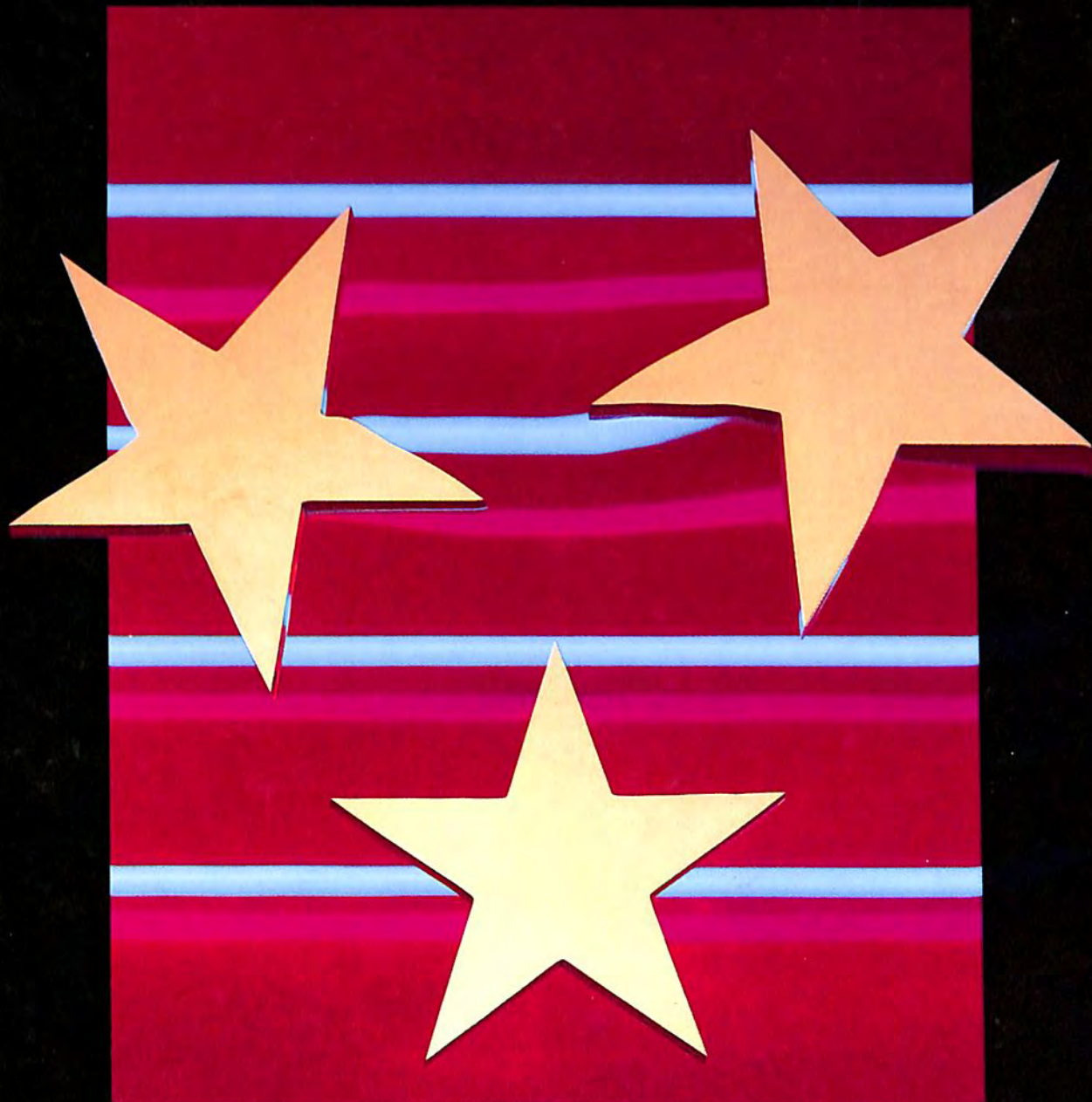


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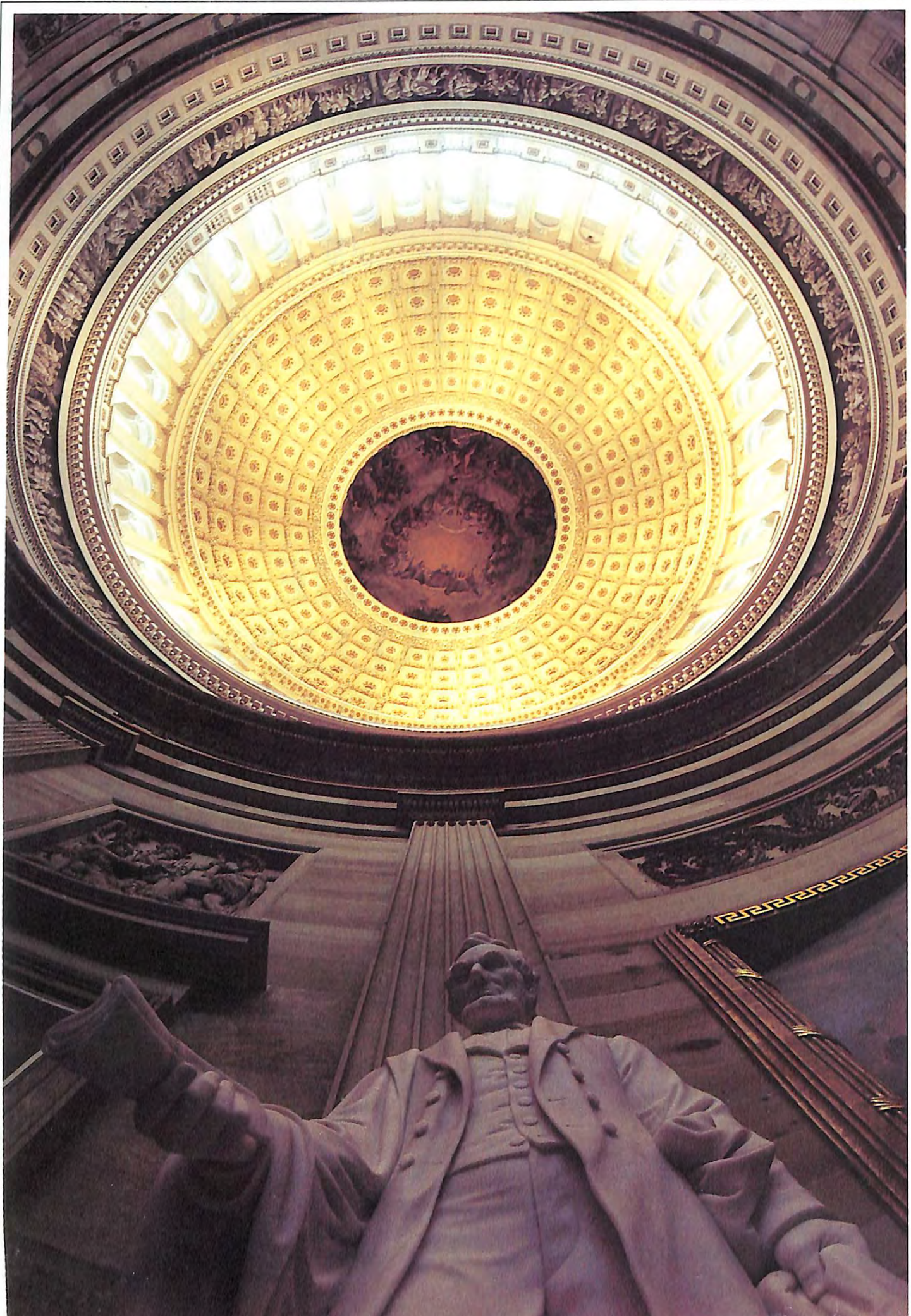
GOVERNMENT IN AMERICA

S E C O N D E D I T I O N

JANDA | BERRY | GOLDMAN



**THE
CHALLENGE
OF
DEMOCRACY**



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THE CHALLENGE OF DEMOCRACY

Government in America

Second Edition

Houghton Mifflin Company Boston Dallas Geneva, Illinois Palo Alto Princeton, New Jersey



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*For our children
Susan and Katy
Rachel and Jessica
John, Matt, and Josh*

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Preface

We wanted to write an American government textbook that students would like and would credit for shaping their thinking about politics. The response to the first edition of *The Challenge of Democracy* was gratifying. Now, with the second edition, we believe more than ever that students will like *The Challenge of Democracy* and that they will use its framework to analyze politics long after their studies end.

We have tried to discuss a complex subject, politics, in a captivating and understandable way. American politics isn't dull, and its textbooks needn't be either. Although working on this revision was more work than any of us originally imagined, we also have had more fun along the way than we ever thought possible.

We think that an introductory American government text can go beyond simply offering students basic information about the political process. A text can also teach students how political scientists think about politics. In our profession, we try to organize, analyze, and interpret political events, trends, and problems. We want to encourage students to organize, analyze, and interpret American politics and government, too.

THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

It is easy for students to become frustrated with the sheer amount of information assigned each week in an introductory American government course. Our framework provides a way for them to put this information into a broader perspective. Most important, our framework enables students to recognize and think critically about the difficult choices we face as citizens and voters.

Two themes run through our book. In Chapter 1, we suggest that American politics often reflects conflicts between the values of *freedom* and *order* and between the values of *freedom* and *equality*. These value conflicts are prominent in contemporary American society, and they help to explain political controversy and consensus in earlier eras.

In Chapter 3, for example, we argue that the Constitution was designed to promote order and virtually ignored issues of political and social

equality. However, equality was later served by several amendments to the Constitution. In Chapter 17, "Order and Civil Liberties," and in Chapter 18, "Equality and Civil Rights," we demonstrate how many of this nation's most controversial issues are conflicts among individuals holding differing values concerning freedom, order, and equality. Views on issues such as school prayer are not just political opinions, but rather choices about a philosophy that citizens want government to follow. Yet these choices are difficult, sometimes excruciatingly so.

The second theme, introduced in Chapter 2, asks students to consider two competing models of government. One way that government can make decisions is by means of *majoritarian* principles, that is, by taking the actions desired by a majority of citizens. Majoritarianism is a focus of discussion, for example, in Chapter 8, "Political Parties, Campaigns, and Elections," where we treat the real and the ideal roles of political parties. A contrasting model of government, *pluralism*, is built around the interaction of government decision makers with groups concerned about issues that directly affect them. Pluralism is a focus in Chapter 14, "The Washington Community," where we discuss issue networks in the nation's capital.

These models are not mere abstractions; we use them to illustrate the dynamics of the American political system. In Chapter 6, "The Mass Media," we discuss the media's role in the reporting of public opinion, which advances the cause of majoritarianism. Chapter 10, "Congress," begins with a discussion of the confrontation between the public's wish for a new, simplified tax law and the interest-group defense of the old, benefit-bestowing tax law. The tension between majoritarianism and pluralism is common in our political system, and we have tried to help students understand the advantages and disadvantages of each model.

As appropriate in each chapter, we use the themes to discuss relevant issues. All Americans profess a commitment to equality, but "equality" means different things to different people. In Chapter 18, we follow a detailed presentation of the development of affirmative action policy with a discussion of different conceptions of equality, invoking the related concepts introduced in Chapter 1.

Throughout the book we stress that it is the *students* who must choose among the competing values and models of government. Although the three of us have strong opinions about which choices are best, we do not believe it is our role to tell college students our answers to the broad questions we pose. We hope that students will recognize that maintaining a democracy requires difficult choices; this is why we have titled our book *The Challenge of Democracy*.

FEATURES OF THE BOOK

In many ways, the most important features of the book are the two themes just described, for they provide a consistent thread that underlies the presentation of factual material. We also use some other strategies to help students understand what they read.

Each chapter begins with a vignette that draws the student into the chapter and suggests the major themes of the book. It is followed by a few focus questions that alert the student to the central ideas addressed in the chapter.

We believe that students can better evaluate how our political system works when they compare it with politics in other countries. Each chapter has at least one boxed feature—called "Compared With What?"—that treats its topic in a comparative perspective. How much importance do citizens throughout the world place on the value of *order*? How much do Americans participate in politics compared with citizens elsewhere? How much does the United States spend on social insurance and defense compared with other countries? These and other questions are addressed by the "Compared With What?" boxes.

The second edition contains a new set of boxed features entitled "Politics in the Information Age." Each box provides a clear example of how media and modern technology are changing American politics. For example, in Chapter 2, we contemplate the effects of allowing citizens to vote on issues by means of computer terminals in their homes.

Additional boxed features discuss topics in more detail or explain them through illustration. For example, in Chapter 8, we discuss *The Wizard of Oz* as a political fable written about the Progressive party around the turn of the century. In Chapter 15, "The Economics of Public Policy," we illustrate the lack of consensus among economists on key principles of economic theory.

Another feature of *The Challenge of Democracy* is the set of four "Essays," linked by a common theme—transformations in American politics. They appear between the major parts of the book. The essays discuss transformations in American society, in political art, in party politics, and in public policy. Each essay illustrates and describes important subjects discussed in the chapters.

Each chapter concludes with lists of key terms and suggested readings. The book itself concludes with an Epilogue that examines Gorbachev's problems in reforming the Soviet system and assesses whether government in America does what the people want. Finally, the appendix contains *Federalist Papers* Nos. 10 and 51, other basic documents of American government (including an annotated, accessible Constitution), and a glossary of terms.

THE TEACHING PACKAGE

When we began writing *The Challenge of Democracy*, we viewed the book as part of a tightly integrated set of instructional materials. We have worked closely with some very talented political scientists and with educational specialists at Houghton Mifflin to produce what we think is a superior set of ancillary materials to help both students and instructors throughout the course.

The primary purpose of the *Instructor's Manual*, written by the authors (and ably updated by Ethan Cosgriff), is to provide teachers with

classroom material that relates directly to the thematic framework and organization of the book. It includes learning objectives, chapter synopses, lecture outlines, and suggested classroom and individual activities. The accompanying *Test Item Bank*, prepared by Nicholas Strinkowski of Hartwick College, provides over 1,500 test items—identification, multiple-choice, and essay. The *Study Guide*, written by Melissa Butler of Wabash College, is keyed closely to the book. It contains an overview of each chapter, exercises on reading tables and graphs, suggested topics for student research, and multiple-choice questions for practice. The transparency package, containing thirty-six full-color overhead transparencies, is available to adopters of the book. Adopters may also receive a videotape that highlights key political events and personalities discussed in the text.

Computer software ancillaries available to adopters include *LectureBank*, an inventory of detailed ideas for lecture topics; *Microtest*, a test generation program containing all the items in the printed *Test Item Bank*; and *GPA: Grade Performance Analyzer*, which enables instructors to create rosters for each course section and to monitor and analyze student performance throughout the term. Other software ancillaries are designed to improve students' understanding: *Microstudy Plus*, a computerized study guide, and *IDEAlog*, an interactive exercise introducing students to the value conflicts theme in the book. For instructors who want to introduce students to data analysis there are a disk and workbook called *Crosstabs*, which allows students to do creative research using survey data on the presidential election and data on voting in Congress. The *Crosstabs* materials were prepared in collaboration with Philip Schrodtt of the University of Kansas.

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Ken Janda, Jerry Goldman,
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PART *I*

**DILEMMAS OF
DEMOCRACY**



1

Freedom, Order, or Equality?

The Purposes of Government

Maintaining Order • Providing Public Goods • Promoting Equality

A Conceptual Framework for Analyzing Government

The Concepts of Freedom, Order, and Equality

Freedom • Order • Equality

Two Dilemmas of Government

The Original Dilemma: Freedom Versus Order • The Modern Dilemma: Freedom Versus Equality

Ideology and the Scope of Government

Totalitarianism • Socialism • Capitalism • Libertarianism • Anarchism • Liberals and Conservatives—The Narrow Middle

American Political Ideologies and the Purpose of Government

Liberals Versus Conservatives: The New Differences • A Two-Dimensional Classification of Ideologies

Which is better: to live under a government that allows individuals complete freedom to do whatever they please or under one that enforces strict law and order? Which is better: to allow businesses and private clubs to discriminate in choosing their customers and members or to pass laws that enforce equality among races and sexes?

For many people, none of these alternatives is satisfactory. All of them pose difficult dilemmas of choice. These dilemmas are tied to opposing philosophies that place different values on freedom, order, and equality.

This book explains American government and politics in light of these dilemmas. It does more than explain the workings of our government; it encourages you to think about what government should—and should not—do. And it judges the American government against democratic ideals, encouraging you to think about how government should make its decisions. As its title implies, *The Challenge of Democracy* argues that good government often involves tough choices.

College students frequently say that American government and politics are hard to understand. In fact, many people voice the same complaint. Nearly three-quarters of a national sample interviewed after the 1984 presidential election agreed with the statement "Politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't understand what's going on."¹ With this book, we hope to improve your understanding of "what's going on" by analyzing and evaluating the norms or values that people use to judge political events. Our purpose is not to preach what people ought to favor in making policy decisions; it is to teach what values they have favored.

Teaching without preaching is not easy; no one can exclude personal values completely from political analysis. But our approach minimizes this problem by concentrating on the dilemmas that confront governments when they are forced to choose between policies that threaten equally cherished values. An example: People value both freedom and human life. Studies clearly show that seat belts save lives. Does this mean a government should force its citizens to wear seat belts? Or should it allow citizens the freedom *not* to wear seat belts—sacrificing lives in the process.

Every government policy reflects a choice between conflicting values. We want you to understand this concept, to understand that all government policies reinforce certain values (norms) at the expense of others. We want you to interpret policy issues (for example, should buckling up be mandatory?) with an understanding of the fundamental values in question (individual freedom versus safety and order) and the broader political overtones (conservative or liberal politics).

By looking beyond specifics to underlying normative principles, you should be able to make more sense out of politics. Our framework for analysis does not encompass all the complexities of American government, but it should help your knowledge grow by improving your digestion of political information. We begin by considering the basic purposes of government. In short, why do we need it?

THE PURPOSES OF GOVERNMENT

Most people do not like being told what to do. Fewer still like being coerced into acting a certain way. Yet every day, millions of American motorists dutifully drive on the right-hand side of the street and obediently stop at red lights. Every year, millions of U.S. citizens struggle to complete their income tax forms before midnight, April 15. In both of these examples, the coercive power of government is at work. If people do not like being coerced, why do they submit to it? In other words, why do we have government?

Government can be defined as the legitimate use of force—including imprisonment and execution—to control human behavior within territorial boundaries. All governments require citizens to surrender some freedom in the process of being governed. Although some governments minimize their infringement on personal freedom, no government has as a goal the maximization of personal freedom. Governments exist to control; *to govern* means "to control." Why do people surrender their freedom to this control? To obtain the benefits of government. Throughout history, government seems to have served three major purposes: maintaining order (preserving life and protecting property), providing public goods, and promoting equality.

Maintaining Order

Maintaining order is the oldest objective of government. **Order** in this context is rich with meaning. Let's start with "law and order."

Leviathan, Hobbes's All-Powerful Sovereign

This engraving is from the 1651 edition of *Leviathan*, by Thomas Hobbes. It shows Hobbes's sovereign brandishing a sword in one hand and the scepter of justice in the other. He watches over an orderly town, made peaceful by his absolute authority. But note that the sovereign's body is composed of tiny images of his subjects. He exists only through them. Hobbes explains that such governmental power can be created only if men "confer all their power and strength upon one man, or upon one assembly of men, that may reduce all their wills, by plurality of voices, unto one will."



Maintaining order here means establishing the rule of law to preserve life and to protect property. For the seventeenth-century philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), preserving life was the most important function of government. In his classic philosophical treatise, *Leviathan* (1651), Hobbes described life without government as life in a “state of nature.” Without rules, people would live like animals, stealing and killing for personal benefit. In Hobbes’s classic phrase, life in a state of nature would be “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.” He believed that a single ruler, or *sovereign*, must possess unquestioned authority to guarantee the safety of the weak against attacks of the strong. Hobbes characterized his all-powerful government as *Leviathan*, a biblical sea monster. He believed that complete obedience to *Leviathan*’s strict laws was a small price to pay for the security of living in a civil society.

Most of us can only imagine what a state of nature would be like. We might think of the Old West in the days before the Lone Ranger (or John Wayne) rode into town and established law and order. But in some parts of the world today, people actually are living in a state of lawlessness. For more than a decade, the Lebanese have lived under a central government that is not strong enough to control warring religious factions. Films of the street fighting in the strife-torn city of Beirut, shown with regularity on the six o’clock news, give us a good picture of what a state of nature might be like.

In his focus on life in the cruel state of nature, Hobbes saw government primarily as a means for survival. Other theorists, taking survival for granted, believed that government protected order by preserving pri-

Life in a Twentieth-Century “State of Nature”
Seventeenth-century philosopher Thomas Hobbes characterized life without government as life in a state of nature—it would be “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.” Some three hundred years later, we get a picture of life in a state of nature in Beirut, Lebanon, where the central government has collapsed and citizens try to survive amidst the gunfire and bombings of warring religious factions.



vate property (goods and land owned by individuals). Foremost among them was John Locke (1632–1704), an English philosopher. In *Two Treatises on Government* (1690), he wrote that the protection of life, liberty, and property was the basic objective of government. His thinking strongly influenced the Declaration of Independence. The declaration’s famous phrase that identifies “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness” as “unalienable Rights” of citizens under government reflects that influence.

Not everyone believes that the protection of private property is a valid objective of government. The German philosopher Karl Marx (1818–1883) rejected the private ownership of property that is used in the production of goods or services. Marx’s ideas form the basis of **communism**, a complex theory that gives ownership of all land and productive facilities to the people—that is, the government. In line with communist theory, the Soviet Union operates under a constitution that sets forth the following principles of government ownership:

State property, i.e., the common property of the Soviet people, is the principal form of socialist property.

The land, its minerals, waters, and forests are the exclusive property of the state. The state owns the basic means of production in industry, construction, and agriculture; means of transport and communication; the banks; the property of state-run trade organizations and public utilities, and other state-run undertakings; most urban housing; and other property necessary for state purposes.²

Outside communist societies, the extent to which government must protect property or can take it away is a political issue that forms the basis of much ideological thinking across the world. As you will see, Americans hold very strong views on the sanctity of private property.

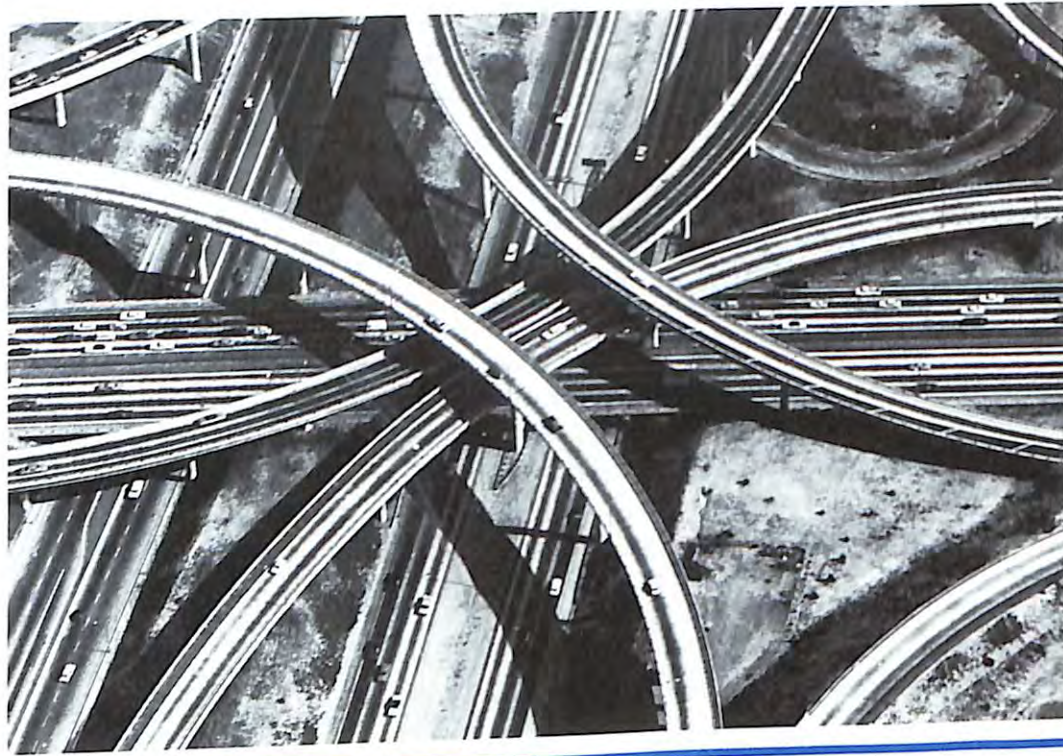
Providing Public Goods

After governments have established basic order, they can pursue other ends. Using their coercive powers, they can tax citizens to raise funds to spend on **public goods**—such as education, sanitation, and parks. These services benefit all citizens but are not likely to be produced by the voluntary acts of individuals. The government of ancient Rome, for example, built aqueducts to carry fresh water from the mountains to the city. Road building was another public good provided by the Roman government.

