

# Citizenship and the Transformation of American Society

There appears to be a specter hanging over American politics since the 2008 Great Recession. We seem to be living through a period marked by heightened social tensions, tumultuous politics, and economic anxiety. Media accounts claim that our country's social and civic fabric is fraying along cultural and economic lines. Americans seem bitterly divided on a host of political issues, and a new type of tribal intolerance seems to be spreading, especially on social media. Political analysts continually add to this extensive list of woes.<sup>1</sup> Too few of us are voting, we are disconnected from our fellow citizens, lacking in social capital, losing faith in our government, and the nation is in social disarray. The *lack* of good citizenship is the phrase you often hear as an explanation for these disturbing trends. The contentious 2016 election brought out these feelings, which have only increased since then.

And we are not alone. An essay in *The Economist* lists the mounting problems of contemporary democracies and then puts the blame for what's gone wrong with democracy directly on its citizens: "The biggest challenge to democracy . . . comes from the voters themselves. Plato's great worry about democracy, that citizens would 'live day to day, indulging the pleasure of the moment', has proved prescient."<sup>2</sup> Claims that democracy is in decline have become commonplace, illustrated by the conflict over Brexit, the rise of populist parties, and the supposed erosion of public support for democracy.<sup>3</sup>

Frequently, these experts claim that the young are the primary source of this decline. Authors extol the civic values and engagement of the older, "greatest generation" with great hyperbole.<sup>4</sup> Many analysts hold that the slow, steady, and ineluctable replacement of older, civic-minded generations by the disaffected Generation X and now Millennials is the most important reason for the erosion of social capital in America.<sup>5</sup> These experts seemingly agree that young Americans are dropping out of politics, losing faith in government, and even becoming disenchanted with their personal lives.<sup>6</sup> A *Time* magazine article on the Millennial Generation began with the following introduction:<sup>7</sup>

Here are some broad descriptions about the generation known as Millennials: They're narcissistic. They're lazy. They're coddled. They're even a bit delusional. Those aren't just unfounded negative stereotypes about 80 million Americans born roughly between 1980 and 2000. They're backed up by a decade of sociological research.

This echoes Aristotle's view that "politics is not a proper study for the young." As a university professor and father of two Millennials, I have a different view of American youth. Many young people in America—and in other Western democracies—are concerned about their society and others in the world, and they are willing to contribute their time and effort to make a difference. They see a role for themselves and their government in improving the world in which we live. At the same time, they relate to government and society in different ways than their elders. The 1960s weren't the good old days that some proclaim.

Research in the United States and other affluent democracies shows that today's citizens are more educated, more cosmopolitan, and more supportive of self-expressive values than any other public in the history of democracy.<sup>8</sup> Ronald Inglehart, for example, maintains that younger generations are more committed to participatory values and democratic ideals, more concerned with the well-being of others, and more cognitively sophisticated than previous generations in the United States and other affluent democracies.<sup>9</sup> Other analysts discuss a younger generation that is politically engaged, albeit in different ways than their elders.<sup>10</sup> Contemporary research points to the rising levels of volunteerism among the young, ranging from Teach America to the Peace Corps to local community activities. Youth are also more positive toward the political and social diversity of America and more tolerant of others. Thus, a special issue of *The Economist* began with a different tag line:<sup>11</sup> "Today's young people are held to be alienated, unhappy, violent failures. They are proving anything but."

So the debate continues, and it is an important debate because it portends our country's future.

These are two very different images of American society and politics. One perspective says American democracy is "at risk" in large part because of the changing values and participation patterns of the young. The other side points to new patterns of citizenship that have emerged among the young, the better educated, and other parts of American society. These opposing views have generated sharp debates about the vitality of our democracy, and they are the subject of this book.

## The Social Transformation of America

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On a cab ride from Ann Arbor to the Detroit airport, the cab driver told me the story of the American dream as his life story. Driving a cab is not a fun job; it requires long hours, uncertainty, and brings in a typically modest income. The cab driver had grown up in the Detroit area. His relatives worked in the auto plants, and he drove a cab as a second job to make ends meet. We started talking about politics, and when he learned I

was a university professor, he told me of his children. His son had graduated from the University of Michigan and had begun a successful business career. He was even prouder of his daughter, who was finishing law school. “All this on a cab driver’s salary,” he said, with great pride in his children.

If you live in America, you have heard this story many times. It is the story of American society and the tremendous social changes we have shared. The past five decades have seen this story repeated over and over again because this has been a period of exceptional social and political change.<sup>12</sup> The expansion of the American economy produced a tremendous increase in the average standard of living. The postwar Baby Boom Generation reaped these benefits and, like the cab driver’s children, were often the first in their family to attend college.

