CHAPTER

1

CITIZENSHIP AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF AMERICAN SOCIETY

> Every age since the ancient Greeks fashioned an image of being political based upon citizenship
>
> Engin Isin, *Being Political*

What does it mean to be a "good citizen" in today's society?

In an article on the 2005 annual UCLA survey of college freshmen, the *Los Angeles Times* presented an interview with a California university student who had spent his semester break as a volunteer helping to salvage homes flooded by Hurricane Katrina.[1] The young man had organized a group of student volunteers, who then gave up their break to do hard labor in the devastated region far from their campus. He said finding volunteers willing to work "was easier than I expected." Indeed, the gist of the article was that volunteering in 2005 was at its highest percentage in the 25 years of the college survey.

Later I spoke with another student who also had traveled to the Gulf Coast. Beyond the work on Katrina relief, he was active on a variety of social and political causes, from problems of development in Africa, to campus politics, to the war in Iraq. When I asked about his interest in political parties and elections, however, there was stark lack of interest. Like many of his fellow students, he had not voted in the last election. He had not participated at all in the 2004 campaign, which was his first opportunity to vote. This behavior seems paradoxical considering the effort involved; it's just a short walk from the campus to the nearest polling

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station, but almost a two thousand mile drive along Interstate 10 to New Orleans.

These stories illustrate some of the ways that the patterns of citizenship are changing. Many young people in America—and in other Western democracies as well—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 all live. At the same time, they relate to government and society in different ways than their elders. Research in the United States and other advanced industrial democracies shows that modern-day citizens are the most educated, most cosmopolitan, and most supportive of self-expressive values than any other public in the history of democracy.[2] So from both anecdotal and empirical perspectives, most of the social and political changes in the American public over the past half-century would seem to have strengthened the foundations of democracy.

Despite this positive and hopeful view of America, however, a very different story is being told today in political and academic circles. An emerging consensus among political analysts would have us believe that the foundations of citizenship and democracy are crumbling. Just recently, a new study cosponsored by the American Political Science Association and the Brookings Institution begins:

> *American democracy is at risk. The risk comes not from some external threat but from disturbing internal trends: an erosion of the activities and capacities of citizenship. Americans have turned away from politics and the public sphere in large numbers, leaving our civic life impoverished. Citizens participate in public affairs less frequently, with less knowledge and enthusiasm, in fewer venues, and less equally than is healthy for a vibrant democratic polity.*[3]

A host of political analysts now bemoans what is wrong with America and its citizens.[4] Too few of us are voting, we are disconnected from our fellow citizens and lacking in social capital, we are losing our national identity, we are losing faith in our government, and the nation is in social disarray. The *lack* of good citizenship is the phrase you hear most often to explain these disturbing trends.

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What you also hear is that the young are the primary source of this decline. Authors from Robert Putman to former television news anchor Tom Brokaw extol the civic values and engagement of the older, "greatest generation" with great hyperbole.[5] Putnam holds that the slow, steady, and ineluctable replacement of older, civic-minded generations by the disaffected Generation X is the most important reason for the erosion of social capital in America.[6] Political analysts and politicians seemingly agree that young Americans are dropping out of politics, losing faith in government, and even becoming disenchanted with their personal lives.[7] Perhaps not since Aristotle held that "political science is not a proper study for the young" have youth been so roundly denounced by their elders.

Here we have 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 view points to new patterns of citizenship that have emerged among the young, the better educated, and other sectors of American society. These opposing views have generated sharp debates about the vitality of our democracy, and they are the subject of this book.

Perhaps the subtitle for this volume should be: "The good news is . . . the bad news is wrong." Indeed, something is changing in American society and politics. But is it logical 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, and its implications for American democracy, it is more helpful first to ask that 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 are the criteria you would use? Voting? Paying taxes? Obeying the law? Volunteer work? Public protests? Being concerned for those in need? Membership in a political party? Trusting government officials?

