marginally but still constitutes less than 1 percent of the whole population. Figure 1.5 also shows the proportion of people reporting that they belonged to two or more racial groups, a category that was not an option on the census questionnaire until 2000.

As Figures 1.6 (on page 21) and 1.7 (on page 22) show, minority populations tend to be concentrated in different areas of the United States. Figure 1.6 shows the concentration of non-Hispanic African Americans. At 12 percent of the population, African Americans are the largest racial minority in the United States. (Hispanics are an ethnic minority.) As the map illustrates, the African American population tends to be centered in urban areas and in the South, where, in some counties, African Americans constitute a majority of the population.

Hispanics, on the other hand, tend to cluster in Texas and California along the border between the United States and Mexico and in the urban centers of New Mexico, as shown in Figure 1.7 (on page 22). Concentrations of Hispanic populations are also found in Florida and the Northeast. Hispanics are the fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States, with a projected 16 percent of the U.S. population identifying themselves as Hispanic in 2010, an increase of nearly 10 percent since 1980. Among people of Hispanic ethnicity, Mexicans make up the largest number (about 7 percent of the total U.S. population), followed by Puerto Ricans (1 percent in 2000) and Cubans (0.4 percent).

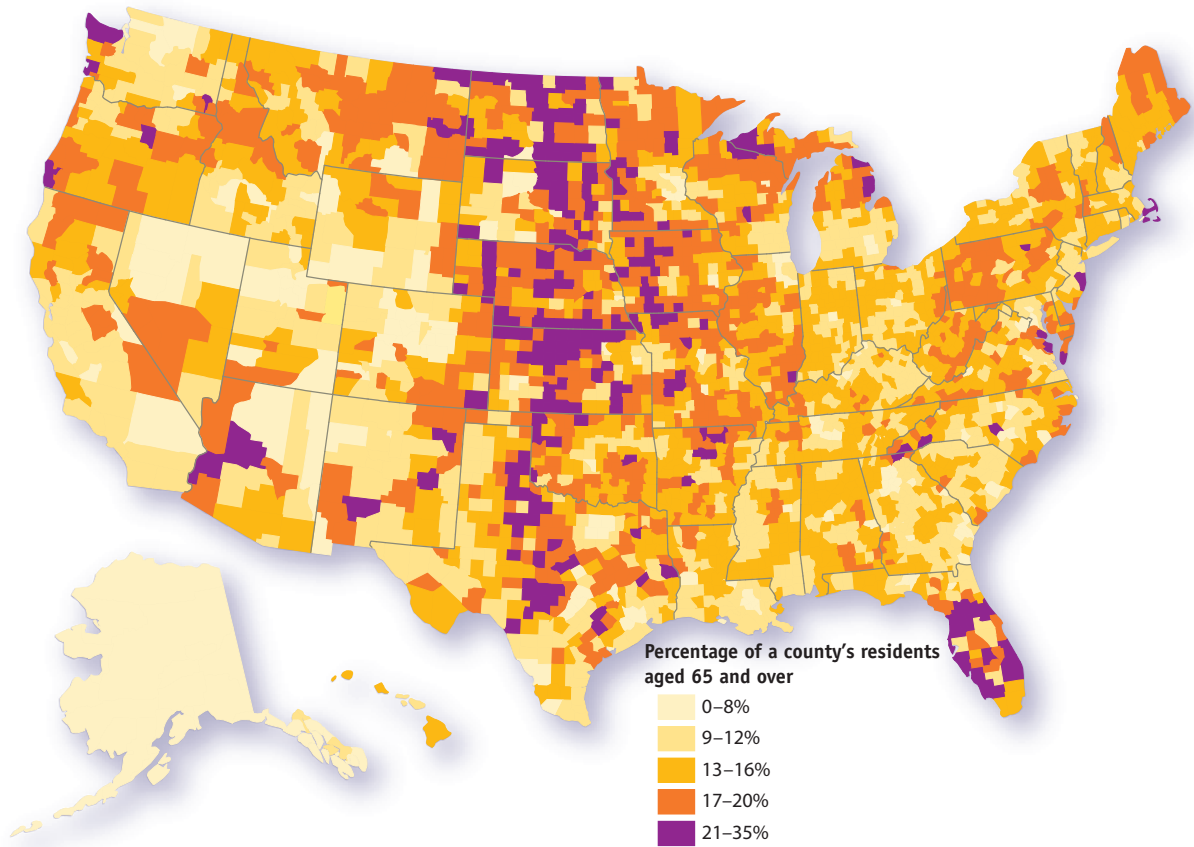
\* A note about terminology: When discussing data for various races and ethnicities for the purpose of making comparisons, we use the terms *black* and *Hispanic*, because these labels are typically used in measuring demographics by the Bureau of the Census and other organizations that collect this type of data. In more descriptive writing that is not comparative, we use the terms *African American* and *Latino* and *Latina*, which are the preferred terms at this time. Although the terms *Latino* and *Latina* exclude Americans who came from Spain (or whose ancestors did), these people compose a very small proportion of this population in the United States.