In addition, a rights revolution empowered a large share of the public that had been limited to the periphery of politics. The civil rights movement of the 1960s through 1970s ended centuries of official governmental recognition and acceptance of racial discrimination. The women’s movement of the 1970s through 1980s transformed gender roles that had roots in social relations since the beginning of human history. (In the 1950s and early 1960s, it was unlikely that the cab driver’s daughter would have attended law school regardless of her abilities.) America also became a socially and ethnically diverse nation—even more so than its historic roots as an immigrant society. Today, the definition of equal rights has expanded to include homosexuals through the legalization of gay marriage and protection from other forms of discrimination.

In *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Richard Florida discussed how a time traveler from 1950 would view life in the United States if he or she was transported to 1900 and then again to 2000.<sup>13</sup> Florida suggests that *technological change* would appear greater between 1900 and 1950, as people moved from horse-and-buggy times all the way to the space age. But *cultural change* would seem greater between 1950 and 2000, as America went from a closed social structure with limited standards of living to a very affluent society, one that gives nearly equal status to women, blacks, and other minorities. Similarly, I am fairly certain that if Dwight D. Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson returned to observe the 2020 U.S. presidential election, they would not recognize it as the same electorate and politics as they encountered in their 1952 and 1956 campaigns for the Oval Office.

In the same respect, many of our scholarly images of American public opinion and political behavior are shaped by an older view of our political system. The landmark research of *The American Voter* remains unrivaled in its theoretical and empirical richness in describing the American public.<sup>14</sup> However, they examined the electorate of the 1950s. At an intellectual level, we may be aware of how the American public and politics have changed since 1952, but it is easy to overlook the total impact of these changes

because they accumulate only slowly. The electorate of 1956, for instance, was only marginally different from the electorate of 1952, and the electorate of 2020 is only marginally different from that of 2016. But the differences between 1952 and 2016 are often substantial. As gradual changes accumulate over five or six decades, however, this produces a major transformation in the socio-economic conditions of the American public. These conditions are directly related to citizenship norms. None of the trends described later in this chapter is likely to surprise you. But you may be struck by the size of the total change when compared across a long span of time.

Perhaps the clearest evidence of change and the carrier of new experiences and new norms is the generational turnover of the American public. The public of the 1950s largely came of age during the Great Depression or before and had lived through one or both world wars—experiences that had a strong influence on images of citizenship and politics. We can see how rapidly the process of demographic change reshapes the public by following the changing generational composition of the public from 1952 to the present.

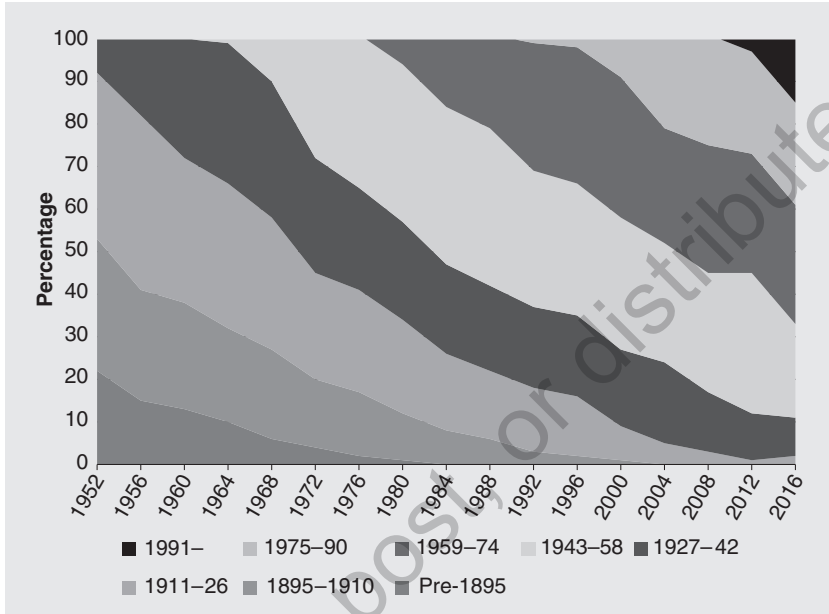
Figure 1.1 shows that in 1952, 85 percent of adults had grown up before the outbreak of World War II (born before 1926). This includes the “Greatest Generation” (born between 1895 and 1926) heralded by Tom Brokaw and other authors. Each year, with mounting frequency, a few of this generation leave the electorate, to be replaced by new citizens. In 1968, in the midst of the flower-power decade of the 1960s, the Greatest Generation still composed 60 percent of the populace. By 2016, this generation had all but left the electorate. In their place, a tenth of the public in 2016 are post–World War II Baby Boomers, a quarter is the Flower Generation of the 1960s and early 1970s, and another quarter is the Eighties Generation who followed. Generation X came at the end of the twentieth century and comprises about a fifth of the adult public. Most recently, a new Millennial Generation—born in 1982 or later—has entered adulthood; about a quarter of the adult public were Millennials in 2016.<sup>15</sup>