This book examines how the American public answers this question—and the fact is, people answer it in different ways. This study will argue that the changing definition of what it means to be a good citizen—what I call the *norms of citizenship*—provide the key to understanding what is really going on.

Let's begin the analysis by examining the social restructuring of American society (Figure 1.1). Changing living standards, occupational

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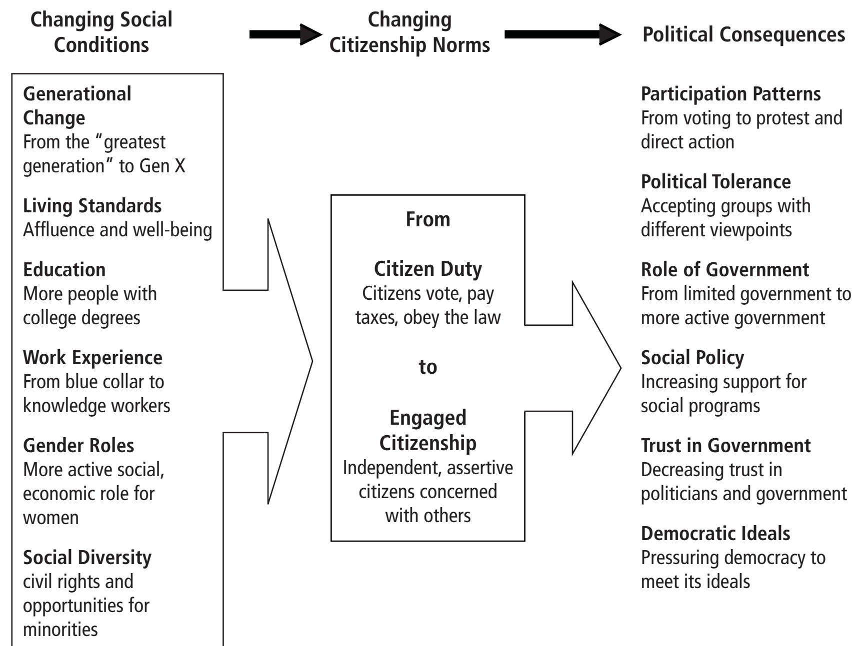
FIGURE 1-1 The Changing American Public

▶ *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.*



experiences, generational change, the entry of women into the labor force, expanding civil rights, and other societal changes 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. This removes some of the restrictions on democratic citizenship that might have existed in earlier historical periods when these skills and resources were less commonly available. Second, social forces are reshaping social and political values. Americans are more assertive and less deferential to authority, and they place more emphasis on participating in the decisions affecting their lives. The expansion of these self-expressive values has a host of political implications.[8]

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These social changes have a direct effect on the norms of citizenship, if for no other reason than that citizenship norms are the encapsulation of the nation's political culture. They 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, belonging to a political party—and how these are changing. I call this **duty-based citizenship** because 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 new norms that make up what I call **engaged citizenship.** These norms are emerging among the American public with increasing prominence. Engaged citizenship emphasizes a more assertive role for the citizen, and a broader definition of the elements of citizenship to include social concerns and the welfare of others. As illustrated by the Katrina volunteers, many Americans believe they are fully 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.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the point that social and demographic changes affect citizenship norms, which in turn affect the political values and behavior of the public. 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 respect for government itself 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, it is important to have a full understanding of how citizenship norms are changing and of the effects of these changes. It is undeniable that the American public at the beginning of the twenty-first century is different from the American

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electorate in the mid-twentieth century. However, some of these differences actually 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, it is essential to place the American experience in a broader cross-national context. Many scholars who study American politics still study *only* American politics. This leads to an introspective, parochial 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 the last great field 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 advanced industrial democracies. Other patterns may be distinctly American. Only by broadening the field of comparison can we ascertain the similarities and the differences.

The shift in the norms of citizenship does not mean that American democracy does not face challenges in response to new citizen demands and new patterns of action. Indeed, the vitality of democracy is that it must, and usually does, respond to such challenges, and this in turn strengthens the democratic process. But it is my contention that political reforms must 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. But we can improve the democratic process if we first understand how Americans and their world are really changing.