Government action to provide public goods can be controversial. During President James Monroe’s administration (1817–1825), many people thought that building the Cumberland Road (between Cumberland, Maryland, and Wheeling, West Virginia) was not a proper function of the national government, the Romans notwithstanding. Over time, the scope of government functions in the United States has expanded. During President Dwight Eisenhower’s administration in the 1950s, the national government outdid the Romans’ noble road building. Despite his basic conservatism, Eisenhower launched the massive Interstate Highway System at a cost of \$27 billion (in 1950s’ dollars). Yet some government

A Concrete Example of a Public Good

Governments use tax money to undertake projects that benefit virtually all citizens but that are not likely to be undertaken by any group of individuals. Expressways are one example of a public good (except when you are stuck in one at rush hour).



enterprises that are common in other countries—running railroads, operating coal mines, generating electric power—are politically controversial or even unacceptable in the United States. People disagree on how far the government ought to go in using its power to tax in providing public goods and services and how much should be handled by private business for profit.

Promoting Equality

The promotion of equality has not always been a major objective of government. It has gained prominence only in this century, in the aftermath of industrialization and urbanization. Confronted by the contrast of poverty amidst plenty, some political leaders in European nations pioneered extensive government programs to improve life for the lower classes. Under the emerging concept of the **welfare state**, government's role expanded to provide individuals with medical care, education, and a guaranteed income, "from the cradle to the grave." Sweden, Britain, and other nations adopted welfare programs aimed at reducing social inequalities. This relatively new purpose of government has been by far the most controversial. Taxation for public goods (building roads and schools, for example) is often opposed because of its cost alone. Taxation for government programs to promote economic and social equality is opposed more strongly on principle.

The key issue here is the government's role in redistributing income—taking from the wealthy to give to the poor. Charity (voluntary giving to the poor) has a strong basis in Western religious traditions; using the power of the state to support the poor does not. (In Charles

Rosa Parks: She Sat for Equality

Rosa Parks had just finished a day's work as a seamstress and was sitting in the front of a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, going home. A white man claimed her seat, which he could do according to the law in December 1955. When she refused to move and was arrested, angry blacks, led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., began a boycott of the Montgomery bus company.



Dickens's nineteenth-century novels, the power of the state was used to imprison the poor, not to support them.) Using the state to redistribute income was originally a radical idea, set forth by Marx as the ultimate principle of developed communism: "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."³ This extreme has never operated in any government, not even in communist states. But over time, taking from the rich to help the needy has become a legitimate function of most governments.

That legitimacy is not without controversy, however. Especially since the Great Depression of the 1930s, the government's role in redistributing income to promote economic equality has been a major source of policy debate in the United States. Food stamps and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) are typical examples of government programs that tend to redistribute income—and generate controversy.

Government can also promote social equality through policies that do not redistribute income. For example, it can regulate social behavior to enforce equality—as it did when the Supreme Court ruled in 1987 that Rotary Clubs must admit women members. Policies that regulate social behavior, like those that redistribute income, inevitably clash with the value of personal freedom.

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING GOVERNMENT

Citizens have very different views on how vigorously they want government to maintain order, provide public goods, and promote equality. Of

the three objectives, providing for public goods usually is less controversial than maintaining order or promoting equality. After all, government spending for highways, schools, and parks carries benefits for nearly every citizen. Moreover, these services merely cost money. The cost of maintaining order and promoting equality is greater than money; it usually means a trade-off of basic values.

To understand government and the political process, you must be able to recognize these trade-offs and identify the basic values involved in them. Just as people sit back from a wide-screen motion picture to gain perspective, to understand American government you need to take a broad view, a much broader view than that offered by examining specific political events. You need to employ political concepts.

A *concept* is a generalized idea. It groups various events, objects, or qualities under a common classification or label. The conceptual framework that guides this book consists of five concepts that figure prominently in political analysis. We regard these five concepts as especially important to a broad understanding of American politics, and we use them repeatedly throughout the book. This framework will help you evaluate political happenings long after you have read this text.

The five concepts that we emphasize deal with the fundamental issues of *what* government tries to do and *how* it decides to do it. The concepts that relate to what government tries to do are *order*, *freedom*, and *equality*. All governments by definition value order; maintaining order is part of the meaning of government. Most governments at least claim to preserve individual freedom while they maintain order, although they vary widely in the extent to which they succeed. Very few governments even profess to guarantee equality, and governments differ greatly in policies that pit equality against freedom. Our conceptual framework should help you evaluate the extent to which the United States pursues—and achieves—all three values through its government.

How government chooses the proper mix of order, freedom, and equality in its policymaking has to do with the *process* of choice rather than the outcome. We evaluate the American governmental process using two models of democratic government: the *majoritarian* and the *pluralist*. Most governments profess to be democracies. Whether they are or not depends on their (and our) meaning of the term. Even countries that Americans agree are democracies—for example, the United States and Britain—differ substantially in the type of democracy they practice. We use our conceptual models of democratic government both to classify the type of democracy practiced in the United States and to evaluate the government's success in fulfilling that model.

We can organize these five concepts into two groups.

- Concepts that identify the *values* pursued by government:
Freedom
Order
Equality
- Concepts that describe *models* of democratic government:
Majoritarian democracy

The rest of this chapter examines freedom, order, and equality as conflicting values pursued by government. In Chapter 2, we discuss majoritarian democracy and pluralist democracy as alternative institutional models for implementing democratic government.

THE CONCEPTS OF FREEDOM, ORDER, AND EQUALITY

These three terms—*freedom*, *order*, and *equality*—have different connotations in American politics. Both *freedom* and *equality* are positive terms that politicians have learned to use to their own advantage. Consequently, *freedom* and *equality* mean different things to different people at different times—depending on the political context in which they are used. *Order*, on the other hand, has negative connotations. For most people, it symbolizes government intrusion in private lives. Except during periods of social strife, few politicians call openly for more order. Because all governments infringe on freedom, we examine that concept first.

Freedom

Freedom can be used in two major senses: *freedom to* and *freedom from*. Franklin Delano Roosevelt used the word in both senses in a speech he made shortly after the United States entered World War II. He described four freedoms—freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom from fear, and freedom from want. The noted illustrator Norman Rockwell gave Americans a vision of these freedoms in a classic set of paintings published in the *Saturday Evening Post* (see Feature 1.1).

Freedom to is the absence of constraints on behavior. In this sense, freedom is synonymous with *liberty*. Two of Rockwell's paintings—*Freedom of Worship* and *Freedom of Speech*—exemplify this type of freedom.

Freedom from underlies the message of the other paintings, *Freedom from Fear* and *Freedom from Want*. Here *freedom* suggests immunity from fear and want. In the modern political context, *freedom from* often symbolizes the fight against exploitation and oppression. The cry "Freedom Now!" of the civil rights movement in the 1960s conveyed this meaning. If you recognize that freedom in this sense means immunity from discrimination, you can see that it comes close to the concept of equality.⁴ We avoid using *freedom* to mean "freedom from"; for this sense of the word, we simply use *equality*.

Order

When order is viewed in the narrow sense of preserving life and protecting property, most citizens would concede the importance of maintaining order, and thereby grant the need for government. However, when it is viewed in the broader sense of preserving the social order, people are more likely to argue that this is not a legitimate function of

FEATURE 1.1

The Four Freedoms

Norman Rockwell became famous in the 1940s for the humorous, home-spun covers he painted for the *Saturday Evening Post*, a weekly magazine. Inspired by an address to Congress in which President Roo-

sevelt outlined his goals for world civilization, Rockwell painted "The Four Freedoms." The paintings were first reproduced in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Their immense popularity led the government



Freedom of Speech



Freedom of Worship

government (see Compared With What? 1.1). *Social order* refers to established patterns of authority in society and to traditional modes of behavior. It is the accepted way of doing things. The prevailing social order prescribes behavior in many different areas: how students should dress in school (neatly, no purple hair) and behave toward their teachers (respectfully); under what conditions people should have sexual relations (married and of different sexes); what the press should not publish (sexually explicit photographs); and what the proper attitude toward religion and country should be (reverential). It is important to remember that social order can change. Today, perfectly respectable men and women wear bathing suits that would have caused a scandal at the turn of the century.

to print posters of the illustrations for the treasury Department's war bond drive. The Office of War Information also reproduced "The Four Freedoms" and circulated the posters in schools, club houses, railroad stations, post offices, and other public buildings. Officials even had copies dropped into the

European front to remind soldiers of the liberties for which they were fighting. It is said that no other paintings in the world have ever been reproduced or circulated in such vast numbers as "The Four Freedoms."



Freedom from Fear



Freedom from Want

A government can protect the established order under its **police power**—its authority to safeguard citizens' health, morals, safety, and welfare. The extent to which government should use this authority is a topic of ongoing debate in the United States and is constantly being redefined by our courts. There are those who fear the evolution of a *police state*—government that uses its power to regulate nearly all aspects of behavior. For example, South Africa has laws governing intermarriage between blacks and whites, laws prescribing where married people of mixed race can live. It is no accident that the chief law enforcement officer in South Africa is the minister of law and order.

Most governments are inherently conservative; they tend to resist social change. But some governments have as a primary objective the

COMPARED WITH WHAT? 1.1

The Importance of Order as a Political Value

Compared with citizens in other nations, Americans simply do not think maintaining order is very important. Surveys in the United States and twelve European countries asked respondents to select which of the following four national goals was the "most important in the long run":

- Maintaining order in the nation
- Giving the people more say in important government decisions
- Fighting rising prices
- Protecting freedom of speech

Just 29 percent of those surveyed in the United States chose "maintaining order." Only respondents in Belgium, who were more concerned about "fighting rising prices" than were people in any other nation, attached less importance to maintaining order. Compared with citizens in most other Western countries, Americans seem to want less government control of social behavior.



Source: Jacques-René Rabier, Helene Riffault, and Ronald Inglehart, *Euro-Barometer 24: Entry of Spain and Portugal, October, 1985* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, Study 8513, 1986), p. 12.

restructuring of the social order. Social change is most dramatic when an established government is overthrown through force and replaced by a revolutionary government. Governments can work at changing social patterns more gradually through the legal process. Our use of the term *order* in this book includes all three aspects of the term: preserving life, protecting property, and maintaining traditional patterns of social relationships.

Equality

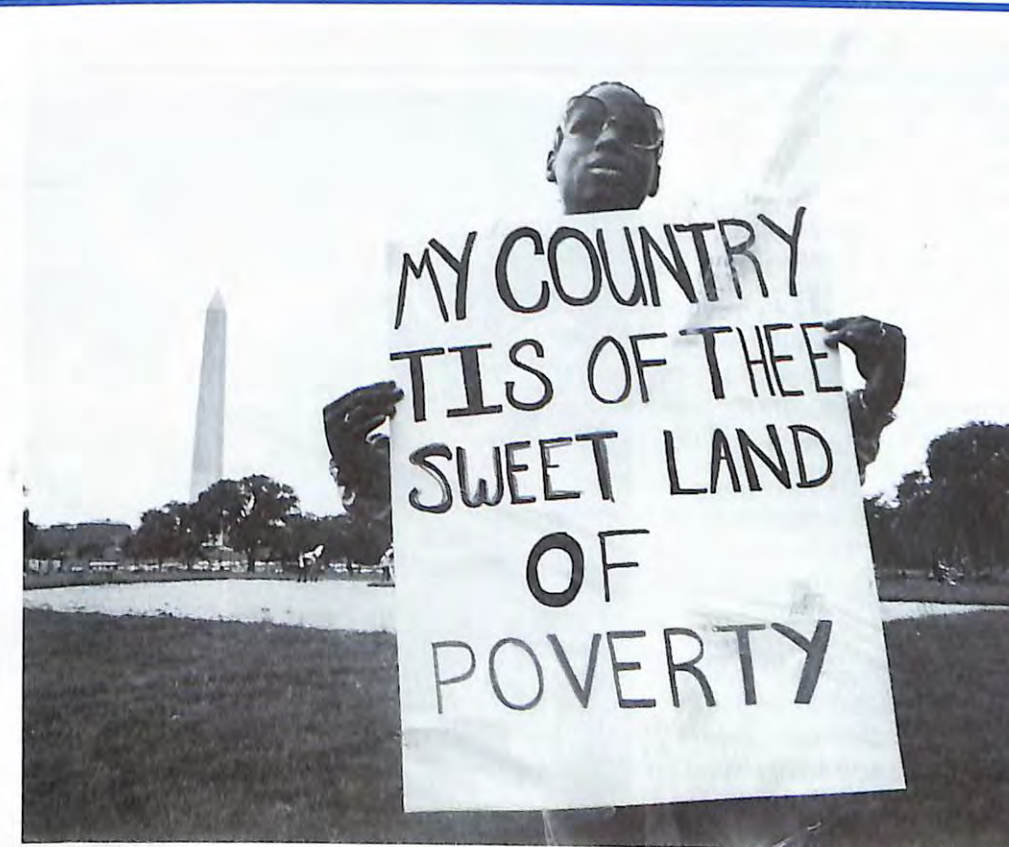
Like *freedom* and *order*, *equality* is used in different senses, to support different causes.

Political equality is easy to define: Each citizen has one and only one vote. This basic concept is central to democratic theory—a subject we explore at length in Chapter 2. But when some people advocate political equality, they mean more than "one person, one vote." These people contend that an urban ghetto dweller and the chairman of the board of General Motors are not politically equal despite the fact that each has one vote. Through occupation or wealth, some citizens are more able than others to influence political decisions. For example, wealthy citizens can exert influence by advertising in the mass media or by contacting friends in high places. Lacking great wealth and political connections, most citizens do not have this kind of influence. Thus, some analysts argue that equality in wealth, education, and status—that is, **social equality**—is necessary for true political equality. There are two routes to achieving social equality: providing equal opportunities and ensuring equal outcomes.

Equality of opportunity means that each person has the same chance to succeed in life. This idea is deeply ingrained in American culture. We do not have titles of nobility, owning property is not a requirement for holding public office, public schools and libraries are free to all. To many people, the concept of social equality is satisfied just by offering oppor-

Are Poor People Really Free?

Some critics argue that people are not politically free unless they are socially equal. Those who hold this view believe that government should redistribute income to produce equality of outcome, not just equality of opportunity. The conception of equality that you choose affects your position on the modern dilemma of government.



tunities for people to advance themselves. It is not essential that people end up being equal after using those opportunities.

For others, true social equality means nothing less than **equality of outcome**.⁵ They believe that society must see to it that people *are* equal. It is not enough for governments to provide people with equal opportunities; they must also design policies to redistribute wealth and status so that economic and social equality are actually achieved. In education, equality of outcome has led to federal laws that require comparable funding for men's and women's college sports. In business, equality of outcome has led to affirmative action programs to increase minority hiring, to the active recruitment of women, blacks, and Hispanics to fill jobs. Equality of outcome here also has produced federal laws that require employers to pay men and women equally for equal work.

Some link equality of outcome with the concept of governmental **rights**—the idea that every citizen is entitled to certain benefits of government, that government should guarantee its citizens adequate (if not equal) housing, employment, medical care, and income as a matter of right. If citizens are entitled to government benefits as a matter of right, then government efforts to promote equality of outcome become legitimized.

Clearly, the concept of equality of outcome is very different from that of equality of opportunity, and it requires a much greater degree of government activity. It is also the concept of equality that clashes most directly with the concept of freedom. By taking from one to give to another—which is necessary for the redistribution of income and sta-

Drive Toward Equality

The tremendous growth in women's sports on college campuses today is largely a result of a national law that promoted sexual equality in education. Under Title IX, part of a 1972 law dealing with educational policy, Congress prohibited sex discrimination in schools and colleges that receive federal funds. Enforced by the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, Title IX required schools and colleges to provide "reasonably comparable" activities to students of both sexes. Colleges responded by expanding their competitive sports programs for women, including awarding a comparable number of athletic scholarships.



tus—the government clearly creates winners and losers. The winners may believe that justice has been served by the redistribution. The losers often feel strongly that their freedom to enjoy their income and status has suffered.

TWO DILEMMAS OF GOVERNMENT

The two major dilemmas facing American government in the 1980s stem from the oldest and the newest objectives of government. The oldest is maintaining order; the newest, promoting equality. Both order and equality are important social values, but government cannot pursue either without sacrificing a third important value: individual freedom. The clash between freedom and order forms the *original* dilemma of government; the clash between freedom and equality, the *modern* dilemma of government. Although the dilemmas are very different, each involves trading off some amount of freedom for another value.

The Original Dilemma: Freedom Versus Order

The conflict between freedom and order originates in the very meaning of government as the legitimate use of force to control human behavior. How much freedom must a citizen surrender to government? This dilemma has occupied philosophers for hundreds of years. In the eighteenth century, French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) wrote that the problem of devising a proper government "is to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain free as before."⁶

The original purpose of government was to protect life and property, to make citizens safe from violence. How well is the American government doing today in guaranteeing the safety of its citizens? Nearly half the respondents in a 1982 national survey said that they were afraid to walk alone at night within a mile of their homes.⁷ In our larger urban areas, their fears seem justified. Nearly three out of ten people interviewed in New York City in 1985 reported that they, or a member of their family, had been a victim of crime within the past year.⁸ Visitors to New York are well advised to keep out of Central Park after dark. Simply put, Americans do not trust their urban governments to protect them from crime when they go out alone at night.

The climate of fear in urban America stands in stark contrast with the pervasive sense of personal safety in Moscow, Warsaw, Prague, and other communist cities. There it is common to see old and young strolling along late at night on the streets and in the parks. Of course, communist countries give their police greater powers to control guns, monitor citizens' movements, and arrest and imprison suspicious people—which enables them to do a better job of maintaining order. Communist governments have deliberately chosen order over freedom. It is perhaps

8976



Two Trains of Thought

Which scene appeals to you more? The photo on the left shows one of Moscow's handsome subway stations (each station displays a different architectural theme) and its spotless subway cars. The photo on the right shows a subway train in New York City. Soviet visitors to U.S. urban areas are appalled by graffiti-defaced subway cars and buses, which they view as symbols of a breakdown in law and order. For what it's worth, New York City officials report a significant decline in graffiti on public vehicles and buildings in recent years.

not surprising that some Russians who had emigrated to the United States found life here too threatening and returned to the security of the Soviet Union. After living for eight years in New York City, Rebecca Katsap (age sixty-seven) returned to Odessa in 1987, saying, "I was afraid to go out in the street after 4 in the afternoon."⁹

The crisis over Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) adds a new twist to the dilemma of freedom versus order. Some health officials believe that AIDS, for which there is no known cure, is the greatest threat in the medical history of the United States. The U.S. Public Health Service estimated that about 1.5 million Americans carried the AIDS virus in their blood in 1987. At the start of 1988, 49,743 cases of the disease had been reported to the Centers for Disease Control, and 27,909 people had died. The Health Service also estimated that 174,000 people will develop AIDS by 1991. The cost of caring for these victims will range between \$8 billion and \$16 billion.¹⁰

To combat the spread of the disease in the military, the Department of Defense began testing all applicants for the AIDS virus. Other government agencies have begun testing current employees. And some officials now are calling for widespread mandatory testing within the private sector as well. These programs are strongly opposed by those who believe

Police Power Versus Personal Privacy

Under its police power, government is charged with promoting public health and safety. One way to stop the spread of AIDS involves using blood tests to identify those who carry the deadly disease. But widespread mandatory blood tests infringe on personal privacy and therefore individual freedom. Is such government testing justifiable? It's a dilemma.



they violate individual freedom. Those who are more afraid of AIDS than an infringement on individual rights support aggressive government action to combat the disease.

The value conflict between freedom and order represents the original dilemma of government. In the abstract, people value both freedom and order; but in real life, the two values inherently conflict. Any policy that works toward one of these values by definition takes away from the other. The balance of freedom and order is an issue in major matters (whether or not to allow capital punishment) and in minor ones (how to deal with urban teenagers who spray-paint subway cars). And in a democracy, policy choices hinge on how much citizens value freedom and how much they value order.

The Modern Dilemma: Freedom Versus Equality

Popular opinion has it that freedom and equality go hand in hand. In reality, these two values usually clash when governments enact policies to promote social equality. Because social equality is a relatively recent government objective, deciding between policies that promote equality at the expense of freedom, and vice versa, is the modern dilemma of politics. Consider four examples in recent years.

- During the 1960s, Congress (through the Equal Pay Act) required employers to pay women and men the same rate for equal work. This means that some employers are forced to pay women more than they would if hiring were based on a free market.

FEATURE 1.2

Promoting Equality by Assessing Comparable Worth

Women's advocates contend that men tend to be paid more than women in part because sex discrimination exists in job classifications and pay rates. They back the idea of pay equity for jobs of comparable worth. If the idea becomes national law, it will involve the government more deeply in promoting social equality. The excerpt below describes one way employers (and government) might determine the comparable worth of two different jobs traditionally held by different sexes.

Should a nurse, usually a woman, be paid as much as a sanitation engineer, often a man? Questions about providing equal pay for jobs of equal value are being raised as interest grows in the relatively new doctrine called "comparable worth." And attempting to answer them is spawning a new career path, mainly in management consulting firms.

Anton Armbruster, an associate of William M. Mercer-Meidinger, an employee benefit and compensation consulting firm, has come up with the following example of how management consultants are providing answers. He uses a point system based on four factors—

know-how, problem-solving requirements, accountability and working conditions.

The nurse probably needs more know-how and more problem-solving ability, but total accountability is about the same because both are important to community health. Working conditions for the engineer, often outdoors in bad weather, are obviously more difficult than those for the typical nurse, so the engineer is credited with a higher number of points in that category.

	Nurse	Sanitary Engineer
Know-how	150	60
Problem solving	75	40
Accountability	175	165
Working conditions	50	185
Total	450	450

Source: Elizabeth M. Fowler, "Comparing the Value of Jobs," *New York Times*, 23 January, 1985. Copyright © 1985 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission.