The steady march of generations across time has important implications for citizenship norms. Anyone born before 1926 was raised in a much different America, where people were expected to be dutiful, parents taught their children to be obedient, political skills were limited, and social realities were dramatically different from contemporary life. These citizens carry the living memories of the Great Depression, four-term president Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and World War II and its aftermath, and so they also embody the norms of citizenship shaped by these experiences.

The Baby Boom Generation experienced a very different kind of life as social and economic stability was reestablished after the war. In further contrast, the 1960s generation entered adulthood in the midst of fundamental social change: the end of segregation, women’s liberation, and the

Figure 1.1 Generational Change

- ▶ With the passage of time, the older “Greatest Generation” from World War II is leaving the electorate to be replaced by Boomers, the 1960s generation, Gen X, and now Millennials.



Sources: American National Election Study (ANES) Cumulative File, 1952–2008, ANES 2012–2016 face-to-face surveys.

expansion of civil and human rights around the world. The curriculum of schools changed to reinforce these developments, and surveys show that parents began emphasizing initiative and independence in rearing their children.<sup>16</sup> Most recently, Generation X and the Millennial Generation are growing up in an era when individualism appears dominant, social tolerance is widespread, and both affluence and consumerism seem overdeveloped (even if unequally shared).<sup>17</sup> If nothing else changed, we would expect that political norms would respond to this new social context.

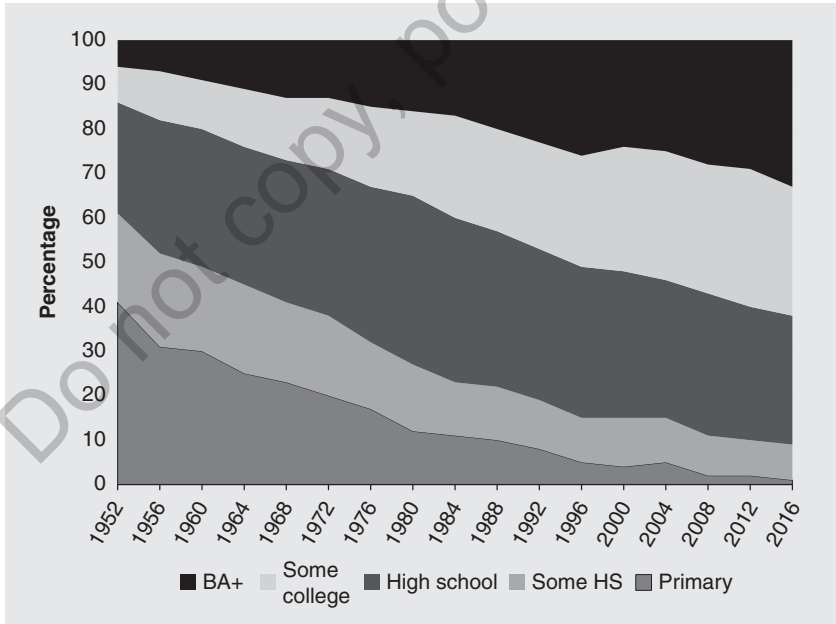
Citizenship norms also reflect the personal characteristics of the people. Over the past several decades, the politically relevant skills and resources of the average American have increased dramatically. One of the best indicators of this trend is educational achievement. Advanced industrial societies require more educated and technically sophisticated citizens, and modern affluence has expanded educational opportunities. University

enrollments grew dramatically during the latter half of the twentieth century. By the 1990s, graduate degrees were almost as common as bachelor's degrees were in midcentury.

These trends have steadily raised the educational level of the American public (Figure 1.2). For instance, two-fifths of American adults in 1952 had a primary education or less, and another fifth had only some high school. In the presidential election that year, the Eisenhower and Stevenson campaigns faced a citizenry with limited formal education, modest income levels, and relatively modest sophistication to manage the complexities of politics. It might not be surprising that these individuals would have a limited definition of the appropriate role of a citizen. By 2016, the educational composition of the American public had changed dramatically. Barely a tenth have less than a high school degree, and more than three-fifths have at least some college education—and many of these have earned one or more degrees. The contemporary American public has a level of formal schooling that would have been unimaginable in the 1950s.