THE SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION OF AMERICA

I recently took a cab ride from Ann Arbor, Michigan, to the Detroit airport, and the cab driver retold the story of the American dream as his life story. Now, driving a cab is not a fun job; it requires long hours, uncer-

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tainty, and brings in 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. 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.[9] There was a tremendous increase in the average standard of living as the American economy expanded. 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. The civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s ended centuries of official governmental recognition and acceptance of racial discrimination. The women's movement of the 1970s and 1980s transformed gender roles that had roots in social relations since the beginning of human history. (A generation ago, 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 had experienced in the past. Changes in the media environment and political process have transformed the nature of democratic politics in America, as citizens have more information about how their government is, or is not, working for them, and more means of expressing their opinions and acting out their views.

In *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Richard Florida has an evocative discussion of 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.[10] Florida suggests that *technological* change would be greater between 1900 and 1950, as people moved from horse-and-buggy times all the way to the space age. But *cultural* change would be greater between 1950 and 2000, as America went from a closed social structure to one that gives nearly equal status to women, blacks, and other ethnic minorities. Similarly, I suspect that if Dwight D. Eisenhower and Adlai E. Stevenson returned to

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observe the next U.S. presidential election, they would not recognize it as the same electorate as the people 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 outdated view of our political system. The landmark studies of Angus Campbell, Philip Converse, Warren Miller, and Donald Stokes remain unrivaled in their theoretical and empirical richness in describing the American public.[11] However, they examined the electorate of the 1950s. At an intellectual level, we may be aware of how the American public and American politics have changed since 1952, but since these changes accumulate slowly over time, it is easy to overlook their total impact. The electorate of 1956, for instance, was only marginally different from the electorate of 1952; and the electorate of 2004 is only marginally different from that of 2000. As these gradual changes accumulated over fifty years, however, a fundamental transformation in the socio-economic conditions of the American public occurred, conditions that are directly related to citizenship norms.

None of these trends in and of themselves is likely to surprise the reader. 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 formative influence on images of citizenship and politics. We can see how rapidly the process of demographic change transforms the citizenry by following the results of the American National Election Studies, which have tracked American public opinions over the past half-century. Figure 1.2 charts the generational composition of the public. In the electorate of 1952, 85 percent of Americans 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 recent 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 popu-

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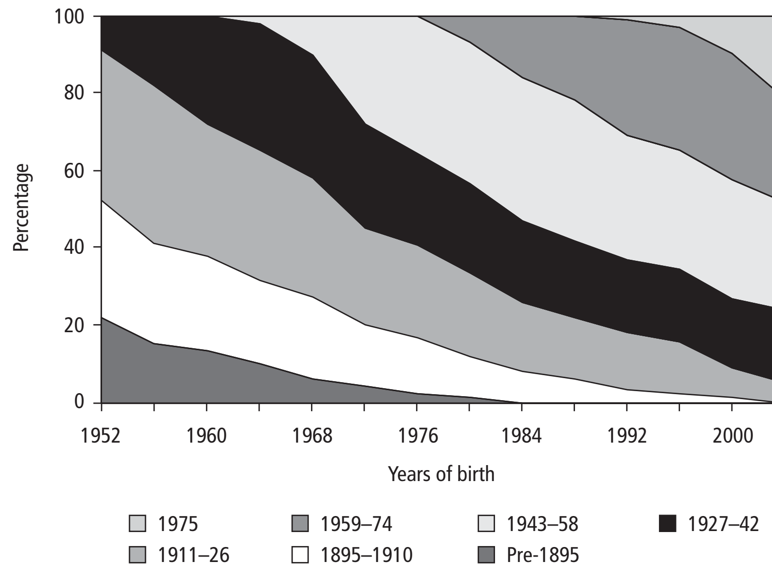
FIGURE 1-2 Generational Change

With the passage of time, the older "greatest generation" that experienced WWII is leaving the electorate to be replaced by baby boomers, the 1960s generation, and now Gen X and Gen Y.