- During the 1970s, the courts ordered the busing of schoolchildren to achieve equal proportions of blacks and whites in public schools. This action was motivated by concern for educational equality, but it also impaired freedom of choice.
- During the 1980s, some states passed legislation that went beyond the idea of equal pay for equal work to the more radical notion of *pay equity*—equal pay for *comparable* work. Women had to be paid at a rate equal to men's—even if they had different jobs—providing the women's jobs were of "comparable worth." For example, if the skills and responsibilities of a female nurse were found comparable to those of a male sanitation engineer in the same hospital, the woman's salary and the man's salary would have to be the same (see Feature 1.2). Equal pay for equal worth was denounced as "the looniest idea since 'Looney Tunes' came on the screen" by the chairman of President Ronald Reagan's Civil Rights Commission, but it was the law in some states. And in 1986, Congress considered enacting this "looney" idea into law.
- By 1987, government pressure on employers to hire women and minority members resulted in the legalization of *reverse discrimi-*

nation. This means qualified white males are passed over in favor of women or blacks. The Santa Clara County Transportation Agency in California had promoted a white woman to the job of dispatching road crews over a white man who had a slightly higher score in a competitive interviewing process. The man sued, claiming he was a victim of illegal sex discrimination. In a split decision, the Supreme Court ruled that employers sometimes may hire or promote women and minority members over better-qualified men and whites to achieve a work force that reflects the area labor market by sex and race. Opponents of the ruling claim that it restricts employers from hiring and promoting purely on merit (see Chapter 18).

These examples illustrate the problem of using government power to promote equality. The clash between freedom and order is obvious, but that between freedom and equality is more subtle. Often it goes unnoticed by the American people, who think of freedom and equality as complementary rather than conflicting values. When forced to choose between the two, however, Americans tend to choose freedom over equality more often than do people in other countries (see Compared With What? 1.2). The emphasis on equality over freedom is especially strong in the Soviet Union, which guarantees its citizens medical care, inexpensive housing, and other social services. Some Russian émigrés who opted to return to the Soviet Union in 1987 cited the hardships of freedom in the absence of such guarantees. Valeri Klever, an artist who lived for ten years in New York, Maine, and California, returned to Leningrad with this complaint about freedom in the United States: "You have to worry about your life, your apartment, monthly bills, everything. Every month, every day, I was waiting for the next dollar to pay bills. It's not freedom."¹¹

The conflicts among freedom, order, and equality explain a great deal of the political conflict in the United States. These conflicts also underlie the ideologies that people use to structure their understanding of politics.

IDEOLOGY AND THE SCOPE OF GOVERNMENT

People hold different opinions about the merits of government policies. Sometimes their views are based on self-interest. For example, senior citizens approve of the social security system more than citizens who do not reap the benefits of the system. Policies also are judged according to individual values and beliefs. Some people hold an assortment of values and beliefs that produce contradictory opinions on government policies. Others organize their opinions into a **political ideology**—a consistent set of values and beliefs about the proper purpose and scope of government.

Political writers often describe the ideologies of politicians and voters as "liberal" or "conservative." In popular usage, liberals favor an active, broad role for government in society; conservatives, a passive,

COMPARED WITH WHAT? 1.2

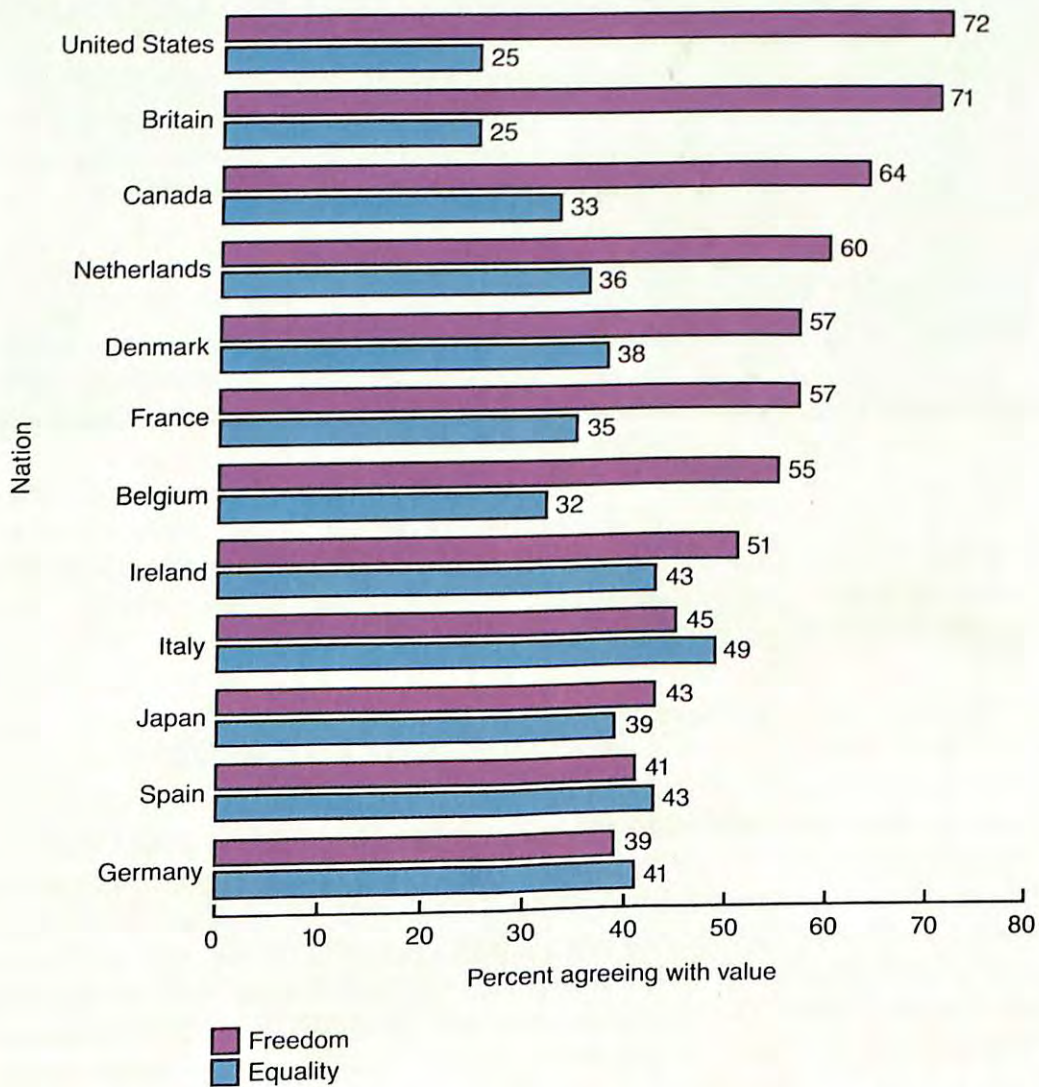
The Importance of Freedom and Equality as Political Values

Compared with citizens' views of freedom and equality in eleven other nations, Americans value freedom more than others do. Respondents in each country were asked which of the following statements came closer to their own opinion:

- "I find that both freedom and equality are important. But if I were to make up my mind for one or the other, I would consider personal freedom more important, that is, everyone can live in freedom and develop without hindrance."
- "Certainly both freedom and equality are important. But if I were to make up my mind for

one of the two, I would consider equality more important, that is, that nobody is underprivileged and that social class differences are not so strong."

Americans chose freedom by a ratio of nearly 3 to 1, followed closely by the British. No other nations showed such a strong preference for freedom, and citizens in three countries favored equality instead. When we look at this finding together with Americans' disdain for order (see Compared With What? 1.1), the importance of freedom as a political concept in the United States is very clear.



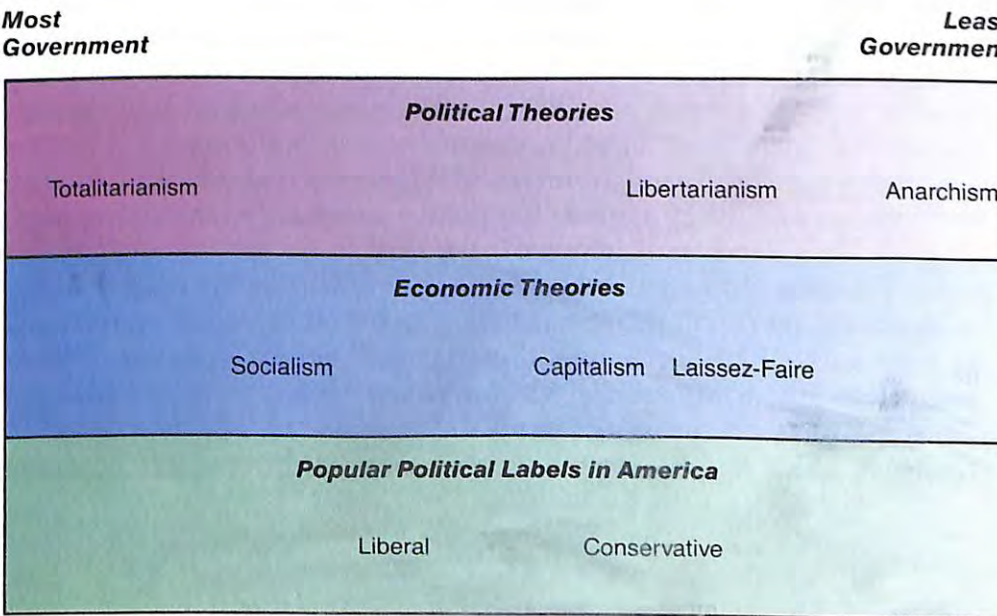
Source: World Values Survey, 1981–1982. The tabulation was provided by Professor Ronald F. Inglehart.

narrow role. For example, liberals favored the Social Security Act of 1935 because they wanted the government to help the elderly. Conservatives opposed the act because it committed the federal government to a costly new program. Although relatively few citizens today would advocate scrapping social security, they often divide sharply on ideological grounds over the desirability of other government programs. By carefully analyzing their political ideologies, we can explain their support of and opposition to seemingly diverse government policies.

How far should government go to maintain order, provide public goods, and promote equality? In the United States (as in every other nation), citizens, scholars, and politicians have different answers to this question. We can analyze their positions using normative theories about the proper scope of government—the range of its permissible activities. Imagine a continuum. At one end is the belief that government should do everything; at the other, the belief that government should not exist. These extreme ideologies—from most government to least government—and those that fall between them are shown in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1

Ideology and the Scope of Government
We can classify political ideologies according to the scope of action that people are willing to give government in dealing with social and economic problems. In this chart, the three lines map out various philosophical positions along an underlying continuum ranging from “most” to “least” government. Notice that conventional politics in the United States spans only a narrow portion of the theoretical possibilities for government action.
In popular usage, liberals favor a greater scope of government; conservatives, a narrower scope. But over time, this traditional distinction has eroded and now oversimplifies the differences between liberals and conservatives. See Figure 1.2 on page 28 for a more discriminating classification of liberals and conservatives.



Totalitarianism

Totalitarianism is a belief that government should have unlimited power. A totalitarian government controls all sectors of society: business, labor, education, religion, sports, the arts. A true totalitarian favors a network of laws, rules, and regulations that guides every aspect of individual behavior. The object is to produce a perfect society serving some master plan for “the common good.” Totalitarianism has reached its terrifying potential only in literature and films (for example, George Orwell’s *1984*), but several real societies have come perilously close to “perfection.” One thinks of Hitler’s Germany, Stalin’s Soviet Union, and perhaps the Ayatollah Khomeini’s Iran. Not many people openly profess totalitarianism today, but the concept is useful because it anchors one side of our continuum.

Socialism

Where *totalitarianism* refers to government in general, *socialism* pertains to government’s role in the economy. Like communism, socialism is an economic system based on Marxist theory. Under **socialism** (and communism), the scope of government extends to ownership or control of the basic industries that produce goods and services. These include communications, mining, heavy industry, transportation, and power. Although socialism favors a strong role for government in regulating private industry and directing the economy, it allows more room than communism does for private ownership of productive capacity.

Many Americans equate socialism with the communism practiced in the closed societies of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. But there is a difference. Although communism in theory was supposed to result in a “withering away” of the state, communist governments in practice tend toward totalitarianism, controlling both political and social life through a dominant party organization. Some socialist governments, however, practice **democratic socialism**. They guarantee civil liberties (such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion) and allow their citizens to determine the extent of government activity through free elections and competitive political parties. Outside the United States, socialism is not an inherently bad thing. In fact, the governments of Britain, Sweden, Germany, and France—among other democracies—have at times since World War II been avowedly “socialist.” In the United States, however, socialism has such a bad connotation that Reverend Jesse Jackson initially asked the Democratic Socialists of America, who were preparing to endorse him for the presidency in 1988, *not* to support him. He was afraid that their support would hurt his campaign. Ultimately, the group did endorse Jackson for his position on economic issues, at the same time noting that he was *not* a Socialist.

Capitalism

Capitalism also relates to the government’s role in the economy. In contrast to both socialism and communism, **capitalism** supports *free*

enterprise—private businesses operating without government regulations. Some theorists, most notably economist Milton Friedman, argue that free enterprise is necessary for free politics.¹² This argument, that the economic system of capitalism is essential to democracy, contradicts the tenets of democratic socialism. Whether or not it is valid depends in part on our understanding of democracy—a subject we discuss in Chapter 2.

The United States is decidedly a capitalist country, far more so than Britain or most other Western nations. Despite the U.S. government’s enormous budget, it owns or operates relatively few public enterprises. For example, railroads, airlines, and television stations are privately owned in the United States; these businesses are commonly owned by government in other countries. But our government *does* extend its authority into the economic sphere, regulating private businesses and directing the overall economy. American liberals and conservatives both embrace capitalism, but they differ on the nature and amount of government intervention in the economy.

Libertarianism

Libertarianism opposes all government action except that which is necessary to protect life and property. Libertarians grudgingly recognize the necessity of government but believe that government should be as limited as possible. For example, libertarians grant the need for traffic laws to ensure safe and efficient automobile travel. But they oppose laws that set a minimum drinking age as a restriction on individual actions. Libertarians believe that social programs that provide food, clothing, and shelter are outside the proper scope of government. Helping the needy, they insist, should be a matter of individual choice. Libertarians also oppose government ownership of basic industries; in fact, they oppose any government intervention in the economy. This kind of economic policy is called **laissez faire**—a French phrase that means “let (people) do (as they please).”

Libertarians are very vocal advocates of “hands-off” government—in both social and economic spheres. Whereas those who favor a broad scope of government action shun the description “socialist,” libertarians make no secret of their identity. The Libertarian party has run candidates in every presidential election from 1976 through 1988. Not one of these candidates, however, has won more than a million votes.

Don’t confuse *libertarians* with *liberals*. The words are similar, but their meanings are very different. *Libertarianism* draws on *liberty* as its root and means “absence of governmental constraint.” In American political usage, *liberalism* evolved from the root word *liberal*. Over time, it has come to mean something closer to “generous,” in the sense that liberals are willing to support government spending on social programs.

Anarchism

Anarchism stands opposite totalitarianism on the political continuum. Anarchists oppose all government, in any form. As a political

philosophy, anarchism values freedom above all else. Because all government involves some restriction on personal freedom (for example, forcing people to drive on one side of the road), a pure anarchist would even object to traffic laws. Like totalitarianism, anarchism is not a popular philosophy, but it does have adherents on the political fringes.

On May 4, 1986, an estimated three hundred to five hundred anarchists gathered in Chicago to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the riot in Haymarket Square, in which an anarchist's bomb killed several policemen. The modern anarchists, who came from all across the nation, ran amok through Chicago's financial district and along the fashionable Michigan Avenue shopping area, defacing property, shouting anticapitalist slogans, and waving black flags (the symbol of anarchism). This unusual gathering was described by one of its planners as "the most significant anarchist event held in America in years"—proof of sorts that anarchism is more bizarre than it is popular.¹³ For our purposes, anarchism serves to anchor the right side of the government continuum and to indicate that libertarians are not as extreme in opposing government as is theoretically possible.

Liberals and Conservatives— The Narrow Middle

As shown in Figure 1.1, practical politics in the United States ranges over only the central portion of the continuum. The extreme positions—totalitarianism and anarchism—are rarely argued in public debate. And in this era of distrust of "big government," few American politicians would openly advocate socialism. On the other hand, more than a hundred people ran for Congress in 1984 as candidates of the Libertarian party. Although none won, American libertarians are sufficiently vocal to be heard in the debate over the scope of government.

Still, most of that debate is limited to a narrow range of political thought. On one side are what we commonly call *liberals*; on the other, *conservatives*. In popular usage, liberals favor more government, conservatives less. This distinction is very clear when the issue is government spending to provide public goods. Liberals favor generous government support for education, wildlife protection, public transportation, and a whole range of social programs. Conservatives want smaller government budgets and fewer government programs. They support free enterprise, arguing against government job programs, regulation of business, and legislation of working conditions and wage rates.

But in other areas, liberal and conservative ideologies are less consistent. In theory, liberals favor government activism, yet they oppose government regulation of abortions. In theory, conservatives oppose government activism, yet they support government control over the publication of sexually explicit material. What's going on? Are American political attitudes hopelessly contradictory, or is something missing in our analysis of these ideologies today? Actually, something *is* missing. To understand the liberal and conservative stances on political issues, we have to look not only at the scope of government action but also at the purpose of government action. That is, to understand a political

ideology, we have to understand how it incorporates the values of freedom, order, and equality.

AMERICAN POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES AND THE PURPOSE OF GOVERNMENT

Much of American politics revolves around the two dilemmas we described above: freedom versus order and freedom versus equality. These two dilemmas do not account for all political conflict, but they help us gain insight into the workings of politics and organize the seemingly chaotic world of political events, actors, and issues.

Liberals Versus Conservatives: The New Differences

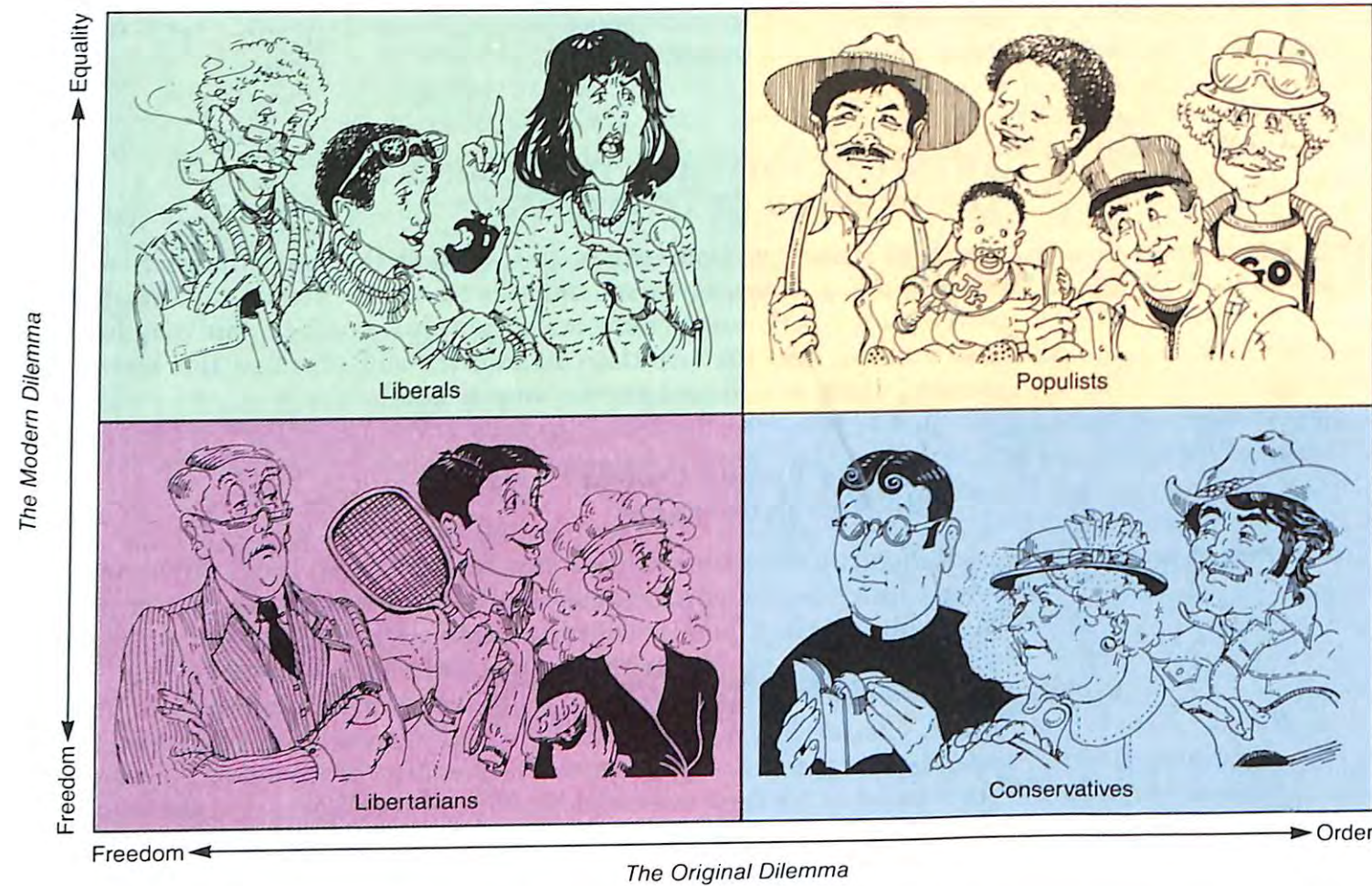
Liberals and conservatives are different, but their differences no longer hinge on the narrow question of the government's role in providing public goods. Liberals still favor more government and conservatives less, but this is no longer the critical difference between them. Today that difference stems from their attitudes toward the purpose of government. Conservatives support the original purpose of government, maintaining social order. They are willing to use the coercive power of the state to force citizens to be orderly. They favor aggressive police action, swift and severe punishment for criminals, and more laws regulating behavior. Conservatives do not stop with defining, preventing, and punishing crime, however. They want to preserve traditional patterns of social relations—the domestic role of women and the importance of religion in school and family life, for example.

Liberals are less likely than conservatives to use government power to maintain order. In general, liberals are more tolerant of deviant lifestyles—for example, homosexual behavior. Liberals do not shy away from using government coercion, but they use it for a different purpose—to promote equality. They support laws ensuring that homosexuals receive equal treatment in employment, housing, and education; that require busing school children to achieve racial equality; that force private businesses to hire and promote women and members of minority groups; that require public carriers to provide equal access to the handicapped; that order cities and states to reapportion election districts so that minority voters can elect minority candidates to public office.

Conservatives do not oppose equality, but they do not value it to the extent of using the government's power to enforce equality. For liberals, the use of that power to guarantee equality is both valid and necessary.

A Two-Dimensional Classification of Ideologies

To classify liberal and conservative ideologies more accurately, we have to incorporate freedom, order, and equality in the classification. We do this using the model in Figure 1.2. It depicts the conflicting values



Ideologies: A Two-Dimensional Framework

The four ideological types below are defined by the values they favor in resolving the two major dilemmas of government: how much freedom should be sacrificed in pursuit of order and equality? Test yourself by thinking about the values that are most important to you. Which box in the figure best represents your combination of values?

Figure 1.2

along two separate dimensions, each anchored in maximum freedom at the lower left. One dimension extends horizontally from maximum freedom on the left to maximum order on the right. The other extends vertically from maximum freedom at the bottom to maximum equality at the top. Each box represents a different ideological type: libertarians, liberals, conservatives, and populists.*

Libertarians value freedom more than order or equality. (We will use this term for people who have libertarian tendencies but who may not accept the whole philosophy.) In practical terms, libertarians want min-

* The ideological groupings we describe here conform to the classification in William S. Maddox and Stuart A. Lilie, *Beyond Liberal and Conservative: Reassessing the Political Spectrum* (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 1984), p. 5. However, our formulation—in terms of the values of freedom, order, and equality—is quite different.

DOONESBURY



Doonesbury "Blow for Individual Freedom"

imal government intervention in both the economic and the social spheres. For example, they oppose food stamp programs and laws against abortion.

Liberals value freedom more than order, but not more than equality. Liberals oppose laws against abortion but support food stamp programs. **Conservatives** value freedom more than equality but would restrict freedom to preserve social order. Conservatives oppose food stamp programs but favor laws against abortion.