**Figure 1.2 Educational Change**

► Citizens with less than a high school education were a majority of the public in the 1950s, and now a majority have attended college.



Sources: ANES Cumulative File, 1952–2012, ANES 2016 face-to-face.

There is no direct, one-to-one relationship between years of schooling and political sophistication. Nonetheless, education is strongly related to a person's level of political knowledge, political interest, and sophistication.<sup>18</sup> Educational levels affect the style of political decision-making, and rising educational levels increase the breadth of political interests.<sup>19</sup> A doubling of the public's educational level may not double the level of political sophistication and engagement, but a significant increase should and does occur. The public today is the most educated in the history of American democracy, and this contributes toward a more expansive and engaged image of citizenship.

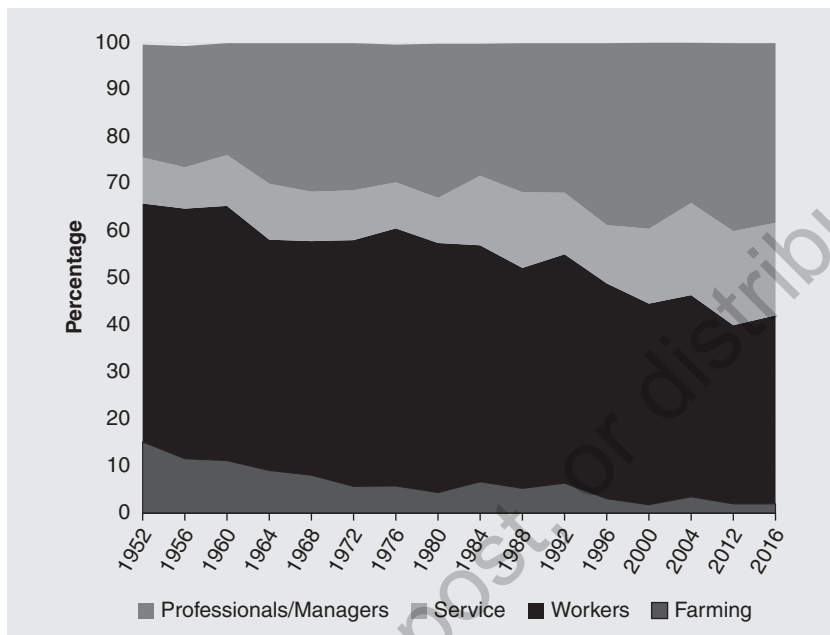
Even more provocatively, social scientists have found that the average person's IQ has risen over the past century in the United States and other affluent democracies.<sup>20</sup> The average American in 2012 had an IQ that was 18 points higher than the average American in 1952. This is a very large increase. This means that the average person in 2012 scores at what was the 85th percentile in 1952! We are getting smarter according to this evidence, which should make it easier for people to follow politics, participate in the process, and understand the complex issues we face. This rise in IQ is due to many factors, such as improving living standards, health, and the lessening of negative environmental conditions, but one important factor is the expansion of education and the development of a scientific way of thinking.

Social modernization has also transformed the structure of the economy from one based on industrial production and manufacturing (and farming) to one dominated by the services and the information sectors. Instead of the traditional blue-collar union worker, who manufactured goods and things, the paragon of today's workforce has shifted to the "knowledge worker," whose career is based on the creation, manipulation, and application of information.<sup>21</sup> Business managers, lawyers, accountants, teachers, computer programmers, designers, database managers, and media professionals all represent different examples of knowledge workers. If one takes a sociological view of the world, where life experiences shape political values, this shift in occupation patterns should affect citizenship norms. The traditional blue-collar employee works in a hierarchical organization where following orders, routine, and structure are guiding principles. Knowledge workers, in contrast, are supposed to be creative, adaptive, and technologically adept, which presumably produces a different image of what one's role should be in society. Richard Florida calls them the "creative class" and links their careers to values of individuality, diversity, openness, and meritocracy.<sup>22</sup>

These trends are a well-known aspect of American society, but we often overlook the amount of change they have fomented in politics over the past six decades. Figure 1.3 plots the broad employment patterns of American men from 1952 until 2016. (We'll track only males at this point and separately describe the shift in the social position of women later.) In

Figure 1.3 Changing Occupations of Men

- Fewer American males are employed in blue-collar or agricultural occupations, while professional and service employment has increased.