Source: American National Election Study (ANES) Cumulative File, 1952–2004.

lace. But by 2004, this generation accounts for barely 5 percent of the populace. In their place, a third of the contemporary public are post-World War II baby boomers, another third is the flower generation of the 1960s and early 1970s, and a full 20 percent are the Generation-Xers who have come of age since 1993 (born after 1975).

The steady march of generations across time has important implications for norms of citizenship. Anyone born before 1926 grew up and became socialized in a much different political context, where citizens 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

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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 American social and economic stability was reestablished after the war. In further contrast, the 1960s generation experienced a nation in the midst of traumatic social change—the end of segregation, women's liberation, and the expansion of civil and human rights around the world. The curriculum of schools changed to reinforce these developments, and surveys show that parents also began emphasizing initiative and independence in rearing their children.[12] And most recently, Generation X and Generation Y are coming of age in an environment where individualism appears dominant, and both affluence and consumerism seem overdeveloped (even if unequally shared). If nothing else changed, we would expect that political norms would change in reaction 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 development is the public's 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 mid-century.

These trends have steadily raised the educational level of the American public (Figure 1.3). For instance, two-fifths of the American public 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 2004, the educational composition of the American public had changed dramatically. Less than a tenth have less than a high school degree, and more than half have at least some college education—and most of these have earned one or more degrees. The contemporary American public has a level of formal schooling that would have been unimaginable in 1952.

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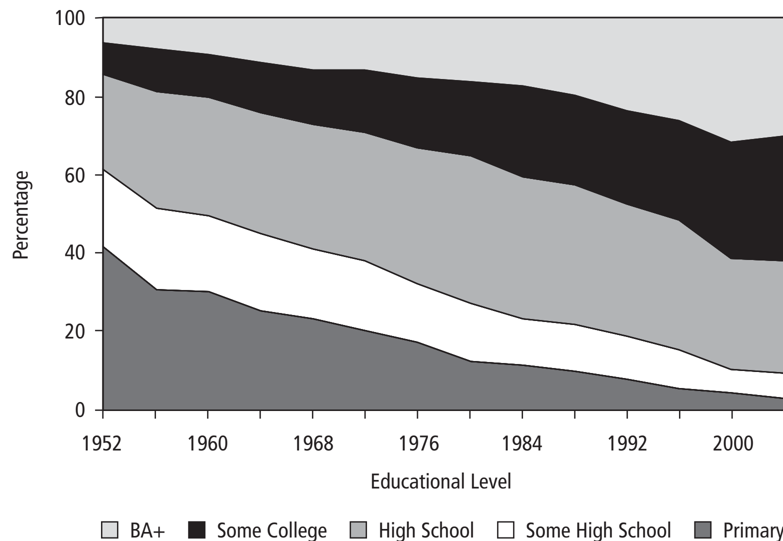
FIGURE 1.3 Educational Change

Citizens with less than a high school education were a majority of the public in the 1950s; now a majority have attended change.



Source: ANES Cumulative File, 1952–2004.

There is no direct, one-to-one relationship between years of schooling and political sophistication. Nonetheless, research regularly links education to a citizen's level of political knowledge, interest, and sophistication.[13] Educational levels affect the modes of political decision-making that people use, and rising educational levels increase the breadth of political interests.[14] A doubling of the public's educational level may not double the level of political sophistication and political 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.

In addition, social modernization has 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

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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.[15] 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.[16]

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 five decades. Figure 1.4 plots the broad employment patterns of American men from 1952 until 2004. (We'll track only males at this point to separate out the shift in the social position of women, which is examined below). In 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 will stand here as a surrogate 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 have shifted. By 2000–2004, blue-collar workers and knowledge workers are almost at parity, and the proportions of service and clerical workers have increased (some of whom should also be classified as knowledge workers). Florida uses a slightly more restrictive definition of the creative class, but similarly argues that their proportion of the labor force has doubled since 1950.[17] Again, if nothing else had changed, we would expect that the political outlook of the modern knowledge worker would be much different than in previous generations.