**FIGURE 1.3**

### The Aging U.S. Population, 2000–2050

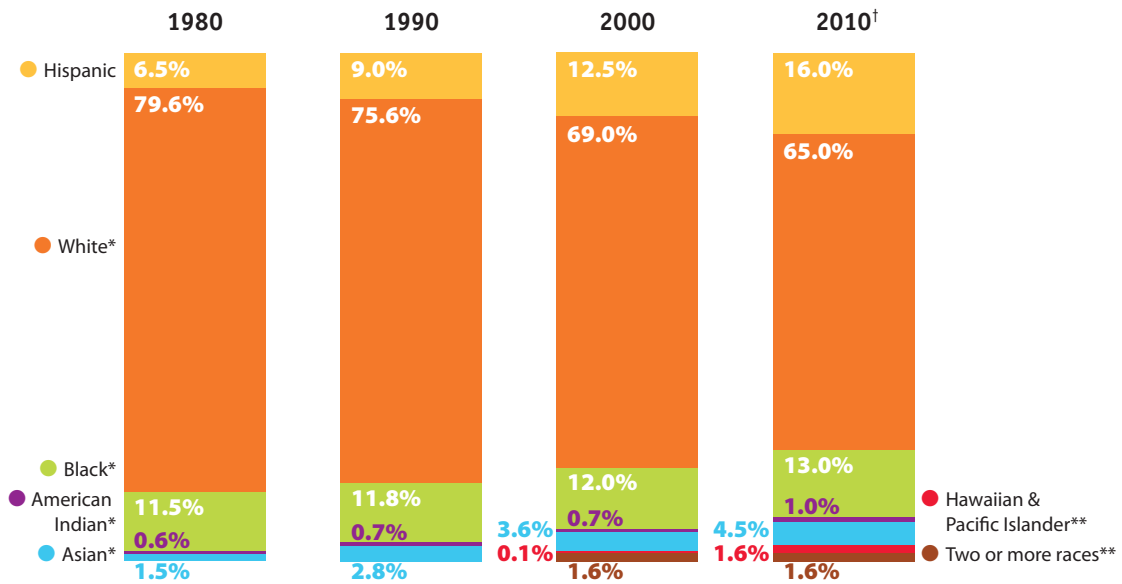
SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, National Population Projections, [www.census.gov/population/www/projections/natchart.html](http://www.census.gov/population/www/projections/natchart.html).



**FIGURE 1.4**

**Where the Older Americans Are**

SOURCE: www.CensusScope.org, Social Science Data Analysis Network, University of Michigan, www.ssdan.net.



\* Non-Hispanic only; in 1980 and 1990 "Asians" included Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders

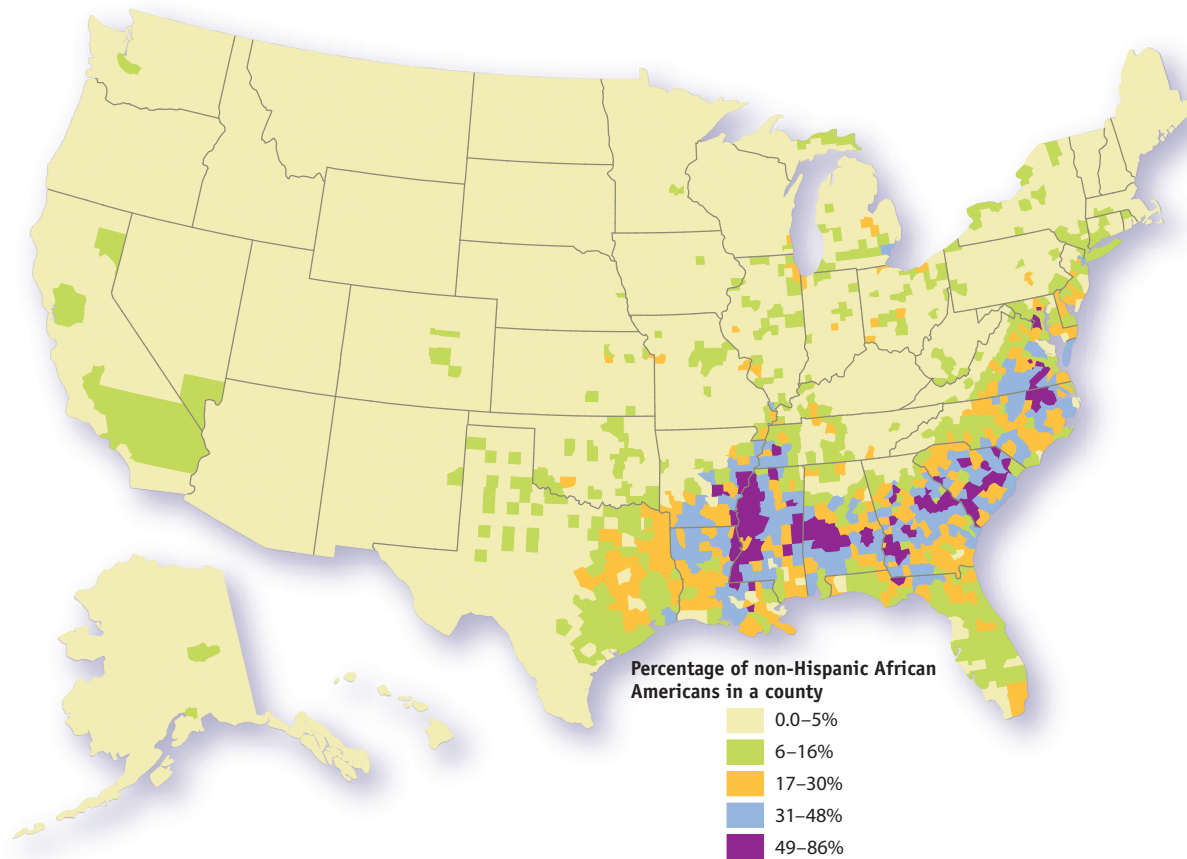
\*\* Option available for the first time in 2000 census