Sources: ANES Cumulative File, 1952–2004 ANES and ANES 2012, 2016.

the 1950s, most of the labor force was employed in working-class occupations and another sixth had jobs in farming. The category of professionals and managers, which is an indirect measure for knowledge workers (the actual number of knowledge workers is significantly larger) was small by comparison. Barely a quarter of the labor force held such jobs in the 1950s.

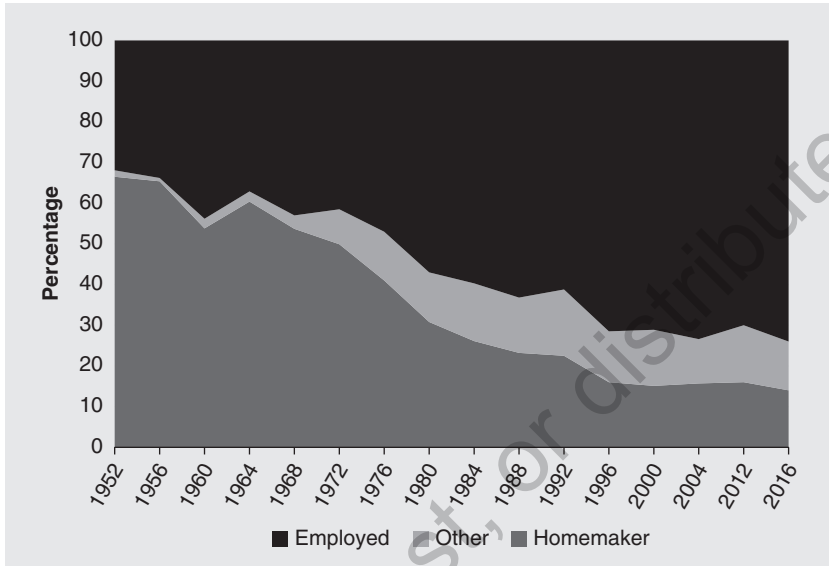
Slowly but steadily, labor patterns shifted. By 2016, blue-collar workers and professionals/management employees are at rough parity. Florida uses a more restrictive definition of the creative class but similarly argues that their proportion of the labor force has doubled since 1950.<sup>23</sup> Again, if nothing else had changed, we would expect that the political outlook of the modern knowledge worker would be much different than assembly-line workers in previous generations.

The social transformation of the American public has no better illustration than the changing social status of women. At the time Angus Campbell et al. published *The American Voter* in 1960,<sup>24</sup> women held a restricted role in society and politics. Women were homemakers and mothers—and



Figure 1.4 Working Women

- ▶ The percentage of women who describe themselves as housewives has dropped dramatically as most women have entered the active labor force.



Sources: ANES Cumulative File, 1952–2012, and 2016 ANES; women only, retirees not included.

it had always been so. One of the coauthors of *The American Voter* said that the interviewers regularly encountered women who thought the interviewer should return when her husband was home to answer questions since politics was the man's domain.

The women's movement changed these social roles in a relatively brief span of time. Women steadily moved into the workplace, entered universities, and became more engaged in the political process. Employment patterns illustrate the changes. Figure 1.4 tracks the percentage of women who were housewives, in paid employment, or another status across the past five decades.<sup>25</sup> In 1952, two-thirds of women described themselves as housewives. The image of June Cleaver, the stay-at-home-mom on the popular TV show *Leave It to Beaver*, was not an inaccurate portrayal of the middle-class American woman of that era. By 2016, however, three-quarters of women were employed, and only a seventh described themselves as homemakers. The professional woman is now a staple of American society and culture. The freedom and anxieties of the upwardly mobile women in the TV programs *Madame Secretary* and *Big Bang Theory* are more typical of the contemporary age.

The changing social status of women also affects their citizenship traits. For instance, women's educational levels have risen even more rapidly than men. By 2016, young men and women have essentially equal educational levels, with slightly more women attending college. Women entering the workforce should stimulate political participation; no longer is politics a male preserve. For instance, although women are still underrepresented in politics, the growth in the number of women officeholders during the last half of the twentieth century is quite dramatic.<sup>26</sup> Rather than being mere spectators or supporters of their husbands, women are now politically engaged and create their own political identities. Though gender inequity and issues of upward professional mobility remain, this transformation in the social position of women over the past several decades has clear political implications.