Finally, we have the ideological type positioned at the upper right in Figure 1.2. This group values *both* equality and order more than freedom. Its members support both food stamp programs and laws against abortion. We will call this new group **populists**. The term *populist* derives from a rural reform movement that was active in the United States in the late 1800s. Populists thought of government as an instrument to promote the advancement of common people against moneyed or vested interests. They used their voting power both to regulate business and to enforce their moral judgments on minorities whose political and social values differed from the majority's.¹⁴ Today the term aptly describes those who favor government action both to reduce inequalities and to ensure social order.

By analyzing political ideologies on two dimensions rather than one, we can explain why people seem to be liberal on one issue (favoring a broader scope of government action) and conservative on another (favoring less government action). The answer hinges on the action's *purpose*: which value does it promote, order or equality? According to our typology, only libertarians and populists are consistent in their attitudes toward the scope of government activity, whatever its purpose. Libertarians

value freedom so highly that they oppose most government efforts to enforce either order or equality. Populists are inclined to trade off freedom for both order and equality. Liberals and conservatives, on the other hand, favor or oppose government activity depending on its purpose. As you will learn in Chapter 5, large groups of Americans fall into each of the four ideological categories. Because Americans choose four different resolutions to the original and modern dilemmas of government, the simple labels *liberal* and *conservative* no longer describe contemporary political ideologies as well as they did in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s.

SUMMARY

The challenge of democracy is making difficult choices—choices that inevitably bring important values into conflict. *The Challenge of Democracy* outlines a normative framework for analyzing the policy choices that arise in the pursuit of the purposes of government.

The three major purposes of government are maintaining order, providing public goods, and promoting equality. In pursuing these objectives, every government infringes on individual freedom. But the degree of that infringement depends on the government's (and by extension, its citizens') commitment to order and equality. What we have then are two dilemmas. The first—the original dilemma—centers on the conflict between freedom and order. The second—the modern dilemma—focuses on the conflict between freedom and equality.

Some people have political ideologies that help them resolve the conflicts that arise in political decision making. These ideologies outline the scope and purpose of government. At opposite extremes of the continuum are totalitarianism, which supports government intervention in every aspect of society, and anarchism, which rejects government entirely. An important step back from totalitarianism is socialism. Democratic socialism favors government ownership of basic industries but preserves civil liberties. Capitalism, another economic system, promotes free enterprise. A significant step short of anarchism is libertarianism, which allows government to protect life and property but little else.

In the United States, we use the terms *liberal* and *conservative* to describe a narrow range toward the center of the political continuum. And this is probably accurate if we are just talking about the scope of government action. That is, liberals support a broader role for government than do conservatives. But if we look at both the scope and the purpose of government, a different, sharper distinction emerges.

Conservatives may want less government, but not at the price of maintaining order. In other words, they are willing to use the coercive power of government to impose social order. Liberals too are willing to use the coercive powers of government, but for a different purpose—promoting equality.

It is easier to understand the differences between liberals and conservatives and their views on the scope of government if we incorporate the values of freedom, order, and equality into our description of political ideologies. Libertarians choose freedom over both order and equality. Populists are willing to sacrifice freedom for both order and equality. Liberals value freedom and equality more than order. Conservatives value freedom and order more than equality.

The concepts of government objectives, values, and political ideologies appear repeatedly as we determine who favors what government action and why. So far, we have said little about how government should make its decisions. In Chapter 2, we complete our normative framework for evaluating American politics by examining the nature of democratic theory. There we introduce two key concepts for analyzing how democratic governments make decisions.

Key Terms

government	political ideology
order	totalitarianism
communism	socialism
public goods	democratic socialism
welfare state	capitalism
freedom to	libertarianism
freedom from	laissez faire
police power	anarchism
political equality	libertarians
social equality	liberals
equality of opportunity	conservatives
equality of outcome	populists
rights	

Selected Readings

Corbett, Michael. *Political Tolerance in America: Freedom and Equality in Public Attitudes*. New York: Longman, 1982. Corbett summarizes research on support for civil liberties and civil rights in America. Drawing heavily on public opinion surveys, he shows the generally upward trend in political tolerance and analyzes tolerant attitudes by social groups.

Ebenstein, William, and Edwin Fogelman. *Today's Isms: Communism, Fascism, Capitalism, Socialism*. 9th ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1985. This standard source describes the history of each of the four major "isms" and relates each to developments in contemporary politics. It is concise, informative, and readable.

Herson, Lawrence. *The Politics of Ideas: Political Theory and American Public Policy*. Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1984. Herson guides a lively journey through American political history, culture, and thought. The book has especially good sections on populism, democracy, and the contemporary nature of liberals and conservatives.

King, Desmond S. *The New Right: Politics, Markets and Citizenship*. Chicago, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1987. King uses the concepts of freedom, order, and equality to analyze ideological tendencies in Margaret Thatcher's government in Britain and in Reagan's government here. He uses *liberalism* in the European sense, to mean "limiting" state intervention

in the economy. In fact, contrary to American practice, this is the way most of the world uses the term.

Maddox, William S., and Stuart A. Lilie. *Beyond Liberal and Conservative: Reassessing the Political Spectrum*. Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 1984. Not satisfied with the conventional labels *liberal* and *conservative*, Maddox and Lilie have devised a typology of ideologies based on two dimensions: expansion of personal freedom and government intervention in economic affairs. It is similar to our framework but less theoretical.

McClosky, Herbert, and John Zaller. *The American Ethos: Public Attitudes Toward Capitalism and Democracy*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985. This book analyzes survey data on citizens and opinion leaders. It argues that conflicts between capitalism and democracy have been a feature of American politics. When these conflicts have occurred, they have tended to be resolved in favor of democracy, producing a form of "welfare capitalism."

Medcalf, Linda J., and Kenneth M. Dolbeare. *Neopolitics: American Political Ideas in the 1980s*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985. This slim volume reviews the history of ideological labels in American politics. It explains the changing meanings of various labels and updates their usage in contemporary politics. It also describes more recent ideological types, among them the "new right."



2

Majoritarian or Pluralist Democracy?

The Theory of Democratic Government

The Meaning and Symbolism of Democracy • The Procedural View of Democracy • A Complication: Direct Versus Indirect Democracy • The Substantive View of Democracy • Procedural Democracy Versus Substantive Democracy

Institutional Models of Democracy

The Majoritarian Model of Democracy • An Alternative Model: Pluralist Democracy • The Majoritarian Model Versus the Pluralist Model • An Undemocratic Model: Elite Theory • Elite Theory Versus Pluralist Theory

Democracies Around the World

Testing for Democratic Government • American Democracy: More Pluralist than Majoritarian

A sniper used a rifle to shoot Martin Luther King, Jr., in Memphis on April 4, 1968. An assassin used a handgun to kill Robert Kennedy in Los Angeles two months later. Despite a police record, King's killer was able to purchase his weapon over the counter. Kennedy's killer bought a cheap "Saturday night special," no questions asked. Both murders vividly recalled President John F. Kennedy's assassination with a mail-order rifle in Dallas in 1963. Now a stunned nation insisted on stricter gun controls. Congress responded quickly by passing the Gun Control Act (1968), which outlawed the interstate sale of handguns and required gun dealers to maintain records of sales. By responding promptly and positively to public opinion, Congress acted as we would expect an elected legislature in a democracy to act.

In 1986, legislation that would weaken the Gun Control Act came before Congress. Under the new law, gun collectors would not have to obtain a license before selling firearms; records of ammunition sales would no longer have to be kept; and federal authorities would be limited to only one unannounced inspection of gun dealers each year.

Public opinion had not changed in the interim. Americans still supported strict controls on handguns. For example, polls consistently showed majorities of nearly three to one in favor of laws requiring a police permit to purchase a gun.¹ The law enforcement community was very vocal in its opposition to the new bill. The executive director of the International Association of Chiefs of Police stated that the new legislation would have "a very detrimental effect on law enforcement and public safety."² His judgment was echoed by most of the law and

order establishment, including the National Sheriffs Association, the Police Foundation, the Fraternal Order of Police, the National Troopers Coalition, and the American Bar Association (ABA). And scores of police officers came before Congress to argue against relaxing the gun control law.

Despite the combined opposition of the vast majority of the American people and the law enforcement community, the bill was passed. The votes in the Senate and the House weren't even close.* What happened?

What happened was the "gun lobby"—a collection of groups that believe gun controls deprive citizens of their constitutional right to bear arms yet fail to reduce crime. The gun lobby includes the National Rifle Association (NRA), Gun Owners of America, and the Citizens' Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms. Without question, the most important group in the gun lobby is the NRA, whose 3 million members were quick to contact their elected representatives on the gun control issue. In addition to its own advertising against the old law, the NRA contributed \$1.5 million in 1985 to sympathetic political committees, capping off a long campaign to relax the 1968 act. On this issue, the gun lobby eventually outweighed both public opinion and the law enforcement community.

The evidence is clear that Congress, in supporting a small constituency—gun owners backed by organized interest groups—voted against what a majority of the people wanted. Was its decision "democratic"? And if it wasn't, can we really say that the United States is a democracy?

In Chapter 1, we discussed three basic values that underlie what government should do. In this chapter, we examine how government should decide what to do. In particular, we set forth criteria for judging whether or not a government's decision-making process is democratic.

NRA Aims at State Legislators

Members of the National Rifle Association (NRA) attend a hearing on state legislation for handgun control in Massachusetts. The NRA opposes all aspects of gun control on any level of government, and it carefully keeps track of which legislators are its friends and which are its foes, in anticipation of the next election.



THE THEORY OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT

The origins of democratic theory lie in ancient Greek political thought. Greek philosophers classified governments according to the number of citizens involved in the process. Imagine a continuum running from rule by one person, through rule by a few, to rule by many. The Greeks gave us two different sets of terms to describe each form. One set is based on the root *kratein*, which means "to rule"; the other is based on *archy*, which means "supreme power."

At one extreme is an **autocracy** (or **monarchy**), in which one individual has the power to make all important decisions. The concentration

One	Few	Many
Autocracy	Aristocracy	Democracy
Monarchy	Oligarchy	Polyarchy

* The key Senate vote to weaken the legislation was 79 to 15; the House vote was 292 to 130.

of power in the hands of one person (usually a king) was a more common form of government in earlier historical periods, although some argue that Hitler ruled Germany autocratically.

Aristocracy literally means "rule by the best"; **oligarchy** puts government power in the hands of "the few." At one time, it was common for the nobility or the major landowners to rule as an aristocracy. Today, *aristocracy* does not properly describe, say, a group of military leaders ruling an underdeveloped country; *oligarchy* is more suitable. There are some who contend that industrialized nations are also oligarchies. They argue that the few individuals who head a nation's key financial, industrial, and communications institutions amount to a **ruling elite**, a small group that governs modern society as surely as the aristocracy governed traditional society.

At the other extreme of the continuum is **democracy**, which means "authority in, or rule by, the people," and a less familiar term, **polyarchy**, which means that "the many" hold the power.³ Most scholars believe that the United States, Britain, France, and other countries in Western Europe are genuine democracies. Dissenters contend that these countries appear to be democracies because they hold free elections, but that they actually are run by elites for the elites' benefit. Nevertheless, most people today agree that governments *should* be democratic—whatever that means.

The Meaning and Symbolism of Democracy

Americans have a simple answer to the question "Who should govern?" It is "The people." Unfortunately, this answer is too simple. It fails to define who "the people" are. Should we include young children? Recent immigrants? Illegal aliens? This answer also fails to tell us how the people should do the governing. Should they be assembled in a stadium? Vote by mail? Choose others to govern for them? We need to take a closer look at what *government by the people* really means.

The word *democracy* originated in Greek writings around the fifth century B.C. *Demos* referred to the common people, the masses. The ancient Greeks were afraid of democracy—rule by the people. That fear is evident in the term *demagogue*. Applied negatively, it refers to a politician who appeals to and often deceives the masses by manipulating their emotions and prejudices.

Many centuries later, *democracy* still carried the connotation of mob rule. When George Washington was president, opponents of a new political party disparagingly called it a "democratic" party. No one would do that in politics today. In fact, the term has become so popular that the names of more than 20 percent of the world's political parties contain some variation of *democracy*.⁴

In the United States, democracy has become the apple pie and motherhood of political discourse. Like *justice* and *decency*, *democracy* is used reverently by politicians of all persuasions. Even totalitarian regimes use it. The Soviet Union routinely refers to the communist governments of Eastern Europe as "peoples' democracies." Like other complex concepts, democracy means different things to different people.

There are two major schools of thought about what constitutes democracy. The first believes democracy is a form of government. It emphasizes the *procedures* that enable the people to govern—meeting to discuss issues, voting in elections, running for public office. The second sees democracy in the *substance* of government policies, in freedom of religion and providing for human needs. The *procedural* approach focuses on *how* decisions are made; the *substantive* approach is concerned with *what* government does.⁵ Each gives us a set of normative principles that describes how a democracy should function. (Normative principles stress pure ideals and create perfect standards of judgment, which in practice are never fully achieved.)

The Procedural View of Democracy

Procedural democratic theory sets forth principles that describe how government should make decisions. These principles address three distinct questions:

1. *Who* should participate in decision making?
2. *How much* should each participant's vote count?
3. *How many* votes are needed to reach a decision?

According to procedural democratic theory, *everyone* should participate in government decision making. This means everyone within the boundaries of the political community should be allowed to participate in its decision making. And "everyone" really means *everyone*—including the mentally handicapped, convicted felons, recent immigrants, and children. (Some Swedes would even include babies; see Feature 2.1.) If some people are prohibited from participating, they are excluded for practical or political reasons. The theory of democracy itself does not exclude anyone from participation. We refer to this principle as **universal participation**.

How much should each participant's vote count? According to procedural theory, all votes should be counted *equally*. This is the principle of **political equality**.

Notice that universal participation and political equality are two distinct principles. It is not enough for everyone to participate in a decision; all votes must carry equal weight. President Abraham Lincoln reportedly once took a vote among his cabinet members and found that all of them opposed his own position on the issue. He summarized the vote and the decision like this: "The vote is one aye and the rest nay; the aye carries!" Everyone participated, but Lincoln's vote counted more than all the others combined. (No one ever said that presidents have to run their cabinets democratically.)

Finally, how many votes are needed to reach a decision? Procedural theory prescribes that a group should decide to do what the *majority* of its participants (50 percent plus one person more) wants to do. This principle is called **majority rule**. (If participants divide over more than two alternatives and none receives a simple majority, the principle usually defaults to *plurality rule*, in which the group should do what most participants want.)

FEATURE 2.1

Sweden: Cradle of Democracy

According to the principle of universal participation, everyone should be allowed to take part in government decisions. Throughout most of American history, *everyone* meant citizens age twenty-one or older. Now the voting age nationwide is eighteen. But why eighteen? Why not twelve? Why have any age limit at all? A group of physicians in Sweden recently carried the question of age and political rights to its logical conclusion.

STOCKHOLM [Reuters]—Should babies be given the vote?

In Sweden, the issue is no joke. It has been raised by the Swedish Pediatric Association, which proposes that all the country's 1.9 million children get the vote, though it says parents should exercise the vote for children until they are 18.

Worried that society takes insufficient care of families with children, the association has urged the government to examine ways of giving children and parents more political influence.

The pediatric association, representing 800 specialists, called for an official inquiry into the possibilities of changing the electoral system or giving children political representation in some other way.

"One possibility that should be analyzed is that children, represented by their parents,

should get the right to vote in general elections," assistant professor Claes Sundelin of Uppsala Hospital, the association's chairman, said in a letter to the Justice Ministry.

Sundelin said the association's members believe children's health and welfare are neglected in comparison with the interests of workers and retirees.

"The most important reason why society pays so little attention to children is quite simply that it is not especially profitable politically," Sundelin said.

The association is eager to dispel any notion that gurgling babies could soon be lining up outside polling booths in their carriages.

"We think the right to take part in the political process begins at birth," Sundelin said. "All children, including the newborn, should have a vote, but this should be exercised by parents until they are old enough to make up their own minds."

When would they be old enough?

"We think the 18-year age limit is reasonable but that parents should listen to their children when voting," he said.

Source: "Should Babies Be Given the Right to Vote?" by Reuters as published in *Chicago Tribune*, 17 October 1985. Reprinted by permission of Reuters.

Majority rule does not necessarily go hand in hand with universal participation and political equality. Group decisions can require an *extraordinary majority*—some stated percentage greater than 50. For example, most bills in the U.S. Senate require just a simple majority to pass, but some issues—the approval of treaties with other nations is one—require a two-thirds majority for passage. Still, majority rule must work in combination with universal participation and political equality to produce truly democratic procedures for decision making.

A Complication: Direct Versus Indirect Democracy

These three principles—universal participation, political equality, and majority rule—are widely recognized as necessary for democratic decision making. In small simple societies, these principles can be met in a **direct democracy**, in which all members of the group meet to make

decisions, while observing political equality and majority rule. Something close to direct democracy is practiced in New England villages, where citizens gather in town meetings to make community decisions. Citizens in Derry, New Hampshire, governed themselves in annual town meetings for 158 years. Usually held the second Tuesday in March, the Derry town meeting was an all-day affair that began with the election of officers, then proceeded to decisions on road repairs, building maintenance, and other town issues.

In large complex societies, however, the people cannot assemble in one place to participate directly in government. In Derry, as the population increased, the town meeting was no longer a viable form of government. There was no place to assemble even a fraction of the 25,000 townspeople. In 1985, Derry bowed to growth and switched to a different form of government, an elected town council headed by a mayor.⁶ The town still followed democratic principles in voting for members of the town council, but the council decided village policies in place of the people.

Derry changed from direct to **indirect democracy**: Its citizens now participate in government by electing public officials to make government decisions for them. Because their elected officials are expected to represent the voters' views and interests—that is, to serve as the agents of the citizenry—indirect democracy is also known as **representative government**.

Philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau contended that true democracy is impossible unless all citizens gather together to make their own decisions and to supervise their government.⁷ Some theorists today argue

Direct Democracy in a New England Town Meeting
Adults and children alike attend the town meeting in Pittsfield, Vermont. Citizens use the town meeting to govern the activities of their village, which amounts to direct democracy. Town meetings typically run all day. In Pittsfield, baked goods are available at lunch time to give the citizens food for thought during the rest of the meeting.



the same point.⁸ They are concerned about democracy in its purest form—direct democracy. Other theorists, among them the nineteenth-century English philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), accept the necessity of indirect democracy; they believe representative government is the best *possible* form of government.⁹

Adhering to the principles of universal participation, political equality, and majority rule, we can guarantee that the election of representatives is democratic. But what happens after the election? The elected representatives might not make the same decisions the people would have made if they had gathered for the same purpose. To cope with this possibility in representative government, procedural theory gives us a fourth decision-making principle: **responsiveness**. Elected representatives should respond to public opinion; they should do what a majority of the people want, regardless of what it is. That is, elected representatives should do what the people would do if they could assemble to act directly.

Adding responsiveness to deal with the case of indirect democracy, we now have four principles of procedural democracy:

- Universal participation
- Political equality
- Majority rule
- Government responsiveness to public opinion

The Substantive View of Democracy

According to procedural theory, the principle of responsiveness is absolute. The government should do what the majority wants, regardless of what it is. At first this seems a reasonable way to protect the rights of citizens in an indirect democracy. But think for a minute. Christians account for more than 90 percent of the U.S. population. Suppose that the Christian majority backs a constitutional amendment to require Bible reading in public schools, that the amendment is passed by Congress, and that it is ratified by the states. From a strict procedural view, the action would be democratic. But what about freedom of religion? What about the rights of minorities? To limit the government's responsiveness to public opinion, we must look outside procedural democratic theory to substantive democratic theory.

Substantive democratic theory focuses on the substance of government policies, not on the procedures followed in making those policies. It argues that in a democratic government, certain principles must be embodied in government policies. Substantive theorists would reject a law that requires Bible reading in schools because it would violate a substantive principle, the freedom of religion.

In defining the principles that underlie democratic government—and the policies of that government—most substantive theorists agree on a basic criterion: Government policies should guarantee civil liberties (for example, freedom of religion and freedom of expression) and civil rights (for example, protection against discrimination in employment and housing). According to this standard, the claim that the United States is a

... Please Help Me Pass This Test!

In reality, prayer in school is a serious matter. Surveys regularly show that most Americans believe that schools should be allowed to start each day with a prayer, but the Supreme Court has held that school-organized prayers would violate the Constitution. By making such decisions, the Court is protecting minority rights, but it is denying majority rule.



democracy rests on its record in ensuring its citizens these liberties and rights. (We look at how good this record is in Chapters 17 and 18.)

Agreement among substantive theorists breaks down when discussion moves from civil rights to *social* rights (adequate health care, quality education, decent housing) and *economic* rights (private property, steady employment). They disagree most sharply on whether a government must promote social equality to qualify as a democracy. For example, must a state guarantee unemployment benefits and adequate public housing to be called democratic? Some insist that policies that promote social equality are essential to democratic government.¹⁰ Others limit their requirements to policies that safeguard civil liberties—guaranteed freedoms of action—and civil rights—social treatment to which citizens are entitled.

The political ideology of a theorist tends to explain his or her position on what democracy really requires in substantive policies. Conservative theorists have a narrow view of the scope of democratic government, and a narrow view of the social and economic rights guaranteed by that government. Liberal theorists believe that a democratic government should guarantee its citizens a much broader spectrum of social and economic rights. In Chapters 15 and 16, we review important social and economic policies that our government has actually followed over time. Keep in mind, however, that what the government *has* done is not necessarily a good guide to what a democratic government *should* do.

Procedural Democracy Versus Substantive Democracy

There is a problem with the substantive view of democracy. It does not provide clear, precise criteria that allow us to determine whether a government is or is not democratic. It is, in fact, open to unending arguments over which government policies are truly democratic in the substantive sense. Theorists are free to promote their pet values—separation of church and state, guaranteed employment, equal rights for women, whatever—under the guise of substantive democracy.

There is also a problem with the procedural viewpoint. Although it presents specific criteria for democratic government, those criteria can produce undesirable social policies that prey on minorities. This clashes with **minority rights**—the idea that citizens are entitled to certain things that cannot be denied by majority decisions. There are many different opinions on what those “certain things” are, but freedom of religion is definitely one of them. One way to protect minority rights is to limit the principle of majority rule—to require extraordinary majorities when decisions must be made on certain subjects or to put the issue in the Constitution, beyond the reach of majority rule.

The issue of prayer in school is a good example of the limits on majority rule. No matter how large, majorities in Congress cannot pass a law to allow organized prayer in public schools because the Supreme Court has determined that the Constitution forbids this kind of law. The Constitution could be changed so that it no longer protects religious minorities, but amendment is a cumbersome process that involves ex-

Social Equality in the Classroom

Would our government be democratic if it did not provide for equal educational opportunity through integrated schools? Substantive theorists might argue that democratic government in a multiracial society requires integrated schools. Procedural theorists would leave the issue to be decided by public opinion.



traordinary majorities. When limits like these are put on the principle of majority rule, the minority often rules instead. Those who are committed to majority rule in the procedural conception of democracy have no alternative: They must insist on *unlimited* majority rule, then trust in government by the people.

Clearly, procedural and substantive democracy are not always compatible. In choosing one over the other, we are also choosing to focus on either procedures or policies. As authors of this text, we favor the procedural conception of democracy because it more closely approaches the classical definition of *democracy*—“government by the people.” And procedural democracy is founded on clear, well-established rules for decision making. But the theory has a serious drawback: It allows a democratic government to enact policies that can violate the substantive principles of democracy.

Is this a real problem? Or is it simply a question of definition? Because people equate democracy with desirable government, they have trouble accepting undesirable policies in a democratic government. Early political theorists did not attach such overtones to the idea of democracy; they saw it simply as a mechanism for making government decisions. If we do the same, if we realize that democratic government and desirable policies are not necessarily synonymous, then we should be able to live with a political system that sets standards for the decision-making process if not the decisions themselves.