† Projected

**FIGURE 1.5**

**Population by Race Since 1980**

SOURCE: www.CensusScope.org, Social Science Data Analysis Network, University of Michigan, www.ssdan.net, and www.census.gov/compendia/statab/cats/population/estimates\_and\_projections\_by\_age\_sex\_raceethnicity.html.



**FIGURE 1.6**

### Where African Americans Live

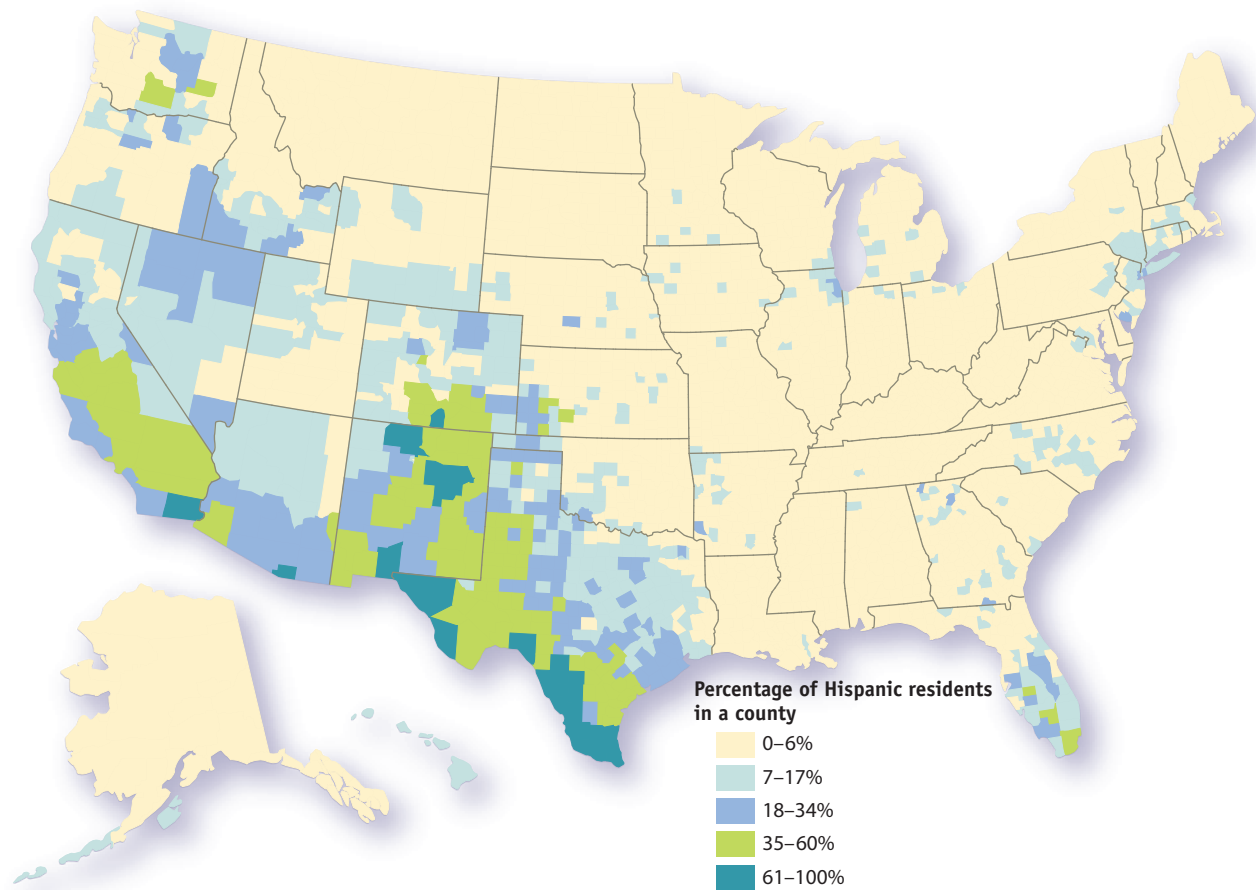
SOURCE: [www.CensusScope.org](http://www.CensusScope.org), Social Science Data Analysis Network, University of Michigan, [www.ssdan.net](http://www.ssdan.net).