Race is another major source of political transformation within the American electorate. In the 1950s, the American National Election Studies found that about two-thirds of African Americans said they were not registered to vote, and few actually voted. By law or tradition, many of these Americans were excluded from the most basic rights of citizenship. The civil rights movement and the transformation of politics in the South finally incorporated African Americans into the electorate.<sup>27</sup> African American voting rates surged with Barack Obama's candidacy in 2008 and 2012, and black and white citizens now vote at roughly equal rates in presidential elections. In other words, almost a tenth of the public was excluded from citizenship in the mid-twentieth century, and these individuals are now both included and more active. Moreover, Hispanic and Asian Americans are also entering the electorate in increasing numbers, transforming the complexion of American politics. If Adlai Stevenson could witness the Democratic National Convention in 2008 and 2012, he would surely be amazed at the change in the party that nominated him for president in 1952 and 1956.

Though historically seismic, these generational, educational, gender, and racial changes are not the only ingredients of the social transformation of the United States into an advanced industrial society.<sup>28</sup> The average living standard of Americans has more than tripled over this period as well, closely linked to changes in the structure of the economy and rising levels of skills and knowledge. Michael Shermer summarizes some of the most striking changes in living standards:

We also have more material goods—SUVs, DVDs, PCs, TVs, designer clothes, name-brand jewelry, home appliances and gadgets of all kinds. The homes in which we keep all our goodies have doubled in size in just the last half a century, from about 1,100 square feet in the 1950s to more than 2,200 square feet today. And 95 percent of these homes have central heating, compared with just 15 percent a century ago, and 78 percent have air conditions, compared with the numbers of our grandparents' generation—zip.<sup>29</sup>

In addition, the growth of the mass media and the Internet create an information environment that is radically different from the experience of the 1950s: Information is now instantaneous, and it's available from a wide variety of sources. The advancement of transportation technologies has shrunk the size of the nation and the world and increased the breadth of life experiences.<sup>30</sup> These social changes inevitably increase the skills and resources that are useful in being an active democratic citizen.

These trends accompany changes in the forms of social organization and interaction. Structured forms of organization, such as institutional political parties and hierarchic organizations, have given way to voluntary associations and ad hoc advocacy groups, which in turn become less formal and more spontaneous in organization. Communities are becoming less bounded by geographical proximity; think of your Facebook friends and where they are located. Individuals are involved in increasingly complex and competing social networks that divide their loyalties. Institutional ties are becoming more fluid; hardly anyone expects to work a lifetime for one employer anymore.

None of these trends are surprising to analysts of America society, but too often we overlook the magnitude of these changes and their cumulative impact over more than sixty years. In fact, these trends are altering the norms of citizenship and, in turn, the nature of American politics. They have taken place in a slow and relatively silent process over several decades, but they now reflect the new reality of political life.

## The Evolution of Citizenship Norms

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The subtitle for this volume might be “The good news is . . . the bad news is wrong.” I have described the many changes in American society and politics. But is it correct to conclude, as many do, that if politics is not working as it did in the past, then our entire system of democracy is at risk? To understand what is changing among the American public and its implications for democracy, it is helpful to ask a simple but fundamental question:

*What does it mean to be a good citizen in America today?*

Take a moment to think of how you would answer. What criteria would you use? Voting? Paying taxes? Obeying the law? Volunteer work? Protest wrongdoing? Being concerned for those in need? Trying to protect the environment? Trusting government officials? This book examines how the American public answers this question. I argue that the changing definition of what it means to be a good citizen—what I call the *norms of citizenship*—are the key to understanding what is really going on.

This book holds that changing living standards, different occupational roles, the entry of women into the labor force, expanding civil rights, and other societal changes described in this chapter are producing two