INSTITUTIONAL MODELS OF DEMOCRACY

A small group of people can agree to make democratic decisions directly by using the principles of universal participation, political equality, and majority rule. But even the smallest nations have too many citizens to practice direct democracy. If nations want democracy, they must achieve it through some form of representative government, electing officials to make government decisions. Even then, democratic government is not guaranteed. Governments must have a means for determining what the people want, as well as some means for translating those wants into decisions. In other words, democratic government requires **institutional mechanisms**—established procedures and organizations—to translate public opinion into government policy, to be responsive. Elections, political parties, legislatures, and interest groups (which we discuss in later chapters) are all examples of such institutional mechanisms in politics.

Some democratic theorists favor institutions that tie government decisions closely to the desires of the majority of citizens. If most citizens want laws against the sale of pornography, then the government should outlaw pornography. If citizens want more money spent on defense and less on social welfare (or vice versa), the government should act accordingly. For these theorists, the essence of democratic government is majority rule and responsiveness.

Other theorists place less importance on the principles of majority rule and responsiveness. They do not believe in relying heavily on mass opinion; instead, they favor institutions that allow groups of citizens to defend their interests in government decisions.

Both schools hold a procedural view of democracy but differ in how they interpret *government by the people*. We can summarize these theoretical positions using two alternative models of democracy. As a model, each is a hypothetical plan, a normative blueprint, for achieving democratic government through institutional mechanisms. The *majoritarian model* values participation by the people in general; the *pluralist model* values participation by the people in groups.

The Majoritarian Model of Democracy

The *majoritarian model of democracy* relies on the classical, textbook theory of democracy. It interprets *government by the people* as government by the *majority* of the people. The majoritarian model tries to approximate the people's role in a direct democracy within the limitations of representative government. To force the government to respond to public opinion, the majoritarian model depends on several mechanisms that allow the people to participate directly in the political system.

The popular election of government officials is the primary mechanism for democratic government in the majoritarian model. Citizens are expected to control their representatives' behavior by choosing wisely in the first place and by re-electing or defeating public officials according to their performance. Elections fulfill the first three principles of procedural democratic theory: universal participation, political equality, and majority rule. And the prospect of re-election and the threat of defeat at the polls are expected to motivate public officials to be responsive.

Usually we think of elections only as mechanisms for choosing between candidates for public office. Majoritarian theorists also see them as a means for deciding government policies. An election on a policy issue is called a **referendum**. There are no provisions for referenda at the national level, but they are common at the state level and appeared on the ballot in most states in the 1986 general elections. Citizens in Oregon, for example, had the opportunity to prohibit the use of state money for funding abortions. (Oregonians voted against the prohibition, 55 percent to 45 percent.¹¹)

In the majoritarian model, citizens are expected to do more than vote. They are expected to learn about the issues, to discuss politics in community meetings, and even to propose legislation through a process called the **initiative**. This process allows citizens who have circulated petitions and gathered a required number of signatures to place issues before the legislature or before the people in referenda. (In fact, the Oregon abortion referendum arose from a citizens' initiative.)

The most fervent advocates of majoritarian democracy would like to see modern technology used to maximize the government's responsiveness to the majority. Some have proposed incorporating public opinion polls, first used regularly in the 1930s, into government decision making. More recently, some have suggested that computers could be used in the referendum process. For instance, citizens could vote on an issue by inserting plastic identification cards into computer terminals installed in all homes.¹² People disagree on the merits of "video voting," but it certainly is technically possible (see Politics in the Information Age 2.1).

Saying No to Nukes

Citizens of Boston, Massachusetts, sign a petition to protest the opening of a nuclear power plant in nearby Seabrook, New Hampshire. Heated controversy over public safety issues has blocked the activation of the \$5.4 billion reactor. Massachusetts officials have aided the "stop Seabrook" cause by demanding comprehensive and viable evacuation plans. Signing petitions to request government action is one way that people can involve themselves in politics.



The majoritarian model contends that citizens can control their government if they have adequate mechanisms for popular participation. It also assumes that citizens are knowledgeable about government and politics; that they want to participate in the political process; and that they make rational decisions in voting for their elected representatives.

If these factors are truly necessary to the functioning of majoritarian democracy, then the majoritarian model in the United States is in trouble. Only 26 percent of a national sample of voters interviewed just after the 1984 election said that they "followed what's going on" in government "most of the time." More (37 percent) said that they followed politics "only now and then" or "hardly at all." Further, as we discuss in Chapter 7, voter turnout in presidential elections has fallen to little more than half of the eligible electorate. And those who do vote often choose candidates more from habit (along party lines) than from a close examination of the candidates' positions on the issues.

An Alternative Model: Pluralist Democracy

For years, political scientists struggled valiantly to reconcile the majoritarian model of democracy with polls that showed a widespread ignorance of politics among the American people. One example illustrates the shallowness of public opinion. Throughout President Ronald Reagan's administration, the U.S. government supported the Nicaraguan rebels (the Contras) against the Soviet-backed Sandinista regime. Reagan often described the rebels as "freedom fighters." Still at the height of congressional debate on a key vote to grant \$100 million in aid to the

POLITICS IN THE INFORMATION AGE 2.1

Electronic Democracy

Thanks to computers and telecommunications, we could now involve the masses of citizens directly in government decisions by having them vote on issues using computers in their own homes. Would this be a good idea? A philosopher writing in *PC World*, a computer magazine, sees problems but urges us to trust the people (and the computers).

Imagine a nationwide interactive communications network that connects with every home's personal computer, telephone, and TV set. On this network local, state, and national issues are debated and decided periodically. Each viewpoint is clearly and fairly framed, and unpopular views are defended vigorously by a "public dissenter." Voters, using individual passwords to prevent fraud, cast their ballots at the keyboard. The true voice of the people is regularly and authoritatively expressed. The electronic referendum becomes a part of our lives—as popular as "Monday Night Football," though with much more at stake. . . .

Electronic democracy would profoundly change the way we view "government by the people." Today we popularly elect representatives, who then make policy affecting our lives. Electronic democracy promises speed, accuracy, and convenience without representation. Every issue of local, state, or national importance can be put directly to the voter. Problems of fairness, of course, would have to be solved in the design of such a system. Problems like ensuring universal access and guarding against fraud—which have been with us since the beginning of our republic—would have to be solved. But the key question about electronic democracy is not so much its feasibility as its desirability. . . .

Would "one terminal, one vote" democracy improve the quality of decisions made? Would the First Amendment be defeated if put to a vote of the American people? Would the taking of American hostages by a foreign power

cause a government instantly responsive to the will of its citizens to retaliate by reflex? The masses have commonly been judged as being intemperate in war, shortsighted in peace, and unable to deal with the refinements of economic policy. Recent national polls on political issues tend to support this view.

But if we cannot trust ourselves, who can we trust? If genuine self-government is dangerous, are we not saying that democracy is dangerous—unless restrained by the aristocrat? Is government by the terminal what we really want? Or should we honestly admit that we feel competent to choose our leaders but not to guide them? . . .

If we reject computerized, direct democracy because we fear the outcome, then the whole concept of democracy is in question. Perhaps it is not computers that present the real problem, but placing the ultimate authority in the hands of the governed. And so the answer is at hand: too much democracy—in any form—is dangerous.

I reject this answer because I am a democrat. I realize that people can and sometimes do make terrible mistakes, but I trust them in the long run—certainly more than any elite body. A computerized system of direct participation in public affairs might bring about a better, more robust democracy. . . .

Computers cannot produce a spirit of universal participation, but they can support it. If politics becomes more tangible, more countable, and more keenly sensed and effective because of computers, we may yet revive our flagging democracy. The personal computer, tied to a world of computers, can reinforce the spirit of democracy and endear it to us.

Source: Carl Cohen, *PC World*, July 1984, pp. 21–22. Copyright 1984 PC World Communications. Reprinted by permission.

rebels, only 38 percent of those polled in a national survey realized that the United States and the Contras were on the same side.¹³

Polling did not become an established research tool for studying public opinion until the 1950s. When repeated polls revealed how little the public actually knows about politics, the assumptions of majoritarian democracy came into question. Obviously, the wisdom of government by the people—the very idea of democracy itself—also came into ques-

tion. If most voters do not know enough to make rational political judgments, why pretend that they should govern at all? In short, why argue for democracy?

In the 1950s, an alternative interpretation of democracy evolved, one tailored to the limited knowledge and participation of the *real* electorate, not the perfection of the ideal one. It was based on the concept of **pluralism**—that modern society consists of innumerable groups of people who share economic, religious, ethnic, or cultural interests. Often people with similar interests organize formal groups: The Future Farmers of America, the Junior Chamber of Commerce, and the Knights of Columbus, for example. Many of these social groups have little contact with government; but occasionally they find themselves backing or opposing government policy. When an organized group seeks to influence government policy, it is called an **interest group**. Many interest groups regularly spend a great deal of time and money trying to influence government policy (see Chapter 9). Among them are the AFL-CIO, the Associated Milk Producers, the National Education Association (NEA), the Moral Majority, Operation PUSH, the National Organization for Women (NOW), and, of course, the NRA.

The **pluralist model of democracy** interprets *government by the people* to mean government by people operating through competing interest groups. According to this model, democracy exists when many (plural) organizations operate separately from the government, press their interests on the government, and even challenge the government.¹⁴ Compared with majoritarian thinking, pluralist theory shifts the focus of democratic government from the mass electorate to organized groups. It changes the criterion for democratic government from responsiveness to mass public opinion to responsiveness to organized groups of citizens.

The two major mechanisms in a pluralist democracy are interest groups and a decentralized structure of government that provides ready access to public officials and that is open to hearing the groups' arguments for or against government policies. In a centralized structure, decisions are made at one point, the top of the hierarchy. The few decision makers at the top are too busy to hear the claims of competing interest groups or to consider those claims in making their decisions. But a decentralized, complex government structure offers the access and openness necessary for pluralist democracy. The ideal is a system that divides government authority among numerous institutions with overlapping authority. Under such a system, competing interest groups have alternative points of access to present and argue their claims.

Our Constitution approaches the pluralist ideal in the way it divides authority among the branches of government. When the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) could not get Congress to outlaw segregated schools in the South, it turned to the federal court system, which did what Congress would not. When Reagan submitted a budget that cut funding for Amtrak trains, train travelers organized and protested to Congress, which restored the funding. According to pluralist democracy, if all opposing interests are allowed to organize, and if the system can be kept open so that all substantial claims have an opportunity to be heard, then the diverse needs of a pluralist society will be served when an issue is decided.

Why They Are Called Lobbyists

At the national level, interest groups are usually represented by highly paid lobbyists. These people are called lobbyists because they often gather in the lobby outside congressional meeting rooms, positioned to contact senators and representatives coming and going. Here, lobbyists are waiting to help members of the House Ways and Means Committee understand the importance of their pet tax loopholes.



Although many scholars have contributed to the model, pluralist democracy is most closely identified with political scientist Robert Dahl. According to Dahl, the fundamental axiom of pluralist democracy is that "instead of a single center of sovereign power there must be multiple centers of power, none of which is or can be wholly sovereign."¹⁵ Some watchwords of pluralist democracy, therefore, are *divided authority*, *decentralization*, and *open access*.

The Majoritarian Model Versus the Pluralist Model

In majoritarian democracy, individual citizens—not interest groups—control government actions. These citizens must be knowledgeable about government and willing to participate in the electoral process. Majoritarian democracy relies on electoral mechanisms that harness the majority's power to make decisions. Conclusive elections and a centralized structure of government are mechanisms that aid majority rule.

Pluralism does not demand much knowledge from citizens in general. It requires specialized knowledge only from groups of citizens, in particular their leaders. Unlike majoritarian democracy, pluralist democracy seeks to limit majority action so that interest groups can be heard. It relies on strong interest groups and a decentralized government structure—mechanisms that interfere with majority rule, thereby protecting minority interests. We could even say that pluralism allows minorities to rule.

An Undemocratic Model: Elite Theory

If pluralist democracy allows minorities to rule, how does it differ from **elite theory**—the view that a small group of people (a minority) makes most important government decisions? According to elite theory, important government decisions are made by an identifiable and stable minority that shares certain characteristics, usually vast wealth and business connections.* Elitism contends that these few individuals wield power in America because they control its key financial, communications, industrial, and governmental institutions.

According to elite theory, the United States is not a democracy but an oligarchy. Although the voters appear to control government through elections, elite theorists argue that the powerful few in society manage to define the issues and to constrain the possible outcomes of government decisions to suit their own interests. Clearly, elite theory describes a government that operates in an undemocratic fashion.

Elite theory appeals to many people, especially those who believe that wealth dominates politics. The theory also provides plausible explanations for specific political decisions. For example, government spending for new military weapons systems—including enormous overruns in estimated costs—often seems to be controlled by agreements between the military and giant defense contractors.¹⁶ Even President Eisenhower, himself a former five-star general, warned of the influence of the "military-industrial complex" on government policy. (In Chapter 19, we examine that influence in more detail.)

Elite theory breaks down, however, when we try to use it to explain a broader range of political decisions. Dahl suggests that convincing research on the ruling elite model must meet three tests:

1. The hypothetical ruling elite must be a well-defined group.
2. A fair sample of cases involving key political decisions must exist. In those decisions, the preferences of the hypothetical ruling elite must be shown to run counter to the preferences of any other likely group. . . .
3. In such cases, the preferences of the elite must regularly prevail.¹⁷

Some researchers have attempted the first test, defining the ruling group. One study identified 7,314 "elite positions" in the corporate, public interest, and governmental sectors of society.¹⁸ Although this number represents only a tiny fraction of the nation's population, 7,314 rulers somehow seems many more than "the few."

The second test, identifying a number of government decisions that pit the special interests of the ruling elite against the interests of others, has not been performed in serious research at the national level. This means the third test, determining whether or not elite interests regularly

* The classic book on elite theory in American politics is C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956). Actually, elite theory argues that elite rule is inevitable in every government, indeed in every large organization. See Thomas R. Dye, *Who's Running America? The Conservative Years* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1986), especially pp. 2-6, for a summary of elite theory.

The Power Elite?

This picture symbolizes the underlying notion of elite theory—that government is driven by wealth. In truth, wealthy people usually have more influence in government than do people of ordinary means. Critics of elite theory point out that it is difficult to demonstrate that an identifiable ruling elite usually sticks together and gets its way in government policy.



prevail in such decisions, also has not been met. Careful studies of decision making in American cities, which should be even more susceptible to elite rule than the nation as a whole, have shown that different groups win on different issues.¹⁹ This also seems to be true in some cases at the national level. For instance, the giant oil, chemical, and steel industries do not always triumph over environmental groups on the issue of air pollution. And what was once the nation's largest corporation, AT&T, was forced to break up its telephone monopoly in suits brought by much smaller communications companies.

The available evidence of government decisions on many different topics does not generally support elite theory—at least in the sense that an identifiable ruling elite usually gets its way in government policy. But elite theory is not dead; it is still forcefully argued by radical critics of American politics.²⁰ We believe, however, that pluralist theory offers a more satisfactory interpretation of American politics today.

Elite Theory Versus Pluralist Theory

The key difference between elite and pluralist theory lies in the durability of the ruling minority. Unlike elite theory, pluralist theory does not define government conflict in terms of a minority versus the majority; instead, it sees many minorities vying with one another in different policy areas. In the management of national forests, for example,

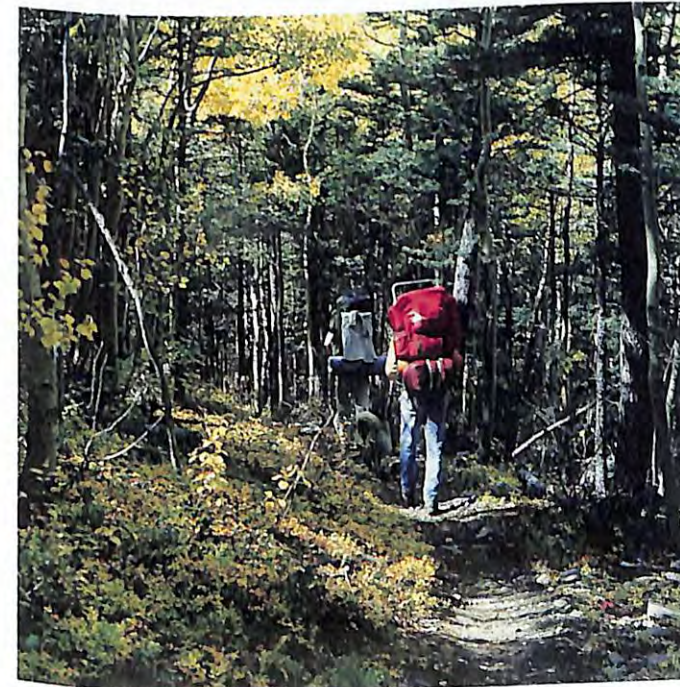
many interest groups—logging companies, recreational campers, environmentalists—have joined the political competition. They press their various interests on government through group representatives who are well informed about the issues as they affect group members (see Feature 2.2). According to elite theory, the financial resources of big logging companies ought to win out over the arguments of campers and environmentalists, but this does not always happen.

The pluralist model holds that this type of competition among minority interests also takes place in other policy arenas, including transportation, agriculture, public utilities, and urban housing. Although some groups with “better connections” in government may win more often in individual arenas, no identifiable elite wins consistently across a broad range of issues. The pluralist model, then, rejects the primary implication of elite theory, that a single group dominates government decisions.

Instead, pluralist democracy makes a virtue of the struggle among minority interests. It argues for government that accommodates this struggle and channels the result into government action. According to pluralist democracy, the public is best served if the government structure provides access for different groups to press their claims in competition with one another. Notice that pluralist democracy does not insist that all groups have equal influence on government decisions. In the political

Trees or Lumber?

These photos illustrate the conflict between environmentalists and loggers. Environmentalists envision forests as natural havens from the bustle of modern life; loggers regard them as cash crops for harvesting. Because people cannot build homes or print textbooks without lumber or wood pulp, government must somehow strike a balance between the legitimate interests of these two competing groups.



FEATURE 2.2

Interest Group Conflict over Uses of Forests

According to pluralism, modern society is composed of diverse groups struggling to advance their competing interests. The interplay of interest groups trying to influence government policy is clear in the debate over the use of the national forests. Should they be used primarily for commerce or recreation? Or should they simply be preserved? This news item explains the issues involved.

KALISPELL, Mont., April 12—The future of the country's 120 national forests is being laid out in a process that has attracted criticism both from people who want more economic development of the forests and from those who want less.

In the big Flathead National Forest here in northern Montana, those issues are drawn as clearly as anywhere. People who believe the forests should produce timber and minerals for local jobs are opposing those who want the forest to be managed more like a national park, as a place for recreation and wildlife. . . .

The plans being drawn up are the first long-range, forest-by-forest management blueprints that were required under the National Forest Management Act of 1976. The act requires forest supervisors to look 50 years ahead and draw up detailed plans for each of the 10- to 15-year intervals between now and that "planning horizon." The plans must spell out how much timber cutting will be allowed, where oil and gas drilling may take place, what roads should be built, if any, and what lands should be set aside to remain wild.

Conservationists argue that the act was drawn up to curb policies that resulted in excessive clearcutting of lumber, land erosion, infringement on wildlife habitat and the like. . . .

They say their fears that the timber industry would try to circumvent the act in the new forest plans were confirmed when early draft plans envisaged a massive increase in timber harvesting. Only a public outcry forced the service to retreat, say people like Peter Coppleman, senior counsel at the **Wilderness Society**, a conservation group based in Washington. . . .

Edgar B. Brannon, supervisor of the Flathead National Forest, divides the contending forces in this planning process between "the utilitarians" and the "naturists." To varying de-

grees, he said, their opposing views are reflected in continuing disagreements about the proper use of the more than 400 million acres of public land in the West and in the rest of the country. . . .

The debate over how national forests should be used is not a new one. Early in the century Gifford Pinchot, the country's first forester and founder of the national forest system, stressed the careful management of woodlands to increase their economic benefit to man. Although he is remembered as a conservationist, he was nonetheless opposed by John Muir, who argued for protecting the bulk of American wild lands from any economic use and went on to found the **Sierra Club**, a conservation lobby. . . .

The timber industry, the dominant but declining source of jobs in the interior Northwest, says the trend toward reduced timber harvests reflects the rise in power of the environmental movement, or the "preservationists," as they are beginning to be called by opponents like John Benneth, director of the **American Forest Institute**, an industry group. . . .

Richard Kuhl, head of the Flathead chapter of the **Montana Wilderness Association**, counters that economics, and not forest policy, is what is hurting the lumber industry. . . .

Of the 32 national forests that have completed their 10- to 15-year plans, 22 have attracted 139 separate appeals, and all but a handful of the appeals are from conservation groups. The 10 remaining forest plans have so far drawn no appeals. . . .

Mr. Brannon's plan for the Flathead National Forest has drawn 39 appeals, 37 of them from environmentalists asking for more wilderness, more wildlife sanctuaries and protection of scenic vistas and the like, and two from industry asking for more timber cutting. . . .

"Because this is the first time around and it is precedent-setting," he said, "we're getting a lot of appeals from groups that want to establish a position, a posture, that they hope will influence later decisions."

Source: Iver Peterson, "50-Year Plan For Forests Renews Debate on Use," *New York Times*, 16 April 1986. Copyright © 1986 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission.

struggle, wealthy well-organized groups have an inherent advantage over poorer, inadequately organized groups. In fact, unorganized segments of the population may not even get their concerns placed on the agenda for government consideration, which means that what government does not discuss (its *nondecisions*) may be as significant as what it does discuss and decide. Nevertheless, pluralist theory is silent about the proper outcome of the group struggle. As long as all groups are able to participate vigorously in the decision-making process, the process is democratic.

Obviously, pluralist democracy differs from the classic conception based on universal participation, political equality, and majority rule. But the pluralist reliance on access is compatible with contemporary thinking that democratic government should be open to groups that seek redress of grievances. The pluralist concept also fits the facts about the limited political knowledge of most American citizens. Clearly, pluralist democracy is worthy of being embraced as a rival model to majoritarianism, the traditional model of procedural democracy.

DEMOCRACIES AROUND THE WORLD

We have proposed two models of democratic government. The majoritarian model conforms to classical democratic theory for a representative government. According to this model, democracy is a hypothetical form of government that features prompt and complete responsiveness to majority opinion. According to the pluralist model, a government is democratic if it allows minority interests to organize and press their claims freely on government.

No government actually achieves the high degree of responsiveness demanded by the majoritarian model. It is also true that no government offers complete and equal access to the claims of all competing groups, as required by the pluralist model. Still, some nations approach these ideals closely enough to be considered practicing democracies.

Testing for Democratic Government

How do we decide which countries qualify as practicing democracies? We cannot measure a government's degree of responsiveness or access directly, so we must turn to indirect tests of democracy. One test is to look for traits normally associated with democratic government—whether defined from a procedural or from a substantive viewpoint. One scholar, for example, established five criteria for a democracy:²¹

1. *Most adults can participate in the electoral process.* (Embodies the principle of universal participation)
2. *Citizens' votes are secret and are not coerced.* (Embodies the principle of political equality)
3. *Leaders are chosen in free elections, contested by at least two viable political parties.* (Embodies the principle of majority rule)
4. *The government bases its legitimacy on representing the desires of its citizens.* (Embodies the principle of responsiveness)

5. *Citizens, leaders, and party officials enjoy basic freedoms of speech, press, assembly, religion, and organization.* (Substantive policies that create conditions for the practice of the other criteria)

Because the United States fits all these criteria to a fairly high degree, it qualifies as a democracy. How about the other nations of the world? Applying standards similar to these to all nations with a population over 3 million, one writer identified just eighteen nations in addition to the United States as democracies.²² Like the United States, the following nations have government traditions of widespread participation, political equality, and free elections to choose representatives who pay close attention to public opinion.