## Changing Households: American Families Today

The types of families that are counted by the U.S. census are also becoming more diverse. The *nuclear family*, consisting of a stay-at-home mother, a breadwinning father, and their children, was at one time the stereotypical “ideal family” in the United States. Many—though hardly all—American families were able to achieve that cultural ideal during the prosperous 1950s and early 1960s. But since the women’s liberation movement of the 1970s, in which women sought equal rights with men, the American family has changed drastically. As Figure 1.8 on page 23 shows, these changes continued between 1990 and 2000, with the percentage of married couples declining from 55 percent to 52 percent. Explanations for this decline include the trend for people to marry at an older age and the fact that as the population ages, rising numbers of individuals are left widowed. The percentage of female householders without spouses (both with and without children) remained constant between 1990 and 2000 after experiencing a significant increase from 1970 through 1990. The proportion of male householders without spouses increased slightly, and men without a spouse are more likely to be raising children than they were in 1980. Finally, the proportion of the population living in nonfamily households, both those living alone and those living with others, rose slightly.

## Why the Changing Population Matters for Politics and Government

Each of the changes to the U.S. population described here has implications for American democracy. As the nature of the electorate shifts, a majority of the nation’s people may have different priorities, and various policies may become more and less important. For example,



**FIGURE 1.7**

**Where Hispanics Live**

SOURCE: [www.CensusScope.org](http://www.CensusScope.org), Social Science Data Analysis Network, University of Michigan, [www.ssdan.net](http://www.ssdan.net).

swift population growth means that demand for the services government provides—from schools, to highways, to health care—will continue to increase. The aging population will inevitably increase the burden on the nation’s Social Security and government-supported health care system, which will be forced to support the needs of that rising population.

Changes in the population’s racial and ethnic composition also matter, as does the concentration of racial minorities in specific geographic areas. The racial and ethnic makeup of the population (along with other influences) can significantly affect the nation’s political culture and people’s political attitudes. It has implications, too, for who will govern, as more and more representatives of the country’s various racial and ethnic groups become candidates for political office and as *all* political candidates must reach out to increasingly diverse groups of voters—or possibly pay the price at the ballot box for failing to do so.

## Ideology: A Prism for Viewing American Democracy

Besides focusing on the demographic characteristics of the U.S. population, another way of analyzing political events and trends is by looking at them through the prism of ideology.

**Political ideology** is an integrated system of ideas or beliefs about political values in general and the role of government in particular. Political ideology provides a framework for thinking about politics, about policy issues, and about the role of government in people’s everyday lives. In the United States, one key component of various ideologies is the extent to which adherents believe that the government should have a role in people’s everyday

**political ideology**

integrated system of ideas or beliefs about political values in general and the role of government in particular

## U.S. Household Trends



## POLITICAL INQUIRY

**FIGURE 1.8** ■ What factors might explain the increase in male householders without spouses between 1990 and 2000? What factors might explain the increase in nonfamily households? What impact, if any, might these trends have on policy in the future?

SOURCE: [www.CensusScope.org/us/chart\\_house.html](http://www.CensusScope.org/us/chart_house.html), Social Science Data Analysis Network, University of Michigan, [www.ssdan.net](http://www.ssdan.net), and [www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2008.html](http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2008.html).

lives, in particular, the extent to which the government should promote economic equality in society.

For all of the twentieth century, the ideologies of liberalism and conservatism dominated U.S. politics. Although liberalism and conservatism have remained powerful ideologies in the early years of the twenty-first century, neoconservatism has also become increasingly important. Table 1.1 on page 24 summarizes the key ideologies we consider in this section.

### Liberalism

Modern **liberalism** in the United States is associated with the ideas of liberty and political equality; its advocates favor change in the social, political, and economic realms to better protect the well-being of individuals and to produce equality within society. They emphasize the importance of civil liberties, including freedom of speech, assembly, and the press, as outlined in the Bill of Rights. Modern liberals also advocate the separation of church and state, often opposing measures that bring religion into the public realm, such as prayer in the public schools. In addition, they support political equality, advocating contemporary movements that promote the political rights of gay and lesbian couples and voting rights for the disenfranchised.

The historical roots of modern liberalism reach back to the ideals of classical liberalism: freedom of thought and the free exchange of ideas, limited governmental authority, the consent of the governed, the rule of law in society, the importance of an unfettered market economy, individual initiative as a determinant of success, and access to free public education. These also were the founding ideals that shaped American democracy as articulated in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

### liberalism

an ideology that advocates change in the social, political, and economic realms to better protect the well-being of individuals and to produce equality within society

## The Traditional Ideological Spectrum

TABLE 1.1

	<b>Socialism</b>	<b>Liberalism</b>	<b>Middle of Road (Moderate)</b>	<b>Conservatism</b>	<b>Libertarianism</b>
<b>Goal of government</b>	Equality	Equality of opportunity, protection of fundamental liberties	Nondiscrimination in opportunity, protection of some economic freedoms, security, stability	Traditional values, order, stability, economic freedom	Absolute economic and social freedom
<b>Role of government</b>	Strong government control of economy	Government action to promote opportunity	Government action to balance the wants of workers and businesses; government fosters stability	Government action to protect and bolster capitalist system, few limitations on fundamental rights	No governmental regulation of economy, no limitations on fundamental rights

Modern liberalism, which emerged in the early twentieth century, diverged from its classical roots in a number of ways. Most important, modern liberals expect the government to play a more active role in ensuring political equality and economic opportunity. Whereas classical liberals emphasized the virtues of a free market economy, modern liberals, particularly after the Great Depression that began in 1929, advocated government involvement in economic affairs. Today, we see this expectation in action when liberals call for affirmative action; increases in social welfare programs such as Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid; and government regulation of business and workplace conditions.