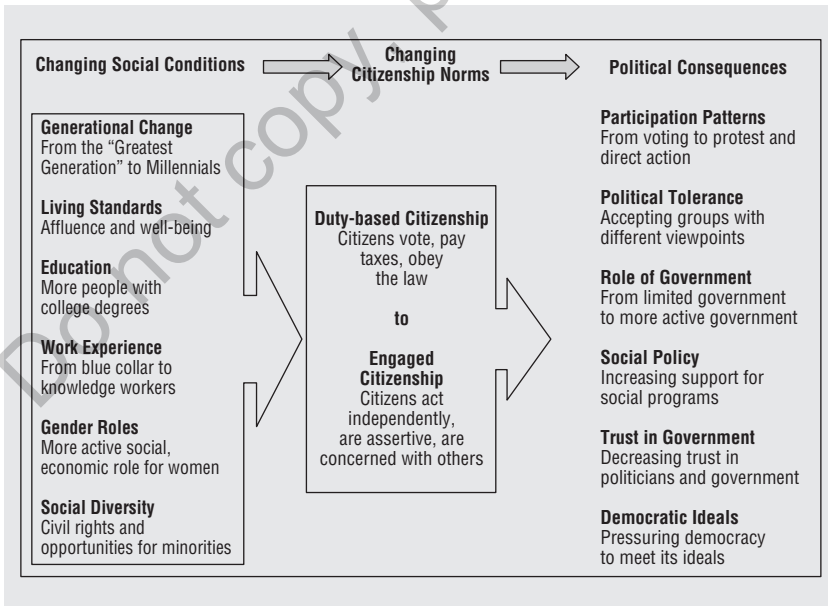
reinforcing effects. First, people possess new skills and resources that enable them to better manage the complexities of politics. People today are better educated, have more information available to them, and enjoy a higher standard of living than any previous American electorate. This removes some of the restrictions on democratic citizenship that existed in earlier time periods when these skills and resources were less commonly available. Second, these same social forces are reshaping social and political values. Americans are more assertive and less deferential to authority, more tolerant of diversity, and want more control over their lives. The expansion of these self-expressive values has a host of political implications.<sup>31</sup>

Figure 1.5 suggests that as the characteristics of citizens and society have changed, this reshapes political values, including the norms of good citizenship. Citizenship norms essentially define what people think is expected of them as participants in the political system, along with their expectations of government and the political process.

Most definitions of citizenship typically focus on the traditional norms of American citizenship—voting, paying taxes, serving on a jury—and how these seem to be eroding. I call this **duty-based citizenship** because

**Figure 1.5 The Changing American Public**

► The changing social conditions reshape the norms of what it means to be a good citizen, and this affects how citizens act and think about politics.



these norms reflect the formal obligations, responsibilities, and rights of citizenship as they have been defined in the past.

However, it is just as important to examine the norms that constitute what I call **engaged citizenship**. These norms are increasingly common among the American public. Engaged citizenship emphasizes a more assertive role for the citizen and a broader definition of citizenship to include social concerns and the welfare of others. As illustrated by those active in climate change protests, community volunteering, and similar activities, many Americans are engaged in society even if they do not vote or conform to traditional definitions of citizenship. Moreover, the social and political transformation of the United States over the past several decades has systematically shifted the balance between these different norms of citizenship. Duty-based norms are decreasing, especially among the young, but the norms of engaged citizenship are increasing.

Third, Figure 1.5 suggests that changes in citizenship norms then affect citizens' political values and behavior. For instance, duty-based norms of citizenship stimulate turnout in elections and a sense of patriotic allegiance to the elected government, while engaged citizenship may promote other forms of political action, ranging from volunteerism to public protest. These contrasting norms also shape other political values, such as tolerance of others and public policy priorities. Even trust in government is influenced by how individuals define their own norms of citizenship.

American politics and the citizenry are changing. Before anyone can deliver a generalized indictment of the American public, we need a full understanding of how citizenship norms are changing and of the effects of these changes. It is undeniable that the public at the beginning of the twenty-first century is different from the electorate in the mid-twentieth century. Some of these differences can benefit American democracy, such as increased political tolerance and acceptance of diversity in society and politics. Other generational differences are just different, not a threat to American democracy, unless these changes are ignored or resisted. A full examination of citizenship norms and their consequences will provide a more complex and potentially more optimistic picture of the challenges and opportunities facing American democracy today.

In addition, we need to place the American experience in a broader cross-national context. Many scholars who study American politics *only* study American politics. This leads to an introspective view of what is presumably unique about the American experience and how patterns of citizenship may or may not be idiosyncratic to the United States. American politics is one of the last fields of area-study research in which one nation is examined by itself. Many trends apparent in American norms of citizenship and political activity are common to other affluent democracies. Other patterns may be distinctly American. Only by broadening the field of comparison can we see the similarities and the differences.

The shift in the norms of citizenship does not mean that American democracy does not face challenges to respond to new citizen demands and new patterns of action. Indeed, the vitality of democracy is that it must and normally does respond to such challenges, and this in turn strengthens the democratic process. It is my contention that any political reforms should reflect a true understanding of the American public and its values. By accurately recognizing the current challenges and responding to them rather than making dire claims about political decay, American democracy can continue to evolve and develop. The fact remains, we cannot return to the politics of the 1950s, and we probably should not want to. However, we can improve the democratic process if we first understand how Americans and their world are really changing.