The social transformation of the American public has no better illustration than the new social status of women. At the time Angus Camp-

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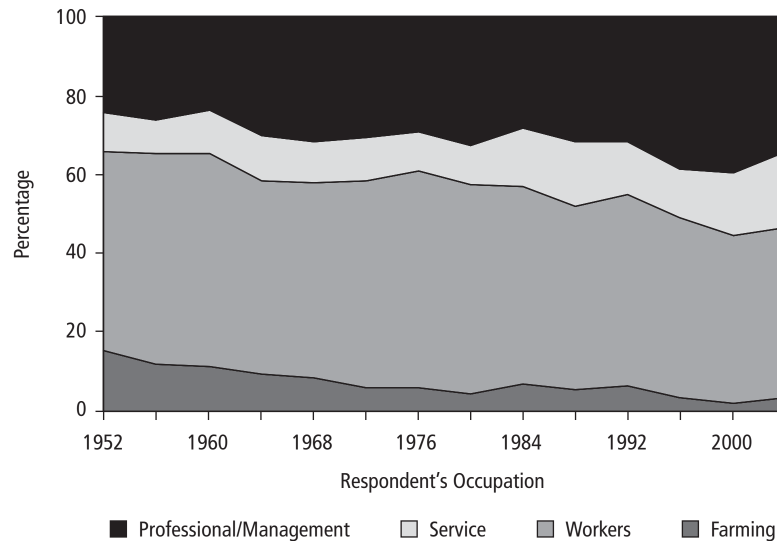
FIGURE 1.4 **Changing Occupations of Men**

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



Source: ANES Cumulative File, 1952–2004; men only.

bell et al. published *The American Voter* in 1960, women exercised a very restricted role in society and politics. Women were homemakers and mothers—and it had always been so. One of the co-authors of *The American Voter* noted that their interviewers regularly encountered women who thought the interviewer should return when her husband was home to answer the survey 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 1.5 tracks the percentage of women who were housewives, in paid employment, or another status across the past five decades.[18] 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

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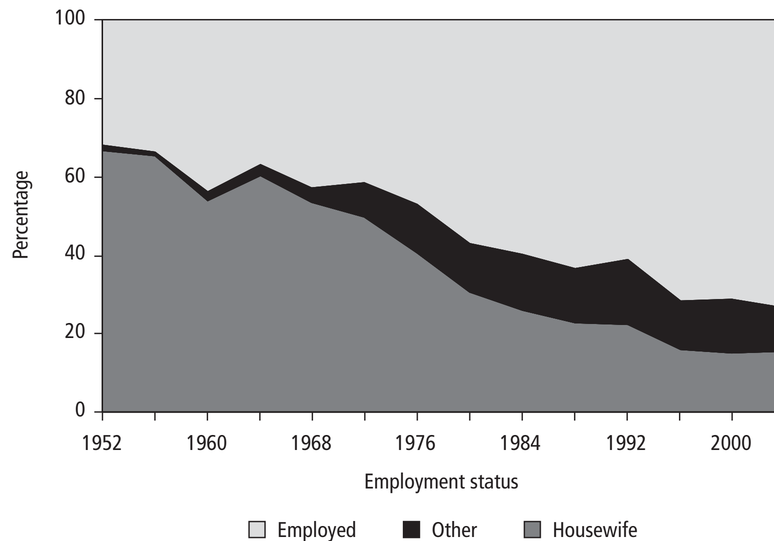
FIGURE 1-5 Working Women

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



Source: ANES Cumulative File, 1952–2004; women only, retirees not included.

the middle class American woman of that era. By 2004, however, three-quarters of women were employed and only a sixth described themselves as housewives. The professional woman is now a staple of American society and culture. The freedom and anxieties of the upwardly mobile women in "Friends" and "Sex and the City" are more typical of the contemporary age.