### Conservatism

Advocates of **conservatism** recognize the importance of preserving tradition—of maintaining the status quo, or keeping things the way they are. Conservatives emphasize community and family as mechanisms of continuity in society. Ironically, some conservative ideals are consistent with the views of classical liberalism. In particular, the emphasis on individual initiative, the rule of law, limited governmental authority, and an unfettered market economy are key components of both classical liberalism and contemporary conservatism.

Traditionally, one of the key differences between modern liberals and conservatives has been their view of the role of government. In fact, one of the best ways of determining your own ideology is to ask yourself the question, To what extent should the government be involved in people’s everyday lives? Modern liberals believe that the government should play a role in ensuring the public’s well-being, whether through the regulation of industry or the economy, through antidiscrimination laws, or by providing an economic “safety net” for the neediest members of society. By contrast, conservatives believe that government should play a more limited role in people’s everyday lives. They think that government should have a smaller role in regulating business and industry and that market forces, rather than the government, should largely determine economic policy. Conservatives believe that families, faith-based groups, and private charities should be more responsible for protecting the neediest and the government less so. When governments must act, conservatives prefer decentralized action by state governments rather than a nationwide federal policy. Conservatives also believe in the importance of individual initiative as a key determinant of success. Conservative ideas are the fundamental basis of policies such as the Welfare Reform Act of 1996, which placed the development and administration of welfare (Temporary Aid to Needy Families, or TANF) in the hands of the states rather than the federal government.

#### conservatism

an ideology that emphasizes preserving tradition and relying on community and family as mechanisms of continuity in society



➤ Protests and demonstrations are tactics that have been used by people across the ideological spectrum. Often, those who rely on protests are outside the mainstream power structure. What groups do you think will be most likely to use protest as a key method in the next several years?

## Other Ideologies on a Traditional Spectrum: Socialism and Libertarianism

Although liberals and conservatives dominate the U.S. political landscape, other ideologies reflect the views of some Americans. In general, those ideologies tend to be more extreme than liberalism or conservatism. Advocates of certain of these ideologies call for *more* governmental intervention than modern liberalism does, and supporters of other views favor even *less* governmental interference than conservatism does.

For example, **socialism**—an ideology that stresses economic equality, theoretically achieved by having the government or workers own the means of production (businesses and industry)—lies to the left of liberalism on the political spectrum.<sup>23</sup> Although socialists play a very limited role in modern American politics, this was not always the case.<sup>24</sup> In the early part of the twentieth century, socialists had a good deal of electoral success. Two members of Congress (Representative Meyer London of New York and Representative Victor Berger of Wisconsin), more than seventy mayors of cities of various sizes, and numerous state legislators (including five in the New York General Assembly and many municipal council members throughout the country) were socialists. In 1912, Socialist Party presidential candidate Eugene Debs garnered 6 percent of the presidential vote—six times what Green Party candidate Ralph Nader netted in 2004.

According to **libertarianism**, on the other hand, government should take a “hands-off” approach in most matters. This ideology can be found to the right of conservatism on a traditional ideological spectrum. Libertarians believe that the less government intervention, the better. They chafe at attempts by the government to foster economic equality or to promote a social agenda, whether that agenda is the equality espoused by liberals or the traditional values espoused by conservatives. Libertarians strongly support the rights of property owners and a *laissez-faire* (French for “let it be”) capitalist economy.

### socialism

an ideology that advocates economic equality, theoretically achieved by having the government or workers own the means of production (businesses and industry)

### libertarianism

an ideology whose advocates believe that government should take a “hands-off” approach in most matters



## Neoconservatism

The term *neoconservatism*, which emerged in the early 1970s, describes the “new conservatives,” or “neo-cons”; the prefix *neo* indicates that many of the prominent thinkers who developed this ideology were new to conservatism. Many people who espouse neoconservative ideology were previously socialists or liberal Democrats who then turned to a more traditional perspective.

**Neoconservatives** differ from traditional conservatives in several ways. Whereas traditional conservatives tend to advocate an isolationist foreign policy and reliance on traditional foreign policy tactics such as diplomacy, neoconservatives are often characterized as “hawks” because they tend to advocate military over diplomatic solutions. Often, too, neoconservatives press for unilateral (one-sided) military action rather than the collective effort of a multinational military coalition. And unlike traditional conservatives, who emphasize a limited role for government, particularly in social policy, neoconservatives are less concerned with restraining government activity than they are with taking an aggressive foreign policy stand. During the Cold War, neoconservatives were defined by their militaristic opposition to communism. Today they are defined by their fierce advocacy of U.S. superiority and their stance against predominantly Arab states that are alleged to support or harbor terrorists or pose a threat to the state of Israel.