## The Plot of This Book

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This study uses public opinion surveys to describe citizenship norms in America. I have tried to make this information accessible to anyone interested in American politics, even those who are not well versed in statistics and research methodologies. The basic theme is quite straightforward: The modernization of American society has transformed the norms of citizenship, and this is affecting the political values and actions of the public, often in positive ways that previous research has overlooked.

The book has three sections. The first section describes citizenship norms in theory and reality. The idea of citizenship has a long history in political research and an equally long list of meanings and uses. Chapter 2 summarizes the key principles of citizenship in contemporary political thought, then introduces a battery of citizenship norms developed through an international collaboration of scholars. These questions appeared in the 2004 and 2014 General Social Surveys (GSS) of the American public, as well as other nations as part of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP).<sup>32</sup> A new survey by the Pew Research Center in 2018 allows me to update results to describe citizenship during the Trump administration. In addition, some evidence comes from the 2005 Citizenship, Involvement, and Democracy Survey conducted by the Center for Democracy and Civil Society (CDACS) at Georgetown University.<sup>33</sup>

These surveys identify two clusters of citizenship norms—citizen duty and citizen engagement—that organize the analysis in this volume. Chapter 3 describes which groups of people lean toward these two rival definitions of good citizenship.

The second section (Chapters 4–7) considers some of the potential consequences of changing norms of citizenship. I am limited to the topics included in the available surveys, but fortunately, they provide a wealth

of evidence on political attitudes and activities. Chapter 4 challenges the idea that political participation is broadly declining; it presents new evidence that people are engaged in different ways than in the past. Except for voting participation, more citizens participate in many forms of political action, especially direct, policy-focused, and individualized forms of activity. Changing norms of citizenship affect the choice of political activities.

Chapter 5 examines the link between citizenship norms and political tolerance. Media pundits and some politicians maintain that Americans have become polarized on ideological grounds, divided into “red” and “blue” states and comparable states of mind and intolerant toward those who are different. In fact, political tolerance has increased markedly over the past several decades, and this tolerance is concentrated among the young and better educated. These findings provide a much more positive image of how the American public has changed its political values over the past several generations.

Chapter 6 examines the implications of citizenship norms on the making of public policy: what policies people favor at both national and local levels. Long-term trends show that people have actually expanded their policy expectations of government over the past several decades, despite the efforts by some public officials to roll back the scope of government action. Moreover, citizenship norms are clearly linked to these expectations. The norms of citizen duty are linked to a restrictive image of the government’s policy role. Engaged citizens, meanwhile, see the need for greater government activity and activity in distinct policy domains. Citizenship norms shape our expectations of government and what it should provide.

Some of the loudest voices warning of a current crisis-of-democracy focus on the decline of political support since the late 1960s as an ominous sign for our nation. Chapter 7 tracks these trends and examines the relationship between citizenship and political support. Changing citizenship norms are related to these sentiments but in complex ways. The engaged citizen is less trustful of politicians, but engaged citizens are more supportive of democratic principles and democratic values. This suggests that changing citizenship norms are pressuring democracy to meet its ideals—and challenging politicians and institutions that fall short of these ideals.

While these analyses largely focus on the American experience, Chapter 8 places the U.S. findings in a cross-national context. Using data from the 2014 International Social Survey Program, I compare the patterns of citizenship norms and their consequences between Americans and Europeans. This shows what is distinct about the American experience and what is part of a common process affecting other affluent democracies.

The conclusion considers the implications of the findings for the democratic process in America. We cannot recreate the halcyon politics of a

generation ago, nor should we necessarily want to. New patterns of citizenship call for new processes and new institutions that will reflect the values of the contemporary American public.

## Conclusion

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In many ways, this book presents an unconventional view of the American public. Many of my colleagues in political science are skeptical of positive claims about the public—and they are especially skeptical that any good can come from the young. Instead, they warn that democracy is at risk and that young people are a primary reason.

I respect my colleagues' views and have benefited from their writings, *but this book tells the rest of the story*. Politics in the United States and other affluent societies are changing in ways that hold the potential for strengthening and broadening the democratic process—despite the Angst that one reads online or sees in news reports. The old patterns are eroding—as in norms of duty-based voting and deference toward authority—but there are positive and negative implications of these trends if we look for both. The new norms of engaged citizenship come with their own potential advantages and problems. America has become more democratic since the mid-twentieth century, even if progress is still incomplete. The purpose of this book is to understand the current state of American political consciousness. If we do not become preoccupied with the patterns of democracy in the past but look toward the potential for our democracy in the future, we can better understand the public and take advantage of the potential for further progress.