Australia	France	New Zealand
Austria	Ireland	Norway
Belgium	Israel	Sweden
Canada	Italy	Switzerland
Denmark	Japan	United Kingdom
Finland	Netherlands	West Germany

Given that more than ninety nations have populations greater than 3 million, nineteen democracies—only about 20 percent of the world's nations—do not seem like very many. By any reckoning, democratic government is relatively rare across the world.

Four of the five criteria above apply to government procedures rather than to the substance of government policy. But all of these criteria apply equally to the majoritarian and pluralist models of democracy. Although the United States clearly qualifies as a democracy according to these criteria, we cannot use them to judge whether it is closer to a majoritarian or to a pluralist democracy.

American Democracy: More Pluralist than Majoritarian

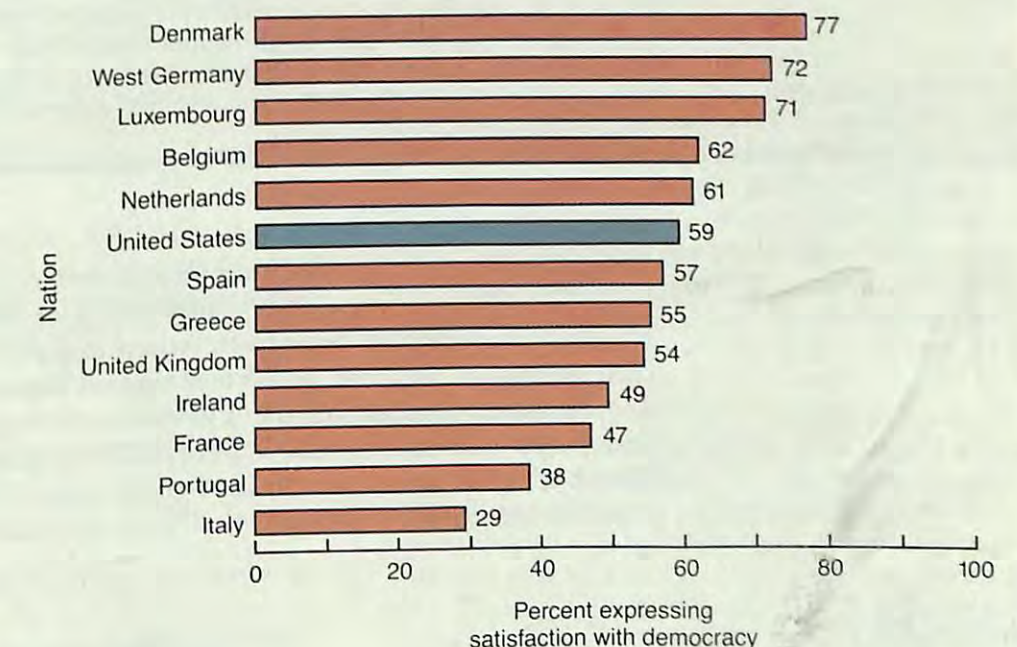
It is not idle speculation to ask what kind of democracy is practiced in the United States. The answer to this question can help us understand why our government can be called *democratic* despite a low level of citizen participation in politics and despite government actions that run contrary to public opinion. The answer may also help us understand why many Americans are not satisfied with the democratic form of government here. As shown in Compared With What? 2.1, only 59 percent of a national sample reported that they were satisfied with the way democracy works in the United States.

Throughout the rest of this book, we probe more deeply to determine how well the United States fits the two alternative models of democracy: majoritarian and pluralist. If our answer is not already apparent, it soon will be. We argue that the political system in the United States rates relatively low according to the majoritarian model of democracy, but that it fulfills the pluralist model very well. It should not be surprising, then, that 80 percent of the wealthiest group of respondents in a national survey were satisfied with the way democracy works in the United States

COMPARED WITH WHAT? 2.1

Satisfaction with Democracy, by Nation

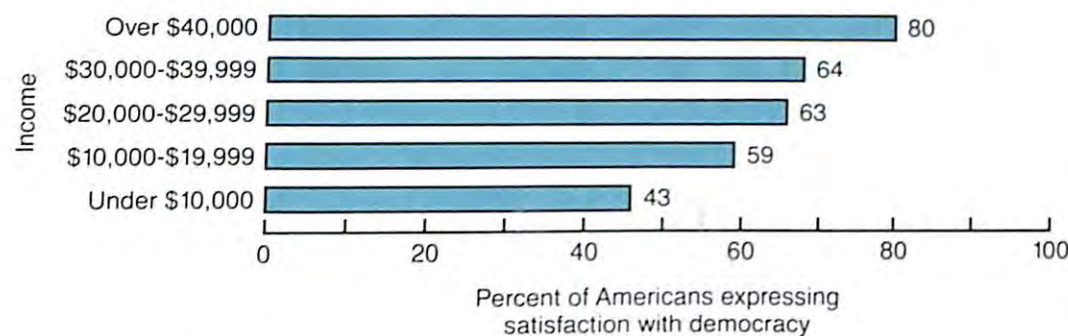
Compared with citizens in twelve other Western countries, Americans are only moderately satisfied with their form of democratic government. When asked in 1985 whether they were “satisfied with the way democracy works” in their country, respondents in five other nations reported higher levels of satisfaction than the 59 percent who were satisfied with “the way democracy is working” in the United States. Of the seven nations whose respondents were less satisfied, three (Spain, Greece, and Portugal) do not have democratic traditions. Spain and Portugal suffered under decades of dictatorship until the late 1970s, and Greece has had a spotty record of free elections since World War II.



Source: Data for the United States are from *The Gallup Poll, Public Opinion 1985* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1986), p. 32; data for the other nations are from Jacques-René Rabier, Helene Riffault, and Ronald Inglehart, *Euro-Barometer 24: Entry of Spain and Portugal, October, 1985* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, Study 8513, 1986), pp. 10–11.

compared with only 43 percent of the poorest group (see Figure 2.1). An advocate of majoritarian democracy once wrote, “The flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent.”²³

This evaluation of the pluralist nature of American democracy may not mean much to you now. But you will learn that the pluralist model makes the United States look far more democratic than does the majoritarian model. Eventually, it will be up to *you* to decide the answers to



Satisfaction with Democracy in the United States, by Income
As shown in Compared With What? 2.1, Americans surveyed in 1985 were only moderately satisfied with “the way democracy is working” in the United States when compared with citizens in other Western nations. But satisfaction in the United States was closely linked to income. Nearly twice the percentage of the wealthiest respondents were satisfied with the workings of democracy compared with the poorest respondents. There were only slight differences in satisfaction among the vast majority of people in the three middle categories. (Source: The Gallup Poll, Public Opinion 1985 [Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1986], p. 32.)

Figure 2.1

SUMMARY

There are not many democracies in the world. In fact, scholars agree that only about nineteen of the world’s larger countries are democratic. Is the United States a democracy? Most scholars believe that it is. But what kind of democracy is it? The answer depends on our definition of *democracy*. Some believe democracy is procedural in nature; they define *democracy* as a form of government in which the people govern through certain institutional mechanisms. Others hold to substantive theory, claiming a government is democratic if its policies promote civil liberties and rights.

In this book, we use the procedural conception of democracy, distinguishing between direct and indirect democracy. In a direct democracy, all citizens

elect representatives to govern for them. If a representative government is elected mostly in accordance with the three principles listed above and is also usually responsive to public opinion, then it qualifies as a democracy.

Procedural democratic theory has produced rival institutional models of democratic government. The classical majoritarian model assumes that people are knowledgeable about government, that they want to participate in the political process, and that they carefully and rationally choose among candidates. But surveys of public opinion and behavior, and voter turnouts, show that this is not the case for most Americans. The pluralist model of democracy was devised to accommodate these findings. It argues that democracy in a complex society requires only that government allow private interests to organize and to press their competing claims openly in the political

democracy works better in a decentralized, organizationally complex government structure than in a centralized, hierarchical one.

In Chapter 1, we talked about three political values—freedom, order, and equality. Here, we’ve looked at two models of democracy—majoritarian and pluralist. These five concepts are critical to an understanding of American government. The values we described in the last chapter underlie the two questions with which the text began:

- Which is better: to live under a government that allows individuals complete freedom to do whatever they please or under one that enforces strict law and order?
- Which is better: to allow businesses and private clubs to discriminate in choosing their customers and members or to pass laws that enforce equality among races and sexes?

The models of democracy we’ve examined here add another:

- Which is better: a government that responds immediately to public opinion on all matters or one that responds deliberately to organized groups that argue their cases effectively?

If by the end of this book you understand the issues involved in answering these questions, you will have learned a great deal about American government.

Key Terms

autocracy (monarchy)	substantive democratic
aristocracy (oligarchy)	theory
ruling elite	minority rights
democracy (polyarchy)	institutional
procedural democratic	mechanisms
theory	majoritarian model of
universal participation	democracy
political equality	referendum
majority rule	initiative
direct democracy	pluralism
indirect democracy	interest group
representative	pluralist model of
government	democracy
responsiveness	elite theory

Selected Readings

Barber, Benjamin R. *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1984. Barber favors a “strong democracy,” a government that features a high degree of participation by individuals, much as a direct democracy does. He suggests specific institutional reforms to stimulate civic discussion and popular participation in government.

Dahl, Robert A. *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy: Autonomy vs. Control*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982. Dahl is the leading theorist on pluralist democracy. This book clearly explains the pluralist model with reference to governments in other countries as well as that in the United States.

Green, Philip. *Retrieving Democracy: In Search of Civic Equality*. Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Allanheld, 1985. Green contends that representative government is “pseudodemocracy” because government is not under the direct control of the people. He argues for “egalitarian democracy,” a society of truly equal citizens. The book urges fundamental economic reforms to produce a redistribution of wealth, which would facilitate direct democracy.

Mansbridge, Jane. *Beyond Adversary Democracy*. New York: Basic Books, 1982. Mansbridge contrasts “adversary democracy,” the kind of open contest that occurs among groups in a large nation, with “unitary democracy,” a cooperative form of decision making based on common rather than opposing interests. She illustrates unitary democracy with two case studies of decision making: one in a New England village, the other in an urban crisis center.

Pateman, Carole. *Participation and Democratic Theory*. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1970. This work is a highly respected analysis of the importance of individual participation in government to democratic theory. Many later studies draw heavily on this influential study.

Spitz, Elaine. *Majority Rule*. Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House, 1984. Spitz reviews the various meanings of *majority* and *rule* and the place of majority rule in democratic theory, then goes beyond the narrow definition of *majority rule* as a method of deciding between policies. She argues that majoritarianism should be viewed as a “social practice” among people who want to hold their society together when making decisions.

Essay A

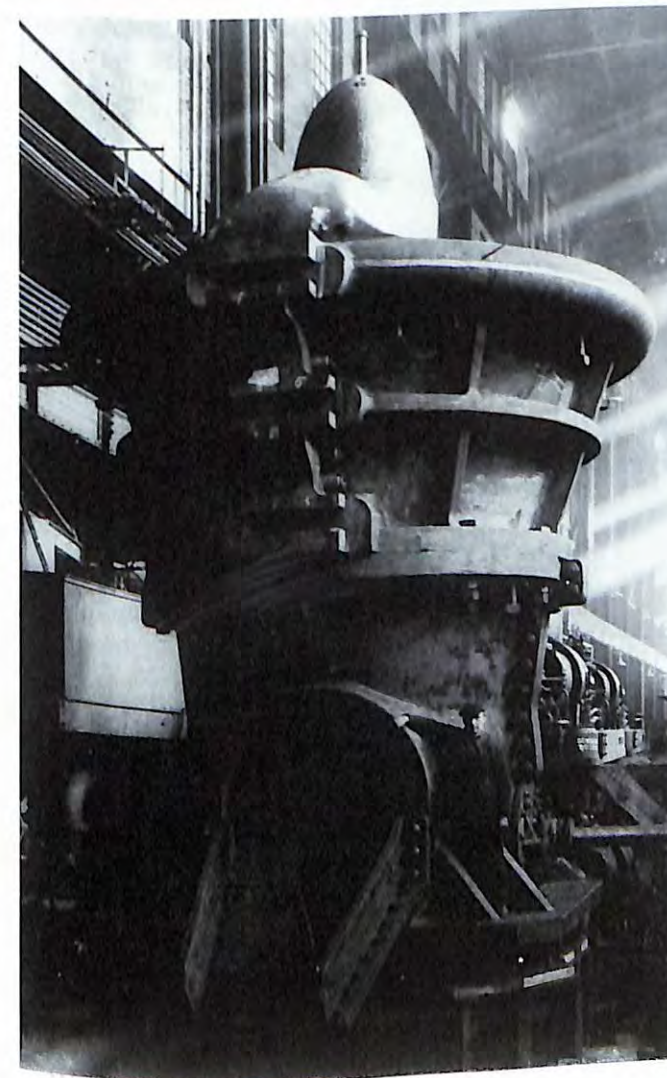
Transformations in American Politics: Into the Information Age

The pattern and practice of politics in the United States reflect the nature of our society. Because American society has changed greatly since the Constitution was written and our government formed, politics today is vastly different from politics two hundred years ago. Two changes in particular have had a major impact on American politics: the evolution of the occupational structure and our society's growing technological sophistication.

This country began as an agricultural society; more than 60 percent of the work force were farmers, and the vast majority of people lived in rural areas. Government during this *agricultural age* was minimal. Most politicians

were members of the landed gentry; the political process was characterized by the courtesy and deference of its participants. But the industrialization that began after the Civil War affected the composition of the work force. By the 1900s, a plurality of workers had blue-collar jobs, mostly in manufacturing. Huge cities grew to house these workers. Government during the *industrial age* grew to help spur industrial growth and deal with the problems of immigration, urban crowding, and monopolistic business practices. Politics became more oriented to the masses, as candidates courted workers' votes and workers themselves entered the political arena.

The Residence of David Twining, 1787, by Edward Hicks, 1845–1848. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center, Williamsburg, Virginia.



Top: An assembly line at Ford Motor Company's Highland Park, Michigan, plant, c. 1914. Bottom left: An ore breaker, destined for the Utah Copper Company, under construction at the Allis-Chalmers plant in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, c. 1940–1950. Bottom right: The shipping department of a salmon canning factory in Astoria, Oregon, 1904.

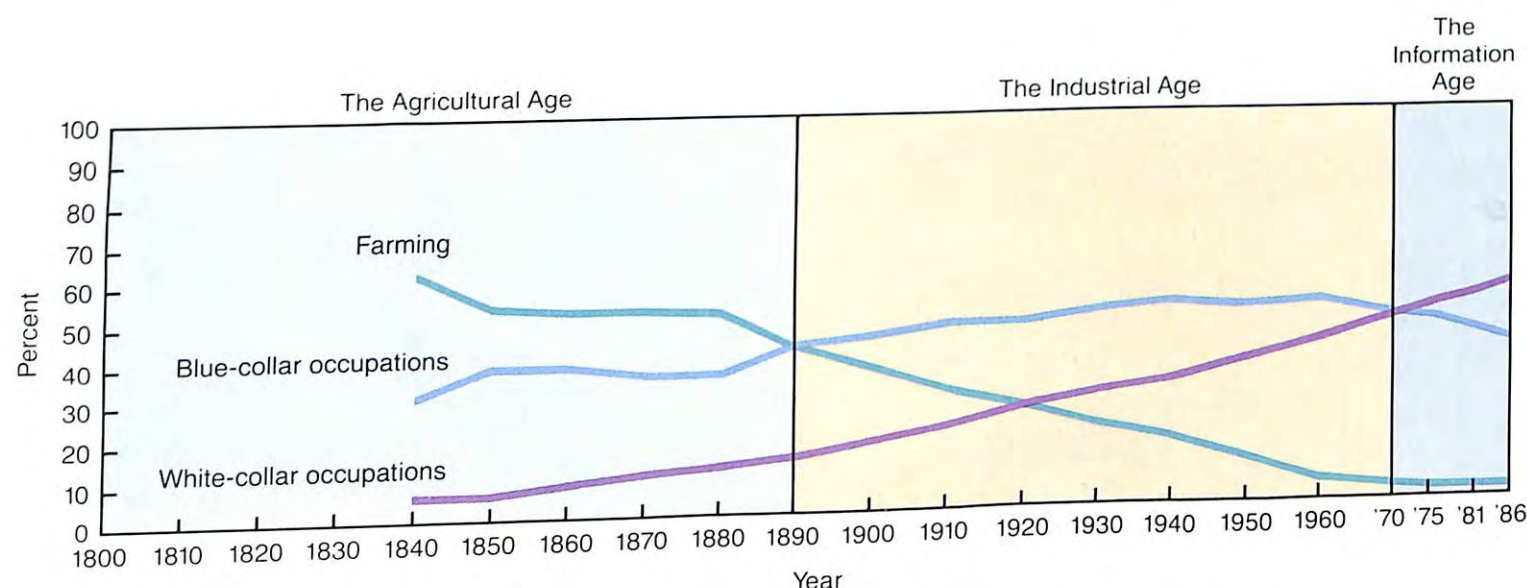
Another major change in the work force occurred around 1970. For the first time, white-collar workers, who process and transmit information, outnumbered blue-collar workers, who produce goods. Although some refer to this new era as the "postindustrial society," we prefer to call it the *information age*.

Government in the information age plays an increasingly active role. For example, it tries to stimulate economic growth yet stabilize the economy, protect civil liberties and promote civil rights, and deal with environmental hazards. Politics in the information age relies heavily on social statistics, economic indicators, expert reports, and scientific knowledge in proposing public policy.

We cannot underestimate the importance of technology to politics in the information age. Politicians use information gleaned from poll data and test marketing results to court the support of various groups. As a result, candidates seeking election become more independent of traditional institutions, such as politi-

cal parties, newspapers, and labor unions. By the same token, the public—often through the media—has greater and faster access to information previously available only to government officials, if available at all. Consequently, more participants in and out of government monitor more actions of government directly. In principle, this greater access to information serves both the majoritarian and pluralist models of democracy; in practice, the particular issue and setting determine which model is better served.

All players in today's political contests depend on the major instruments of the information age: government statistics, scientific findings, public opinion polls, the media, computers, satellites. To examine that debt closely, we have included features called "Politics in the Information Age" throughout this text. The reliance of politics on technology will undoubtedly increase with each advance in collecting, analyzing, transmitting, and consuming information.



The Transformation of Occupation, 1840-1986

Source: Data for 1840-1890 come from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970, Bicentennial Edition, Part I*, p. 139. Figures for agriculture and fishing are combined for farming percentages. Figures for teaching and trade are combined for white-collar percentages. All other figures are combined for blue-collar percentages. Data for 1900-1950 come from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Occupation Trends in the United States, 1900 to 1950*, p. 7. Figures for manual and service occupations are combined for blue-collar percentages. Data for 1960 come from *Historical Statistics of the United States*, p. 139. Data for 1970-1981 come from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1982-1983*, p. 386. Data for 1986 come from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1987*, pp. 376-377.



Top: Exterior view of a modern office building. Right: IBM service coordinators in Atlanta assign repair personnel to on-site jobs through a computer-based system. Bottom right: Portable satellite dishes used by television news organizations, at the site of an Amtrak train crash in Maryland, 1987.



PART *II*

FOUNDATIONS
OF
AMERICAN
GOVERNMENT



3

The Constitution

The Revolutionary Roots of the Constitution

Freedom in Colonial America • The Road to Revolution • Revolutionary Action • The Declaration of Independence

From Revolution to Government: The First Try

The Articles of Confederation • Disorder Under the Confederation

The Constitutional Convention: The Second Try

The Virginia Plan • The New Jersey Plan • The Great Compromise • Compromise on the Presidency

The Final Product

The Basic Principles • The Articles of the Constitution • The Framers' Motives

Selling the Constitution

The Federalist Papers • A Concession: The Bill of Rights • Ratification

Constitutional Change

The Formal Amendment Process • Interpretation by the Courts • Political Practice

An Evaluation of the Constitution

Freedom, Order, and Equality in the Constitution • The Constitution and Models of Democracy



he midnight burglars made a mistake. It led to their capture in the early hours of June 17, 1972, and triggered a constitutional struggle that eventually involved the president of the United States, the Congress, and the Supreme Court.

The burglars' mistake seems small: They left a piece of tape over the lock they had tripped to enter the Watergate office and apartment complex in Washington, D.C. But a security guard discovered their tampering and called the police, who surprised the burglars in the offices of the Democratic National Committee at 2:30 A.M. They arrested five men—four Cuban exiles and a former CIA agent. The burglars wore business suits and surgical gloves. They also carried the equipment they needed to photograph the files and bug the offices of the Democratic National Committee.

The arrests took place a month before the 1972 Democratic National Convention. Investigative reporting by the *Washington Post's* Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward uncovered a link between the Watergate burglary and the forthcoming election.¹ The burglars were carrying the telephone number of another former CIA agent, now working in the White House. At a news conference on June 22, President Richard Nixon said, "The White House has had no involvement whatsoever in this particular incident."² The chairman of his campaign organization, John Mitchell (formerly Nixon's attorney general), ordered an in-house investigation of the incident the same day. Nine days after initiating the investigation, Mitchell resigned from the campaign, citing family problems. Mitchell's investigation exonerated Nixon's re-election committee.

The Unwelcome Wagon Calls

Calls for Richard Nixon's impeachment intensified following the release of taped conversations linking the president to a coverup of the Watergate break-in. On August 8, 1974, a crowd jeering "Jail to the Chief!" stopped traffic along Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House. A moving van drove up, as if to hasten the president's departure. The following day, Nixon resigned.



Senators Investigate a President

The Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities, shown here, was created by the Senate in 1973 to investigate events surrounding Watergate. Its chairman was Democrat Sam Ervin (seated at the center); its ranking minority member was Republican Howard Baker (to Ervin's right). Baker was prominent during another congressional investigation into possible abuses of executive power, but not as a senator. He was President Ronald Reagan's chief of staff during the Iran-Contra hearings in 1987.



At its convention in July, the Democratic party nominated Senator George McGovern of South Dakota to oppose Nixon in the presidential election. McGovern tried to make the break-in at the Democratic headquarters a campaign issue, but the voters either didn't understand or didn't care. In November 1972, Richard Nixon was re-elected president of the United States, winning forty-nine of fifty states in one of the largest electoral landslides in American history.

The events that followed are described in Feature 3.1. Here we need only note that the Watergate affair posed one of the most serious challenges to the constitutional order of modern American government. The incident ultimately developed into a struggle over the rule of law between the presidency on the one hand and Congress and the courts on the other. President Nixon attempted to use the powers of his office to hide his tampering with the electoral process. In the end, the cover-up was thwarted by the Constitution and by leaders who believed in the Constitution. The constitutional principle of separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches prevented the president from controlling the Watergate investigation. The principle of checks and balances allowed Congress to threaten Nixon with impeachment and removal from office. The belief that Nixon had violated the Constitution finally prompted members of his own party to support impeachment.