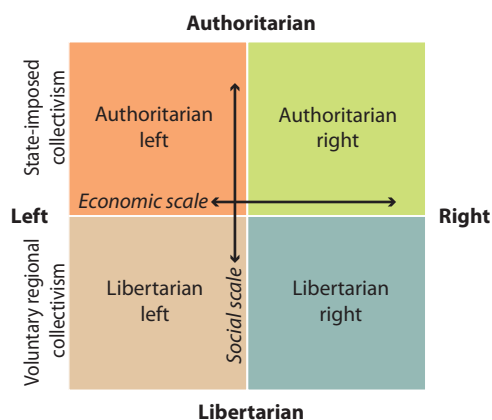
The ideology of neoconservatism was a powerful force during the George W. Bush administration (2000–2008). Indeed, the U.S. war in Iraq is often cited as an example of the power of neoconservatives in that era

### neoconservatism

an ideology that advocates military over diplomatic solutions in foreign policy and is less concerned with restraining government activity in domestic politics than traditional conservatives

## A Three-Dimensional Political Compass

### Multi-Dimensional Ideological Scale



The rise of neoconservatism demonstrates the limitations of a one-dimensional ideological continuum. For example, although an individual may believe that government should play a strong role in regulating the economy, he or she may also believe that the government should allow citizens a high degree of personal freedom of speech or religion. Even the traditional ideologies do not always fit easily into a single continuum that measures the extent to which the government should play a role in citizens’ lives. Liberals supposedly advocate a larger role for the government. But while this may be the case in matters related to economic equality, liberals generally take a more laissez-faire approach when it comes to personal liberties, advocating strongly for privacy and free speech. And although conservatives support less governmental intervention in the economy, they sometimes advocate government action to promote traditional values, such as constitutional amendments to ban flag burning and abortion and laws that mandate prayer in public schools.

Scholars have developed various *multidimensional scales* that attempt to represent peoples’ ideologies more accurately.<sup>25</sup> Many of these scales measure people’s opinions on the proper role of government in the economy on one axis and their beliefs about personal freedom on a second axis. As shown in Figure 1.9, these scales demonstrate that traditional liberals (upper left quadrant) and traditional conservatives (lower right quadrant) believe in social liberty and economic equality, and economic liberty and social order, respectively. But the scale also acknowledges that some people prioritize economic equality and social order, whereas others embrace economic liberty and social order. One Web site, *The Political Compass* ([www.politicalcompass.org](http://www.politicalcompass.org)), allows visitors to plot their ideology on the site’s multidimensional scale.

## POLITICAL INQUIRY

**FIGURE 1.9** ■ Where would you place yourself on this scale? How has your socialization formed your ideology? Can you imagine future circumstances that might cause your views to change?

SOURCE: <http://politicalcompass.org/analysis2>.

# CONCLUSION

## THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT WHAT'S NEXT IN AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

Now is an exciting time to study American democracy. And the fast-paced changes in American society today make participation in government and civic life more vitally important than ever. The effects of participating in the continuing conversation of American democracy through both words and actions are unequivocally positive—for you, for others, and for the government—and can have large ripple effects.

Will the present generation break the cycle of cynicism that has pervaded the politics of the recent past? Today, it is clear that generational changes, particularly the distinctive political opinions of the millennial generation, underscore why it is essential for members of that generation to voice their views. Millennials are participating in the civic life of their communities and the nation through unprecedented—and efficacious—new forms of political participation and community activism. Technology will continue to play a significant role in how they and the population at large communicate and participate in politics and how government creates and administers policy. Exciting changes have come to pass in the political realm, and there is no end to them in sight.

Demographic changes in American society—particularly the aging and growing diversity of the U.S. population—are giving rise to new public policy demands and creating new challenges. Challenges mean opportunities for those who are ready for them, and citizens who respond to those challenges will have an impact on the future of the nation.

## Summary

### 1. Why Study American Democracy Now? Or, Why Should You Study American Democracy Now?

American democracy is at a crossroads with respect to the impact of technology, war, and the continuing terrorist threat on politics. The young Americans of today differ from earlier generations in notable ways, and their fresh opinions and means of organizing and communicating with one another make them a significant political force.

### 2. What Government Does

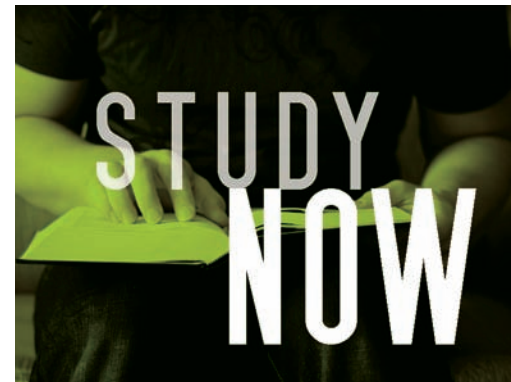
Governments perform a variety of essential functions. They provide for the national defense, preserve order and stability, establish and maintain a legal system, distribute services, raise and spend money, and socialize new generations of citizens.