The change in the social status of women also affects their citizenship traits. For instance, the educational levels of women have risen even more rapidly than men. By 2000, the educational attainment of young men and women were essentially equal. As women enter the workforce, this should stimulate political engagement; 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

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twentieth century is quite dramatic.[19] Rather than being mere spectators or supporters of their husbands, women are now engaged on their own and create their own political identities. Though gender inequity and issues of upward professional mobility remain, this transformation in the social position of half the public 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.[20] In the presidential elections of 2000 and 2004, African-Americans voted at rates equal to or greater than white Americans. 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 Asia-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, he would barely recognize the party that nominated him for president in both 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.[21] The living standards of Americans have grown tremendously over this period as well, providing more resources and opportunities to become politically engaged. The great internal migration of Americans from farm to city during the mid-twentieth century stimulated changes in life expectations and lifestyles. The urbanization—and, more recently, the "suburbanization"—of American society has created a growing separation of the home from the workplace, a greater diversity of occupations and interests, an expanded range of career opportunities, and more geographic and social mobility. The growth of the mass media and now 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 expansion of transportation technologies has

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shrunk the size of the nation and the world, and increased the breadth of life experiences.[22]

These trends accompany changes in the forms of social organization and interaction. Structured forms of organization, such as political parties run by backroom "bosses" and tightly run political machines, 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. 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 size of these changes and their cumulative impact over more than fifty 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 PLOT OF THIS BOOK

This study uses public opinion surveys and other empirical research to analyze citizenship norms in America. Its goal is to make this information accessible to anyone interested in American politics who is not well versed in advanced 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 American 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. Citizenship is an idea with a long history in political research, but 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 and citizen surveys. These questions appeared in the 2004 General Social Survey (GSS) of American citizens as well as to citizens of other nations as part of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP)—the central evidence for our study.[23] In addition,

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the Center for Democracy and Civil Society (CDACS) at Georgetown University included a similar battery of questions in its 2005 Citizenship, Involvement, and Democracy Survey; this data replicates and extends the analyses from the GSS/ISSP.[24]

These surveys help us identify two clusters of citizenship norms—citizen duty and citizen engagement—that structure the analysis in this volume. The first, citizen duty, reflects traditional norms of the citizen as loyal to, and supportive of, the traditional political order. The second cluster typifies the new, challenging values found among younger Americans.

The second section (Chapters 4–7) considers the potential consequences of changing norms of citizenship. We are limited to the topics included in the 2004 General Social Survey and the 2005 CDACS, but this fortunately provides evidence on an important range of political attitudes and activities. Chapter 4 challenges the idea that political participation is in broad decline, and it presents new evidence that Americans are engaged in different ways than in the past. Except for voting participation, more Americans now participate in many forms of political action, especially direct, policy-focused, and individualized forms of activity, such as contacting politics, working with community groups, and protest activities. In fact, changing norms of citizenship affect the choice of political activities.

Chapter 5 examines the link between citizenship norms and political tolerance. Popular political discourse suggests 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, various measures display a steady increase of political tolerance 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—how they translate into laws and regulations at both national and local levels. Long-term trends suggest that public expectations of government action have expanded 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

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these expectations of government. The traditional image of citizen duty leads 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 in the crisis-of-democracy literature have focused on the decline of political support since the late 1960s as an ominous sign for our nation. Chapter 7 tracks these trends and analyzes the relationship between citizenship and political support. Again, it becomes clear that changing citizenship norms are related to these sentiments, but in complex ways. The engaged citizen is less trustful of politicians when compared to those who stress citizenship as a duty, but engaged citizens are also 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 cross-national context. Using data from the International Social Survey Program, we can compare the consequences of citizenship norms between Americans and European publics. This enables us to detect what is distinct about the American experience, and what is part of a common process affecting other advanced industrial 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

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 American public—and they are especially skeptical that any good can come from the young. Instead, they warn that democracy is at risk and that American youth are a primary reason.

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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 advanced industrial societies is changing in ways that hold the potential for strengthening and broadening the democratic process. 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. Understanding the current state of American political consciousness is the purpose of this book. 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 American public and take advantage of the potential for further progress.

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