Nixon resigned the presidency after little more than a year and a half into his second term. In some countries, such an irregular change

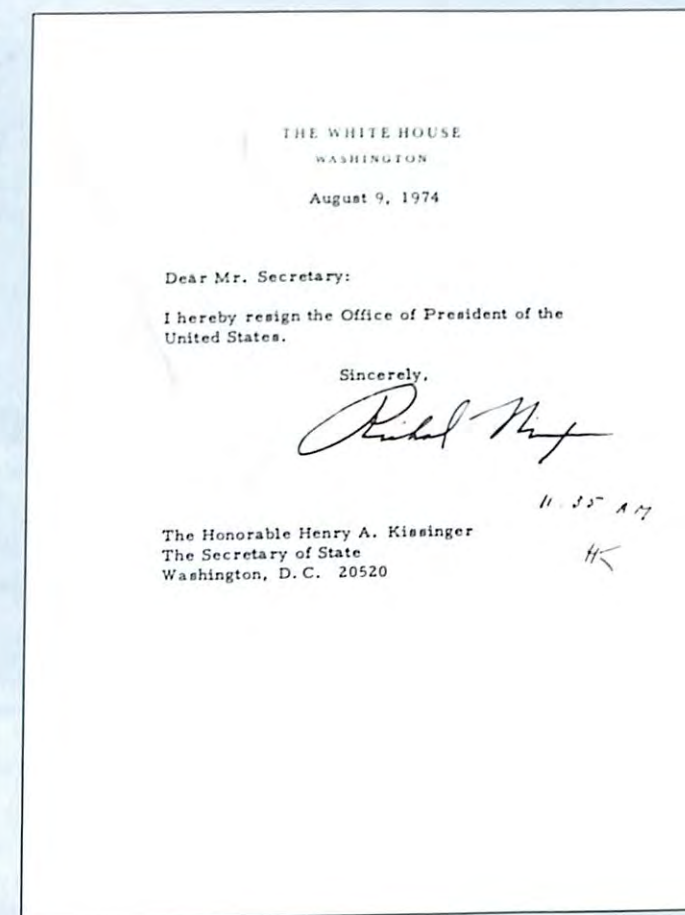
FEATURE 3.1

Watergate

The frightening details of the Watergate story did not unfold until after President Nixon's re-election in November 1972. Two months later, in January 1973, seven men went to trial for the break-in itself. They included the five burglars and two men closely connected with the president: E. Howard Hunt (a former CIA agent and White House consultant) and G. Gordon Liddy (counsel to the Committee for the Re-election of the President, or CREEP). The burglars entered guilty pleas. Hunt and Liddy were convicted by a jury. In a letter to the sentencing judge, one of the burglars charged that they had been pressured to plead guilty, that perjury had been committed at the trial, and that others were involved in the break-in. The Senate launched its own investigation of the matter. It set up the Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities, chaired by a self-styled constitutional authority, Democratic Senator Sam Ervin from North Carolina.

The testimony before the Ervin committee was shocking. The deputy director of Nixon's re-election committee, Jeb Magruder, confessed to perjury and implicated John Mitchell in planning the burglary. Special Counsel to the President John Dean said that the president had been a party to a cover-up of the crime for eight months. And there were more disclosures, of other political burglaries and of forged State Department cables that were intended to embarrass a possible Democratic candidate, Senator Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts.

A stunned nation watching the televised proceedings, learned that the president had secretly tape-recorded all of his conversations in the White House. The Ervin committee asked for the tapes. Nixon refused to produce them, citing the separa-



tion of powers between the legislative and executive branches and claiming "executive privilege" to withhold information from Congress.

In the midst of all this, Nixon's vice president, Spiro T. Agnew, resigned while under investigation for income tax evasion. The Twenty-fifth Amendment to the Constitution (1967) gave the president

in government leadership means an opportunity for a palace coup, armed revolution, or a military dictatorship. But here the most serious display of public antagonism occurred the night before Nixon resigned: One wag drove up in a moving van, as though to speed the president's departure, while a crowd chanting "Jail to the Chief!" stopped traffic in front of the White House. And, significantly, there was no political violence after Nixon's resignation; in fact, none was expected. Constitutional order in the United States had been put to a test, and it passed with high honors.

In this chapter, we ask some questions about the Constitution. How did it evolve? What form did it take? What values does it reflect? How

the power to choose a new vice president with the consent of Congress. Nixon nominated Gerald Ford, then the Republican leader in the House of Representatives. On December 6, 1973, Ford became the first appointed vice president in the nation's history.

Meanwhile, Nixon was fighting subpoenas demanding the White House tapes. Ordered by a federal court to deliver specific tapes, Nixon proposed a compromise. He would release written summaries of the taped conversations. Archibald Cox, the special prosecutor of the attorney general's office, refused the compromise. Nixon retaliated with the "Saturday Night massacre," in which Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson and his deputy resigned, Cox was fired, and the special prosecutor's office was abolished.

The ensuing furor forced Nixon to appoint another special prosecutor, Leon Jaworski, who eventually brought indictments against Nixon's closest aides. Nixon himself was named as an unindicted co-conspirator. Both the special prosecutor and the defendants wanted the White House tapes, but Nixon continued to resist. Finally, on July 24, 1974, the Supreme Court ruled that the president had to hand over the tapes. At almost the same time, the House Judiciary Committee voted to recommend to the full House that Nixon be impeached for, or charged with, three offenses: impeding and obstructing the investigation of the Watergate break-in; abuse of power and repeated violation of the constitutional rights of citizens; and defiance of House subpoenas.

The Judiciary Committee vote was decisive but far from unanimous. On August 5, however, the committee and the country finally learned the con-

tents of the tapes released under the Supreme Court order. They revealed that Nixon had been aware of a cover-up on June 23, 1972, just six days after the break-in. He had also issued an order to the FBI, saying, "Don't go any further in this case, period!" Now even the eleven Republican members of the House Judiciary Committee, who had opposed the first vote to impeach, were ready to vote against Nixon.

Faced with the collapse of his support and likely impeachment by the full House, Nixon resigned the presidency on August 9, 1974. Vice President Gerald Ford became the first unelected president of the United States. A month later, acting within his constitutional powers, Ford pardoned private citizen Richard Nixon for all federal crimes that he had committed or may have committed. When questioned by Congress about the circumstances surrounding the pardon, President Ford said, "There was no deal, period." Others were not so fortunate. Three members of the Nixon cabinet (two attorneys general and a secretary of commerce) were convicted and sentenced for their crimes in the Watergate affair. Nixon's White House chief of staff, H. R. Halde- man, and his domestic affairs adviser, John Ehrlich- man, were convicted of conspiracy, obstruction of justice, and perjury. And other officials were tried, and most were convicted, on related charges.**

* *The Encyclopedia of American Facts and Dates* (New York: Crowell, 1979), p. 946.

** Richard B. Morris, ed., *Encyclopedia of American History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), p. 544.

is it altered? And which model of democracy—majoritarian or pluralist—does it fit best?

THE REVOLUTIONARY ROOTS OF THE CONSTITUTION

The Constitution itself is just 4,300 words. But those 4,300 words define the basic structure of our national government. It is a comprehensive document, dividing the government into three branches, and describing

the powers of those branches, their relationships, and the interaction between government and governed. The Constitution makes itself the supreme law of the land and binds every government official to support it.

Most Americans revere the Constitution as political "scripture." To charge that a political action is unconstitutional is like claiming that it is unholy. And so the Constitution has taken on a symbolism that has strengthened its authority as the basis of American government. Their strong belief in the Constitution has led many politicians to abandon party for principle when constitutional issues are in question. The power and symbolic value of the Constitution were proved once again in the Watergate affair.

The U.S. Constitution is more than two hundred years old. In today's culture, few things that old work very well or are relevant to contemporary life. Yet this document, written in 1787 for an agricultural society huddled along the coast of a wild new land, now guides the political life of a massive urban society in the nuclear age. The stability of the Constitution—and of the political system it created—is all the more remarkable because the Constitution itself was rooted in revolution. In fact, the U.S. Constitution was the first of several national constitutions that stemmed from revolution. Three others—the French constitution of 1791, the Mexican constitution of 1917, and the Russian constitution of 1918—were products of revolutionary movements too.

The noted historian Samuel Eliot Morison observed that "the American Revolution was not fought to *obtain* freedom, but to *preserve* the liberties that Americans already had as colonials."³ The U.S. Constitution was designed to prevent anarchy by forging a union of states. To understand the values embedded in the Constitution, we must understand its historical roots. They lie in colonial America, in the revolt against British rule, and in the failure of the Articles of Confederation that governed the new nation after the Revolution.

Freedom in Colonial America

Although they were British subjects, the American colonists in the eighteenth century enjoyed a degree of freedom denied to most people in the world. Europeans lived with many reminders of their feudal past, a time when great landowners ruled over unlanded tenants; America had no feudal history. Property inheritance in Europe was fraught with conditions; America imposed few, if any, restrictions. In Europe, established churches required the *tithe* (a compulsory contribution) from parishioners; America had no single established church, and tithing was not an important practice. (Even the Church of England enjoyed little influence in America, although it was established in every southern colony.) In England, subjects could be pressed into service in the Royal Navy; Americans were exempt from such service. European guilds and professional associations restricted access to the trades and professions; American guilds and associations imposed no such restrictions. For the colonists, their relationship with the British Empire was a good one. They main-

tained the rights of Englishmen and at the same time enjoyed the protection of the English government.

By 1763, Britain and the colonies had reached a compromise between imperial control and colonial self-government. America's foreign affairs and overseas trade were controlled by the king and Parliament, the British legislature; the rest was left to home rule. But the cost of administering the colonies—including the conquest of Spanish Florida and French Canada—was substantial. Because Americans benefited the most, contended their English countrymen, Americans should bear that cost. And the means was to be taxation.

The Road to Revolution

The British believed that taxing the colonies was the obvious way to meet administrative costs; the colonists did not agree. Like most people, they did not want to be taxed. And they especially did not want to be taxed by a distant government in which they had no representation. The Stamp Act of 1765 was the first direct tax on the colonies. Its purpose was to raise revenues for colonial administration and to impose on the colonies a portion of the cost of defense. It was a stern measure. All kinds of documents—complaints, appeals, diplomas, licenses, deeds, newspapers, playing cards—were taxed. And the tax was a nuisance. Documents had to be prepared on specially stamped papers that could be obtained only from official distributors appointed by the Crown.

In the colonies, opposition to the Stamp Act was immediate and widespread. A group of citizens, calling themselves the Sons of Liberty, engaged in acts of resistance. They burned stamped paper and forced official distributors to resign. In October 1765, the Stamp Act Congress convened in New York City—the colonies' first spontaneous act of political union. Delegates from nine colonies restated the colonists' belief "that no taxes should be imposed on them but with their own consent, given personally, or by their representatives."

Opposition to the Stamp Act was so strong that Parliament repealed it in 1766. This was a stunning political victory, a demonstration that, united, the colonists could turn back the world's most powerful nation. But Britain was determined that the colonies would share the cost of their defense. In June and July 1767, Parliament passed the Townshend Acts, which levied duties on paper, glass, paint, and tea entering the colonies. In response, radical colonial leaders organized a boycott of those products and others, to put as much economic pressure on the British as possible.

In 1770 there was hope of reconciliation when Parliament repealed the Townshend Acts except for the duty on tea. Tea consumption dropped sharply, leaving the East India Company (a British trading house) awash in 18 million pounds of unsold tea. In May 1773, Parliament acted to bolster the floundering company. It passed the Tea Act, which reduced the price of tea by letting the East India Company sell tea directly to its colonial agents. These direct sales eliminated both the colonial merchants who purchased their tea from other sources and the colonial

A Uniquely American Protest

Americans protested the Tea Act (1773) by holding the Boston Tea Party (see background, left) and by employing a unique form of punishment—tarring and feathering. An early treatise on the subject offered the following instructions: “First, strip a person naked, then heat the tar until it is thin, and pour upon the naked flesh, or rub it over with a tar brush. After which, sprinkle decently upon the tar, whilst it is yet warm, as many feathers as will stick to it.”



smugglers who brought tea in from Holland. But the act retained the hated tax as a test of the king's authority.

The colonists responded by throwing a party, the Boston Tea Party. Disguised as Indians and blacks, a mob boarded three ships and emptied 342 chests of tea into Boston Harbor on the night of December 16, 1773. This act of defiance and destruction could not be ignored. “The die is now cast,” wrote George III. “The Colonies must either submit or triumph.”⁴

Parliament retaliated by passing the Coercive (or Intolerable) Acts (1774). One of the acts imposed a blockade on Boston until the tea was paid for; another gave royal governors the power to quarter British soldiers in private homes. Now the taxation issue was secondary; more important was the conflict between British demands for order and American demands for liberty. The colonists drew together, sending food and money to surprised Bostonians. The Virginia and Massachusetts assemblies summoned a **continental congress**, an assembly that would speak and act collectively for the people of all the colonies.

The First Continental Congress met in Philadelphia in September 1774. All the colonies except Georgia sent representatives. The objective of the assembly was to restore harmony between Great Britain and the American colonies. In an effort at unity, all colonies were given the same voting power—one vote each. A leader, called the “president,” was elected. (The terms *president* and *congress* in American government trace their origins to the First Continental Congress.) In October 1774, the delegates adopted a statement of rights and principles, many of which later found their way into the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. For example, the congress claimed a right “to life, liberty, and property” and a right “peaceably to assemble, consider of their grievances, and petition the king.” Then the congress adjourned, planning to reconvene in May 1775.

Revolutionary Action

By early 1775, however, a movement that the colonists themselves were calling a revolution had already begun. In March 1775, Patrick Henry, in his famous “give me liberty or give me death” speech, predicted the outbreak of fighting in New England. A month later his prediction was reality: The colonists in Massachusetts were fighting the British at Concord and Lexington. Delegates to the Second Continental Congress, meeting in May, faced a dilemma: Should they prepare for war? Or should they try to reconcile with Britain? A military force was organized, and George Washington was appointed commander in chief of the army. Sentiment for independence grew, as the colony-states gradually cut tie after tie with Britain. Still, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland resisted self-government. It was not so much that they were afraid of revolution; they were afraid of the type of government that would replace British rule. Tyranny or anarchy was the most likely replacement, and neither was acceptable. Meanwhile, the Second Continental Congress remained in session, to serve as the government of the colony-states.

In 1776, news reached Virginia that the British had hired twelve thousand German mercenaries (known as “Hessians”) to end the rebellion. The Virginia delegation called on the Continental Congress to resolve “that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and Independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.” The decision was made. A committee of five men was appointed to prepare a proclamation expressing the colonies' reasons for declaring independence.

The Declaration of Independence

Thomas Jefferson, a young farmer and lawyer from Virginia, was a member of the committee. Because of his “peculiar felicity of expression,” he prepared the draft of the proclamation. The document Jefferson drafted—the **Declaration of Independence**—was substantially unchanged

by the committee and the congress. It remains a cherished statement of our heritage, expressing simply, clearly, and rationally the arguments in support of separation from Great Britain.

The principles underlying the declaration were rooted in the writings of the English philosopher John Locke and expressed many times by speakers in congress and in the colonial assemblies. Locke argued that people have God-given, or natural, rights that are inalienable—that is, they cannot be taken away by any government.

For Locke, the most basic of people's natural rights was *property*, a concept that encompassed life and liberty as well as material possessions. In addition, Locke believed that all legitimate political authority exists to preserve these natural rights, and that this authority is based on the consent of those who are governed. The idea of consent is derived from **social contract theory**. This theory states that the people agree to set up rulers for certain purposes and that they have the right to resist or remove rulers who persist in acting against those purposes.⁵ In short, government exists, not for the benefit of those who govern, but for the good of its subjects. And, Locke argued, rebellion is the ultimate sanction against the abuse of government power. (In his writings, Locke did not try to justify any particular form of government; nor did he believe in social or political equality.)

Jefferson used similar arguments in the Declaration of Independence. Although he was not an orator, Jefferson was a brilliant wordsmith. His "impassioned simplicity of statement" reverberates to this day with democratic faith:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

The First Continental Congress had declared in 1774 that the colonists were entitled to "life, liberty, and property." Jefferson reformulated the objectives of government as "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." And he continued:

That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such Principles and organizing its Powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

He went on to list the many deliberate acts of the king that were working against the legitimate ends of government. Finally, he declared that the colonies were "Free and Independent States," with no political connection to Great Britain.

The major premise of the Declaration of Independence is that the people have a right to revolt when they determine that their government is denying them their legitimate rights. The long list of the king's actions was evidence of that denial. And so the people had the right to rebel, to form a new government.

On July 2, 1776, the Second Continental Congress finally voted for independence. The vote was by state, and the motion carried 11 to 0.

Voting for Independence
The Second Continental Congress voted independence on July 2, 1776. John Adams of Massachusetts viewed the day "as the most memorable epocha [significant event] in the history of America." In this painting by John Trumbull, the drafting committee presents the Declaration of Independence to the patriots who would later sign it. The committee, grouped in front of the desk, consisted of (from left to right): Adams; Roger Sherman (Conn.); Robert Livingston (N.Y.); Thomas Jefferson (Va.); and Benjamin Franklin (Pa.).



(Rhode Island was not present, and the New York delegation, lacking instructions, did not cast its "yea" vote until July 15.) Two days later, the Declaration of Independence was approved with very few changes. Jefferson's original draft had indicted the king for allowing the slave trade to continue. But representatives from Georgia and South Carolina insisted that this phrase be deleted before they would vote for approval. Other representatives removed language they thought would arouse the colonists. But, in the end, Jefferson's compelling words were left almost exactly as he had written them.

The vote for independence came on July 2; the Declaration of Independence was adopted, but not signed, on July 4. By August, fifty-five revolutionaries had signed it, pledging "our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor" in support of rebellion from the world's most powerful nation. This was no empty pledge: An act of rebellion was treason. If they had lost the revolutionary war, the signers would have faced a gruesome fate. The punishment for treason was hanging, drawing, and quartering—the victim is first hanged until half-dead from strangulation, then disemboweled, and finally cut into four quarters while still alive. We celebrate the Fourth of July with fireworks and flag-waving, parades and picnics. We sometimes forget that the Revolution was a matter of life and death.

The War of Independence lasted far longer than anyone expected. It began in a moment of confusion, when a colonist fired a shot at passing British soldiers on the road to Concord, Massachusetts, on April 19, 1775. It ended with Lord Cornwallis's surrender of his six-thousand-man army at Yorktown, Virginia, on October 19, 1781. It was a costly war: There were more dead and wounded in relation to the population than in any other conflict except the Civil War.⁶ With hindsight, of course,

we can see that the British were engaged in a hopeless conflict. America was simply too vast to subdue without instituting complete military rule there. Britain also had to transport men and supplies over the enormous distance of the Atlantic Ocean. Finally, although the Americans had neither paid troops nor professional soldiers, they were fighting for a cause—in defense of their liberty. The British never understood the power of this fighting faith.

FROM REVOLUTION TO GOVERNMENT: THE FIRST TRY

By declaring their independence from England, the colonies were leaving themselves without any real central government. So the revolutionaries proclaimed the creation of a *republic*. Strictly speaking, a **republic** is a government without a monarch, but the term had come to mean a government rooted in the consent of the governed, in which power is exercised by representatives who are responsible to the governed. A republic need not be a democracy, and this was fine with the founders; at that time *democracy* was associated with mob rule and instability (see Chapter 2). The revolutionaries were less concerned with who would control their new government than with limiting the powers of that government. They had revolted in the name of liberty, and now they wanted a government with sharply defined powers. To make sure they got one, they meant to define its structure and powers in writing.

The Articles of Confederation

When the Second Continental Congress decided to declare independence from Britain, it also began planning a government for the colonies. Barely a week after the Declaration of Independence was signed, the congress received a committee report on "Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union." A **confederation** is a loose association of independent states that agree to cooperate on specified matters. In a confederation, the states retain their **sovereignty**, which means that each has supreme power within its borders. The central government is weak; it can only coordinate, not control, the actions of its sovereign states. Consequently, the individual states are strong.

The congress debated the **Articles of Confederation**, the compact among the thirteen original states that established a government of the United States, for more than a year. The Articles were finally adopted on November 15, 1777, but they were greeted by the states with a mixture of apathy and hostility. Most Americans were more interested in local affairs than in national issues, and even the slightest threat to state sovereignty aroused avid republicans. The Articles did not take effect until they had been ratified (approved) by all thirteen states, on March 1, 1781. On March 2, the Continental Congress assumed a new title: "the United States of America in Congress assembled."

The Articles of Confederation jealously guarded state sovereignty;

their provisions clearly reflected the delegates' fears of a strong central government being substituted for British rule. Article II stated:

Each State retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence, and every Power, Jurisdiction and right, which is not by this confederation expressly delegated to the United States, in Congress assembled.

Under the Articles, each state, regardless of its size, had one vote in the congress. Votes on financing the war against Britain and other important issues required the consent of at least nine of the thirteen states. The common danger—the war—forced the young republic to function under the Articles, but this first try at a government was inadequate to the task. The delegates had succeeded in crafting a national government that was largely powerless.

The Articles failed for at least four reasons: First, they did not give the national government the power to tax. As a result, the congress had to plead for funds with which to conduct the continuing war with Great Britain and to carry on the affairs of the new nation. Second, except for the appointment of a presiding officer of the congress (the president), the Articles made no provision for an independent leadership position to direct the government. This omission was planned—the colonists feared the re-establishment of a monarchy—but it left the nation without a leader. Third, the Articles did not allow the national government to regulate interstate and foreign commerce. (When John Adams proposed that the confederation enter into a commercial treaty with Britain after the war, he was asked, "Would you like one treaty or thirteen, Mr. Adams?"⁷) Finally, the Articles themselves could not be amended without the unanimous agreement of the congress and the assent of all the state legislatures; thus, each state had the power to veto any changes in the confederation.

The goal of the delegates who drew up the Articles of Confederation was to retain power in the states. This was consistent with republicanism, which viewed the remote power of a national government as a danger to liberty. In this sense alone, the Articles were a grand success. They completely hobbled the infant government.

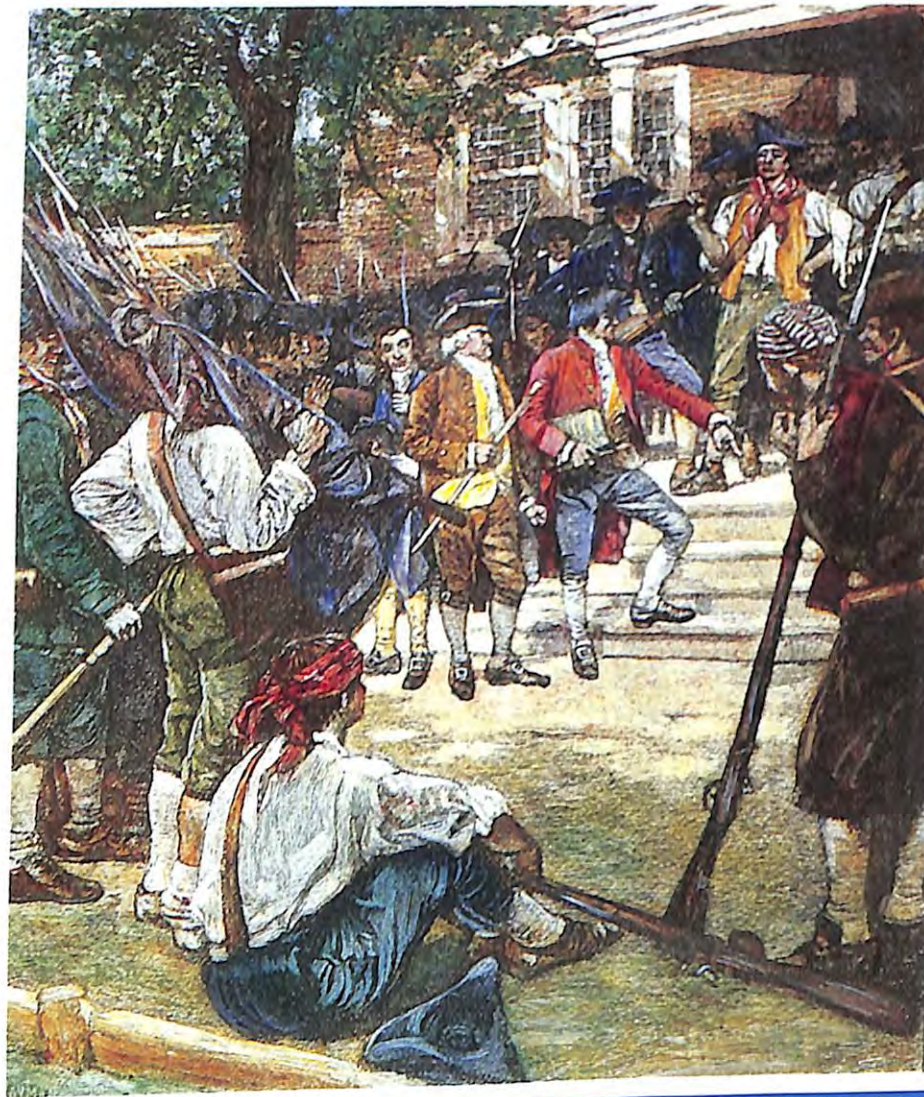
Disorder Under the Confederation

Once the revolutionary war ended and independence was a reality, it became clear that the national government had neither the economic nor the military power to function. Americans, freed from wartime austerity, rushed to purchase goods from abroad. The national government's efforts to restrict foreign imports were blocked by exporting states, which feared retaliation from their foreign customers. Debt mounted and, for many, bankruptcy followed.