### 3. Types of Government

In categorizing governmental systems, political scientists evaluate two factors. One factor is who participates in governing or in selecting those who govern. In a monarchy, a king or a queen has absolute authority over a territory and its government (though most of today's monarchies are constitutional), whereas in an oligarchy, an elite few hold power. In a democracy, the people hold and exercise supreme power. Scholars also categorize governmental systems according to how governments function and are structured. Totalitarian governments effectively control every aspect of their citizens' lives. Authoritarian governments have strong powers but are checked by other forces within the society. In democracies, the people have a say in their governance either by voting directly or, as in the United States, by electing representatives to carry out their will.

### 4. The Origins of American Democracy

American democracy was shaped by individuals who believed in the right of citizens to have a voice in their government. Through principles developed by Enlightenment philosophers



such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the key tenets of American democracy emerged, including the idea of a social contract creating a representative democracy.

### 5. Political Culture and American Values

*Political culture* refers to the people's collective beliefs and attitudes about the government and the political process. Though aspects of political culture change over time, certain fundamental values have remained constant in American democracy. These include liberty, which is both freedom *from* government interference in daily life and freedom *to* pursue happiness; and equality, the meaning of which has fluctuated significantly over the course of U.S. history. Capitalism—an economic system in which the means of producing wealth are privately owned and operated to produce profits—is also a core value of American political culture, as is consent of the governed, with its key components of popular sovereignty and majority rule. Finally, the American political system values the importance of the individual, the family, and the community.

### 6. The Changing Face of American Democracy

The population of the United States is growing, aging, and becoming increasingly diverse. Hispanics now make up the country's largest ethnic minority. U.S. families have undergone fundamental structural alterations, as the number of nonfamily households and of households headed by single people has increased in recent times. These changes have already had an impact on communities, and their effect on government policies will intensify. The demographic shifts may create demand for changes in current policies, or they may indicate that the nature of the electorate has shifted and that different priorities are favored by a majority of the people.

### 7. Ideology: A Prism for Viewing American Democracy

Liberals emphasize civil liberties, separation of church and state, and political equality. Conservatives prefer small government, individual initiative, and an unfettered market economy. Socialists advocate government intervention in the economy to promote economic equality, whereas libertarians argue that government should take a “hands-off” approach to most matters. Neoconservatism, with its emphasis on military rather than diplomatic solutions in foreign policy, and with its comparatively small concern for restraining government activity, has become a growing force in politics and government. Some social scientists prefer to use a three-dimensional framework rather than a two-dimensional continuum for understanding and analyzing political ideology. Regardless of their ideology, citizens can and should act upon their views through civic and political engagement.

## Key Terms

authoritarianism 12	indirect democracy 14	political culture 15
capitalism 17	legitimacy 10	political engagement 7
citizens 8	liberalism 23	political ideology 22
civic engagement 7	libertarianism 25	politics 4
consent of the governed 17	liberty 15	popular sovereignty 14
conservatism 24	limited government 12	property 17
constitutionalism 12	majority rule 17	public goods 11
democracy 12	monarchy 12	social contract 13
direct democracy 14	natural law 13	social contract theory 14
divine right of kings 13	naturalization 9	socialism 25
efficacy 5	neoconservatism 26	totalitarianism 12
government 8	oligarchy 12	

## ***For Review***

- 1.** In what ways has technology changed how politics happens and how government works? What impact did September 11, 2001 and the subsequent war on terror have on how Americans thought—and think—about their government?
- 2.** Explain the functions that governments perform.
- 3.** Describe how social scientists categorize governments.
- 4.** How did the ideas of the Enlightenment shape people’s views on the proper role of government?
- 5.** Explain the fundamental values of American democracy.
- 6.** Describe the general trends with regard to population change in the United States.
- 7.** Contrast liberals’ and conservatives’ views on government. How do the views of neo-conservatives differ from these other perspectives?

## ***For Critical Thinking and Discussion***

- 1.** In what ways do you use technology in your daily life? Do you use technology to get information about politics or to access government services? How? If not, what information and services may be obtained using technological tools?
- 2.** Do you believe there are differences between your political views and those held by members of other generations? Explain. Have the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq changed how you view government? Describe.
- 3.** Why do governments perform the functions they do? Can you think of any private entities that provide public goods?
- 4.** Think of the advantages and disadvantages of direct versus indirect democracies. Do you participate in any form of direct decision making? If so, how well, or poorly, does it work?
- 5.** Examine the demographic maps of the United States in this chapter, and describe what they reveal about the population in your home state.

# PRACTICE QUIZ

**MULTIPLE CHOICE: Choose the lettered item that answers the question correctly.**

- The institution that creates and implements policies and laws that guide the conduct of the nation and its citizens is called
  - a democracy.
  - efficacy.
  - government.
  - citizenry.
- Public goods include
  - clean air.
  - clean water.
  - highways.
  - all of the above.
- The economic system in which the means of producing wealth are privately owned and operated to produce profits is
  - capitalism.
  - monetarism.
  - socialism.
  - communism.
- Emphasizing the importance of conserving tradition and of relying on community and family as mechanisms of continuity in society is known as
  - communism.
  - conservatism.
  - liberalism.
  - libertarianism.
- Citizens' belief that they have the ability to achieve something desirable and that the government listens to them is called
  - popular sovereignty.
  - democracy.
  - civic engagement.
  - efficacy.
- A system in which citizens elect representatives who decide policies on behalf of their constituents is referred to as
  - an indirect democracy.
  - a representative democracy.
  - consent of the governed.
  - both (a) and (b).
- A belief by the people that a government's exercise of power is right and proper is
  - authoritarianism.
  - democracy.
  - popular sovereignty.
  - legitimacy.
- The principle that the standards that govern human behavior are derived from the nature of humans themselves and can be universally applied is called
  - the social contract.
  - neoconservatism.
  - natural law.
  - representative democracy.
- An agreement between the people and their leaders in which the people agree to give up some liberties so that other liberties are protected is called
  - a Mayflower compact.
  - a social contract.
  - republicanism.
  - natural law.
- A form of government that essentially controls every aspect of people's lives is
  - socialism.
  - neoconservatism.
  - liberalism.
  - totalitarianism.

## FILL IN THE BLANKS.

- \_\_\_\_\_ is individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern.
- \_\_\_\_\_ is the institution that creates and implements policy and laws that guide the conduct of the nation and its citizens.
- \_\_\_\_\_ is the idea that in a democracy, only policies with 50 percent plus one vote are enacted.
- \_\_\_\_\_ are services governments provide that are available to everyone, such as clean air, clean water, airport security, and highways.
- A form of government that is structured by law, and in which the power of government is limited, is called \_\_\_\_\_.

**Answers:** 1. c; 2. d; 3. a; 4. b; 5. d; 6. d; 7. d; 8. c; 9. b; 10. d; 11. Civic engagement; 12. Government; 13. Majority rule; 14. Public goods; 15. constitutionalism.



# RESOURCES FOR RESEARCH AND ACTION

## Internet Resources

### *American Democracy Now*

**Web site [www.mhhe.com/harrison2e](http://www.mhhe.com/harrison2e)** Consult the book's Web site for study guides, interactive activities, simulations, and current hot-links for additional information on American politics and political and civic engagement in the United States.

### **Circle: the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement**

**[www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org)** Circle is the premier clearinghouse for research and analysis on civic engagement.

### **American Association of Colleges and Universities**

**[www.aacu.org/resources/civicengagement/index.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/resources/civicengagement/index.cfm)** The AACU's Web site offers a clearinghouse of Internet resources on civic engagement.

### **American Political Science Association**

**[www.apsanet.org/section\\_245.cfm](http://www.apsanet.org/section_245.cfm)** The professional association for political scientists offers many resources on research about civic engagement, education, and participation.

### **The Statistical Abstract of the United States**

**[www.census.gov/compendia/statab](http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab)** This is "the authoritative and comprehensive summary of statistics on the social, political, and economic organization of the United States." It provides a plethora of data about the population of the United States.

### **The 2010 Census**

**<http://2010.census.gov/2010census/>** The U.S. Census Bureau's 2010 census Web site is a clearinghouse for information about the census, including information on why the census is important, data, and how you can get involved in the census.

## Internet Activism

### **The Census Bureau**

**<http://2010.census.gov/2010census/index.php>** The U.S. Census is one of the most important sources of demographic information. Go to the Web site and use the interactive tools to learn how census data affects funding levels for institutions such as hospitals and schools, and how the data collected even shape congressional representation.

## Recommended Readings

Levine, Peter. *The Future of Democracy: Developing the Next Generation of American Citizens*. Medford, MA: Tufts University Press (UPNE), 2007. An examination of how today's youth are participating in poli-

tics differently from previous generations and of how they lack the skills necessary to facilitate some forms of civic participation. The author proposes educational, political, and institutional changes to correct this problem.

Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Touchstone, 2000. A classic volume demonstrating the decline in traditional forms of civic participation.

Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995. An analysis of how people come to be activists in their communities, what issues they raise when they participate, and how activists from various demographic groups differ.

Winograd, Morley, and Michael D. Hais. *Millennial Makeover: MySpace, YouTube, and the Future of American Politics*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008. A study of the impact of millennials' use of changing technology on political life.

Zukin, Cliff, Scott Keeter, Molly Andolina, Krista Jenkins, and Michael X. Delli Carpini. *A New Engagement? Political Participation, Civic Life and the Changing American Citizen*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. A study of participation and political viewpoints across generations.

## Movies of Interest

### ***The Messenger* (2009)**

This film, starring Ben Foster and Woody Harrelson, depicts one side of the ravages of war through the experiences of Army's Casualty Notification service officers. Through their experiences, viewers explore the values of the families of fallen soldiers, as well as those of society at large.

### ***V for Vendetta* (2005)**

Actor Natalie Portman becomes a revolutionary in this thriller, which depicts an uprising against an authoritarian government.

### ***Blind Shaft* (2003)**

This Chinese thriller explores the interaction between free market incentives and aspects of political culture, including traditional communal values and human decency, in the context of an increasingly globalized economy.

### ***Blue Collar* (1978)**

This classic film tracing the experience of three autoworkers in the late 1970s explores racial and economic strife in the United States.