The problem was particularly severe in Massachusetts, where high interest rates and high state taxes were forcing farmers into bankruptcy. In 1786, Daniel Shays, a revolutionary war veteran, marched on a western Massachusetts courthouse with fifteen hundred supporters armed with barrel staves and pitchforks. They wanted to close the courthouse, to prevent the foreclosure of farms by creditors. Later they attacked an

Farmers' Protest Stirs Rebellion

Shays's Rebellion (1786–1787) became a symbol for the urgent need to maintain order. Here, farmers led by Daniel Shays close the courthouse to prevent farm foreclosures by creditors. The uprising demonstrated the military weakness of the confederation: The national government could not muster the funds to fight the insurgents.



arsenal. This revolt against the established order was called **Shays's Rebellion**; it continued into 1787.

Massachusetts appealed to the confederation for help. Horrified by the threat of domestic upheaval, the congress approved a \$530,000 requisition for the establishment of a national army. But the plan failed: Every state except Virginia rejected the request for money. Finally the governor of Massachusetts called out the militia and restored order.⁸

The rebellion demonstrated the impotence of the confederation and the urgent need to suppress insurrection and maintain domestic order. It was proof to skeptics that Americans could not govern themselves.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION: THE SECOND TRY

Order, the original purpose of government, was breaking down under the Articles of Confederation. The "league of friendship" envisioned in the Articles was not enough to hold the nation together in peacetime.

Some states had taken halting steps toward a change in government. In 1785, Massachusetts asked the congress to revise the Articles of Confederation, but the congress took no action. In 1786, Virginia invited the states to attend a convention at Annapolis, to explore revisions aimed at improving commercial regulation. The meeting was both a failure and a success. Although only five states sent delegates to Annapolis, the delegates seized the opportunity to call for another meeting, with a far broader mission, in Philadelphia the next year. That convention would be charged with "devis[ing] such further provisions as shall appear . . . necessary to render the constitution of the Federal Government adequate to the exigencies of the Union." The congress later agreed to the convention but limited its mission to "the sole and express purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation."

Shays's Rebellion lent a sense of urgency to the task before the Philadelphia convention. Congress's inability to confront the rebellion was evidence that a stronger national government was necessary to preserve order and property—to protect the states from internal as well as external dangers. "While the Declaration was directed against an excess of authority," remarked Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson some 150 years later, "the Constitution [that followed the Articles of Confederation] was directed against anarchy."⁹

Twelve of the thirteen states named a total of seventy-four delegates to convene in Philadelphia in May 1787. (Rhode Island, derisively renamed "Rogue Island" by a Boston newspaper, was the one exception.) Fifty-five delegates eventually showed up at the State House in Philadelphia, but no more than thirty were present at any one time during that sweltering spring and summer (see Feature 3.2). Although well versed in ideas, they subscribed to the view that "experience must be our guide. Reason may mislead us." The delegates' goal was to fashion a government that would maintain order and preserve liberty.

The Constitutional Convention—at the time, it was called the *Federal Convention*—officially opened on May 25, when representatives of seven states were present to make a quorum. Remember that a year earlier, at Annapolis, five states had called for the convention to draft a new, stronger charter for the national government. The spirit of the Annapolis meeting seems to have pervaded the Constitutional Convention, even though the delegates were authorized only to "revise" the Articles of Confederation. Within the first week of debate, Edmund Randolph of Virginia had presented a long list of changes, suggested by fellow Virginian James Madison, that would replace the weak confederation of states with a powerful national government. The delegates unanimously agreed to debate Randolph's proposal, which was called the *Virginia Plan*. Almost immediately, then, they rejected the idea of amending the Articles of Confederation, working instead to create an entirely new constitution.

The Virginia Plan

The **Virginia Plan** served as the basis of the convention's deliberations for the rest of the summer. It made several important proposals:

FEATURE 3.2

Behind the Scenes in 1787

When the framers of the Constitution convened . . . on May 25, 1787, to try to keep the American Union from falling to pieces, Philadelphia was the foremost city of America.

It was a place of urban culture and accomplishment. Its streets were crowded with people of diverse national origins. Sailors from many countries mixed with leather-clad frontiersmen and with Shawnee and Delaware Indians from the forest.

But the city also reflected the hard life that most Americans lived then. More than half the population existed on the edge of poverty. Prostitution and disease were widespread. Many streets were open sewers. Flies and mosquitoes added their torment to the oppressive heat of that summer, the worst in nearly 40 years. . . .

Court records revealed much child and spouse abuse. Drunkenness was pervasive. Servants of the wealthy, including those of George Washington, spent their evenings in the taverns of a rough waterfront district called Helltown.

Independence Hall, then called the Pennsylvania State House, had seen better days: Its steeple had become shaky and had to be taken down. Across Walnut Street was a four-story stone prison. Prisoners called out for alms and cursed passers-by who failed to oblige.

When George Washington arrived in Philadelphia, he perceived a radical, divisive atmosphere that reflected the country's mood at a time when dissolution of the Union seemed likely and foreign powers waited to pounce. That perception is said to have contributed to a decision to keep the Constitutional Convention's proceedings secret. . . .

There was no press coverage. The public did not learn anything about what had gone on until after the convention adjourned on Sept. 17. Two days later, the *Pennsylvania Packet* published the Constitution, devoting its entire issue to the text. Newspapers everywhere followed suit. No political story had commanded so much space until then.

Sometimes, extraordinary measures were taken to maintain the secrecy. It seemed impossible to keep Benjamin Franklin quiet, wrote Catherine Drinker Bowen in *Miracle at Philadelphia*, a respected history of the convention. As a result, she

reported, "a discreet member" of the convention attended Franklin's convivial dinners to head off the conversation whenever he appeared ready to divulge a secret.

The delegates stayed at private homes and spent many of their evenings talking and plotting strategy at the City Tavern, the Black Horse, the George and the Indian Queen. They drank a lot: The bill for one dinner party of 12 included sixty bottles of wine.

That may be one reason why so many delegates, as historians have noted, were so corpulent. Few stood more than about 5 feet 8 inches tall, but many weighed about 200 pounds or more. The most striking exception was Washington. Every inch the general at 6 feet 2 inches, with wide shoulders and narrow hips, he towered above the convention both literally and figuratively.

The framers were not demi-gods. But many historians believe that their like will not be seen again in one place. Highly educated, they typically were fluent in Latin and Greek. Products of the Enlightenment, they relied on classical Liberalism for the Constitution's philosophical underpinnings.

They were also veterans of the political intrigues of their states and as such were highly practical politicians who knew how to maneuver.

Still, if it were not for Washington, some historians believe, the convention would never have succeeded. His character and authority kept the convention from flying apart.

One facet of his authority is revealed in an anecdote reported by Mrs. Bowen. Gouverneur Morris, a Pennsylvania delegate who drafted the Constitution's final version, accepted a bet proposed by Alexander Hamilton. To win it, Morris had to greet Washington with a slap on the back. That was just not done. "Well, General!" Morris said, and laid his hand on Washington's shoulder. The general said nothing, but Morris later said that Washington's imperious look made him wish . . . that he could sink through the floor.

Source: William K. Stevens, "Behind the Scenes in 1787: Secrecy in the Heat," *New York Times*, 25 May 1987, p. 7. Copyright © 1987 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission.



James Madison, Father of the Constitution

Although he dismissed the accolade, Madison deserved it more than anyone else. Like most fathers, he exercised a powerful influence in debates (and was on the losing side of more than half of his battles).

- That the powers of the government would be divided among three separate branches: a **legislative branch**, for making laws; an **executive branch**, for enforcing laws; and a **judicial branch**, for interpreting laws.
- That the legislature would consist of two houses. The first would be chosen by the people; the second, by the members of the first house, from among persons nominated by the state legislatures.
- That representation in the legislature would be in proportion to taxes paid to the national government, or in proportion to the free population of each state.
- That a one-person executive would be selected by the legislature and would serve for a single term.
- That the executive and a number of federal judges would serve as a council of revision, to approve or veto (disapprove) legislative acts. Their veto could be overridden, however, by a vote of both houses of the legislature.
- That the judiciary would include a supreme court and other lower courts, with judges appointed for life by the legislature.
- That the range of powers of all three branches would be far greater than that assigned the national government by the Articles of Confederation and would include the power of the legislature to override state laws.

By proposing a powerful national legislature that could override state laws, the Virginia Plan clearly advocated a new form of government. It was a compound structure, operating on the states and operating on the people.

Madison was a monumental force in the ensuing debate on the proposals. He kept records of the proceedings that reveal his frequent and brilliant participation and give us insight into his thinking about freedom, order, and equality.

For example, his proposal that senators serve a nine-year term reveals his thinking about equality. Madison foresaw an increase "of those who will labor under all the hardships of life, and secretly sigh for a more equal distribution of its blessings. These may in time outnumber those who are placed above the feelings of indigence."¹⁰ Power, then, could flow into the hands of the numerous poor. The stability of the Senate, however, with its long elective term of nine years and election by the state legislatures, would provide a barrier against the "sighs of the poor" for more equality. Although most of the delegates shared Madison's apprehension of equality, the nine-year term was voted down.

The constitution that emerged from the convention bore only partial resemblance to the document Madison wanted to create. Of the seventy-one specific proposals that Madison endorsed, he ended up on the losing side on forty of them.¹¹ And the parts of the Virginia Plan that were ultimately adopted in the Constitution were not adopted without challenge. Conflict revolved primarily around the basis of representation in the legislature, the method of choosing legislators, and the structure of the executive branch.

The New Jersey Plan

When it appeared that much of the Virginia Plan would be carried by the large states, the smaller states united in opposition. William Paterson of New Jersey introduced an alternative set of nine resolutions, written to preserve the spirit of the Articles of Confederation by amending rather than replacing them. His **New Jersey Plan** included the following proposals:

- That a single-chamber legislature would have the power to raise revenue and regulate commerce.
- That the states would have equal representation in the legislature and would choose the members of that body.
- That a multiperson executive would be elected by the legislature, with powers similar to those listed in the Virginia Plan but without the right to veto legislation.
- That a supreme judiciary would be created with a very limited jurisdiction. (There was no provision for a system of national courts.)
- That the acts of the legislature would be binding on the states; that is, they would be regarded as the “supreme law of the respective states,” and force could be used to compel obedience.

The New Jersey Plan was defeated in the first major convention vote, 7 to 3. However, the small states had enough support to force a compromise on the issue of representation in the legislature. Table 3.1 compares the New Jersey Plan with the Virginia Plan.

The Great Compromise

The Virginia Plan provided for a two-chamber legislature, with representation in both chambers based on population. The idea of having two chambers was never seriously challenged, but the idea of representation according to population stirred up heated and prolonged debate. The smaller states demanded equal representation for all states, but another vote rejected that concept for the House of Representatives. The debate continued. Finally, the Connecticut delegation moved that each

Table 3.1
Major Differences Between the Virginia Plan and the New Jersey Plan

Characteristic	Virginia Plan	New Jersey Plan
Legislature	Two chambers	One chamber
Legislative power	Derived from the people	Derived from the States
Executive	One person	More than one person
Decision rule	Majority	Extraordinary majority
State laws	Legislature can override	Compel obedience
Executive removal	By Congress	By a majority of the states
Courts	National judiciary	No provision
Ratification	By the people	By the states

DOONESBURY

Garry Trudeau



Doonesbury “Equality and the Constitution”

state have an equal vote in the Senate. Still another poll showed that the delegations were equally divided on this proposal.

A committee was created to resolve the deadlock. It consisted of one delegate from each state, chosen by secret ballot. The committee worked through the Independence Day recess, then reported the **Great Compromise** (it is sometimes called the *Connecticut Compromise*): The House of Representatives would initially consist of fifty-six members, apportioned according to the population of each state. Revenue-raising acts would originate in the House. Most important, the states would be represented equally in the Senate, with two senators each. Senators would be selected by their state legislatures, not directly by the people.

In apportioning representatives in the House, the population of each state was to be determined by adding “the whole Number of free Persons” and “three fifths of all other Persons.” The phrase “all other Persons” is, of course, a euphemism for slaves. Nowhere does the Constitution mention slaves or slavery by name, despite the fact that slavery was a major issue in the nation and among the delegates. But by its wording here and in Article IV (which essentially prescribes the return of runaway slaves), the framers were condoning slavery—the most undemocratic of all institutions.

It is doubtful that there would have been a Great Compromise—or even a Constitution—if the delegates had had to resolve the issue of slavery. The southern states would not have ratified a constitution that prohibited slavery. Those who opposed slavery were willing to tolerate it in the interest of the Union, perhaps believing the issue could await another day. But they also expressed some opposition to slavery by permitting the Congress to abolish the slave trade after 1807.

Finally, the delegates accepted the Great Compromise: The smaller states got their equal representation; the larger states, their proportional

representation. The small states might dominate the Senate and the large states might control the House, but because all legislation had to be approved by both chambers, neither group would be able to dominate the other.

Compromise on the Presidency

Contention replaced compromise when the delegates turned to the executive branch. They did agree on a one-person executive—a president—but they disagreed on how the executive would be selected and what the term of office would be. Because the delegates distrusted the judgment of the people, they rejected the idea of popular election. At the same time, representatives of the smaller states feared that election by the legislature would allow the larger states to control the executive.

Once again, a committee with one member from each participating state was chosen to effect a compromise. That committee fashioned the cumbersome presidential election system that we know today as the **electoral college**. The college consists of a group of electors who are chosen for the sole purpose of selecting the president and vice president. Each state legislature would choose a number of electors equal to the number of representatives it had in Congress. Each elector would then vote for two people. The person with the most votes would become president, provided that that person had a majority of the votes; the person with the next greatest number of votes would become vice president. (This procedure was changed in 1804 by the Twelfth Amendment, which mandates separate votes for each office.) If no candidate won a majority, then the House of Representatives would choose a president, *with each state having one vote*.

The electoral college compromise removed the fear of a popular vote for president. At the same time, it satisfied the small states. If the electoral college failed to produce a president—which the delegates expected would happen—then an election by the House would give every state the same voice in the selection process.

Finally, the delegates agreed that the president's term of office should be four years and that the president should be eligible for re-election.

The delegates also realized that removing a president from office would be a very serious political matter. For that reason, they involved the other two branches of government in the process. The House alone was empowered to charge a president with "Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors," by a majority vote. The Senate was given the sole power to try the president on the House's charges. It could convict, and thus remove, a president only by a two-thirds vote (an extraordinary majority). And the chief justice of the United States was required to preside over the Senate trial.

THE FINAL PRODUCT

Once the delegates resolved their major disagreements, they dispatched the remaining issues relatively quickly. A committee was then appointed

to organize and write up the results of the proceedings. Twenty-three resolutions had been debated and approved by the convention; these were reorganized under seven articles in the draft constitution. The Preamble, which was the last section to be drafted, begins with a phrase that would have been impossible to write when the convention opened. This single sentence contains four elements that would form the foundation of the American political tradition.¹²

- *It creates a people:* "We the People of the United States" was a dramatic departure from a loose confederation of states.
- *It explains the reason for the Constitution:* "in Order to form a more perfect Union" was an indirect way of saying that the first effort, under the Articles of Confederation, had been inadequate.
- *It articulates goals:* "establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity"; in other words, the government exists to promote order and freedom.
- *It fashions a government:* "do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

The Basic Principles

In creating the Constitution, the founders relied on four political principles that together established a revolutionary new political order. These principles were republicanism, federalism, separation of powers, and checks and balances (see Feature 3.3 for a discussion of these principles' philosophical origins).

Republicanism. **Republicanism** is a form of government in which power resides in the people and is exercised by their elected representatives. The framers were determined to avoid aristocracy (rule by a hereditary class), monarchy (rule by one), and direct democracy (rule by the people). A republic was both new and daring: No people had ever been governed by a republic on so vast a scale.

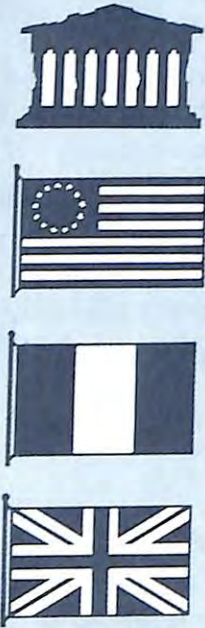
The framers themselves were far from sure that their government could be sustained. They had no model of republican government to follow; moreover, at the time, republican government was thought to be suitable only for small territories, where the interest of the public would be obvious and where government would be within the reach of every citizen. After the convention had ended, Benjamin Franklin was asked what sort of government the new nation would have. "A republic," he replied, "if you can keep it."

Federalism. **Federalism** is the division of power between a central government and regional units. It stands in contrast to **unitary government**, in which all power is vested in a central government. The Articles of Confederation embodied a form of federalism in which political power was divided between the states and the national government, with the states having the greater share. The federalism of the Constitution con-

FEATURE 3.3

The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution

The creation of the U.S. Constitution was a remarkable achievement by a young nation. However, only one of its four basic political principles was "made in America." The other three were inspired by ideas that first grew on foreign soil.



- **Republicanism.** In this form of government, power resides in the people and is exercised by their elected representatives; government is the common business of the citizens, conducted for the common good. The idea of republicanism may be traced to the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 B.C.), who advocated a "mixed" constitution that contained principles of democratic and oligarchic government.
- **Federalism.** The powers of government are shared by a central body and territorial units. Citizens in a federal government are subject to two different bodies of law. Federalism is the distinctly American idea, created by the Constitutional Convention of 1787.
- **Separation of powers.** The responsibilities of government are divided among separate branches. This idea was formulated in a fragmentary way by John Locke and others, but its fullest exposition came from French philosopher Charles-Louis de Secondat Montesquieu (1689–1755).
- **Checks and balances.** The branches of government scrutinize and restrain each other. This idea was first advanced by two Englishmen, the statesman Henry St. John Bolingbroke (1678–1751) and the jurist William Blackstone (1723–1780).

ferred substantial powers on the national government at the expense of the states.

The constitutional powers vested in the national and state governments are derived from the people, who remain the ultimate sovereign. National and state governments could exercise their powers over persons and property within their own spheres of authority. But, at the same time, the people would restrain both national and state governments to preserve their liberty.

The Constitution listed the powers of the national government and the powers that were denied to the states. All other powers remained with the states. Generally, the states were required to give up only the powers necessary to create an effective national government; the national government was limited to the powers specified in the Constitution. In spite of these specific lists, the Constitution does not clearly describe the spheres of authority within which these powers can be exercised. As we discuss in Chapter 4, limits on the exercise of power by the national government and the states have evolved as a result of political and military conflict; moreover, these limits have changed continually.

Separation of powers. Separation of powers is the assignment of the lawmaking, law-enforcing, and law-interpreting functions to indepen-

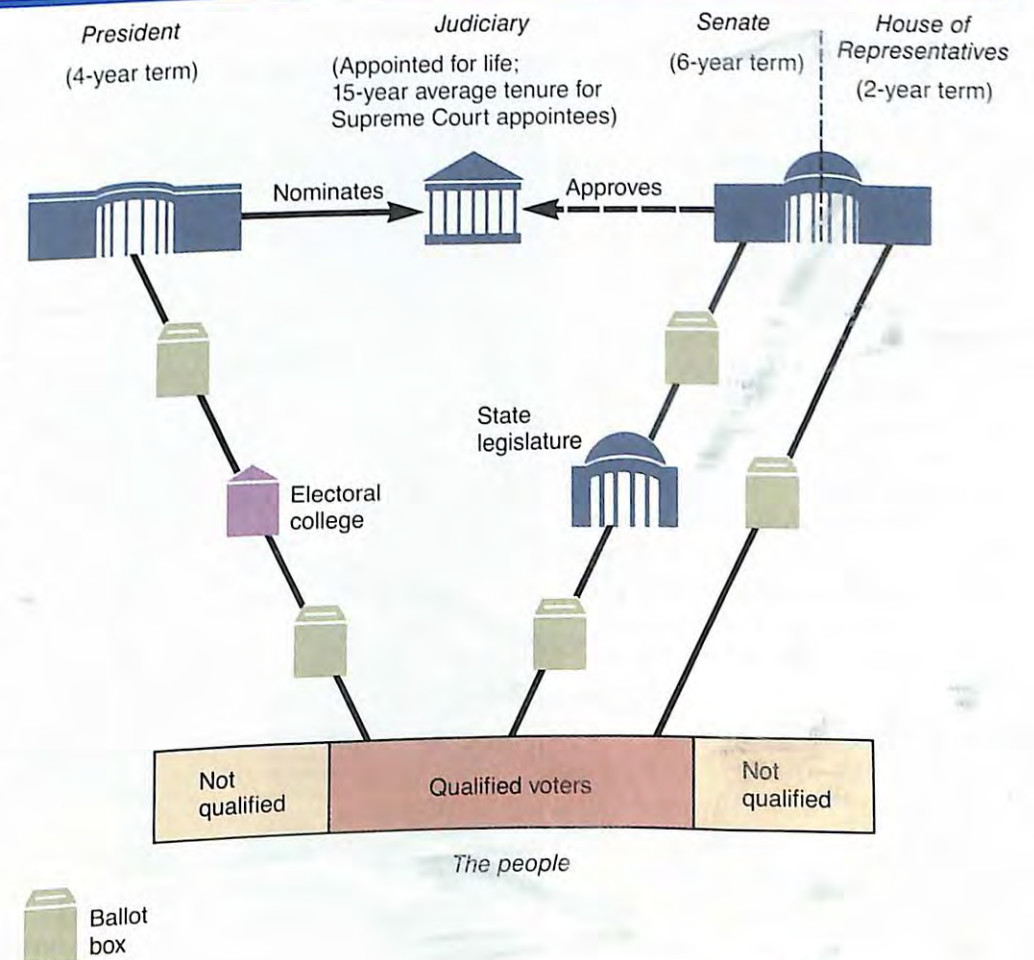
dent legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government. Nationally, the lawmaking power resides in Congress; the law-enforcing power resides in the presidency; and the law-interpreting power resides in the courts. Service in one branch prohibits simultaneous service in the others. Separation of powers safeguards liberty by ensuring that all government power does not fall into the hands of a single person or group of people. But the framers' concern with protecting the liberty of the people did not extend to the election process. The Constitution constrained majority rule by limiting the direct influence of the people on that process (see Figure 3.1).

In theory, separation of powers means that one branch cannot exercise the powers of the other branches. In practice, however, the separation is far from complete. One scholar has suggested that what we have instead is "separate institutions sharing powers."¹³

Checks and balances. The constitutional system of checks and balances is a means of giving each branch of government some scrutiny of and control over the other branches. The framers reasoned that these checks and balances would prevent one branch from ignoring or overpowering the others.

Figure 3.1
The Constitution and the Electoral Process

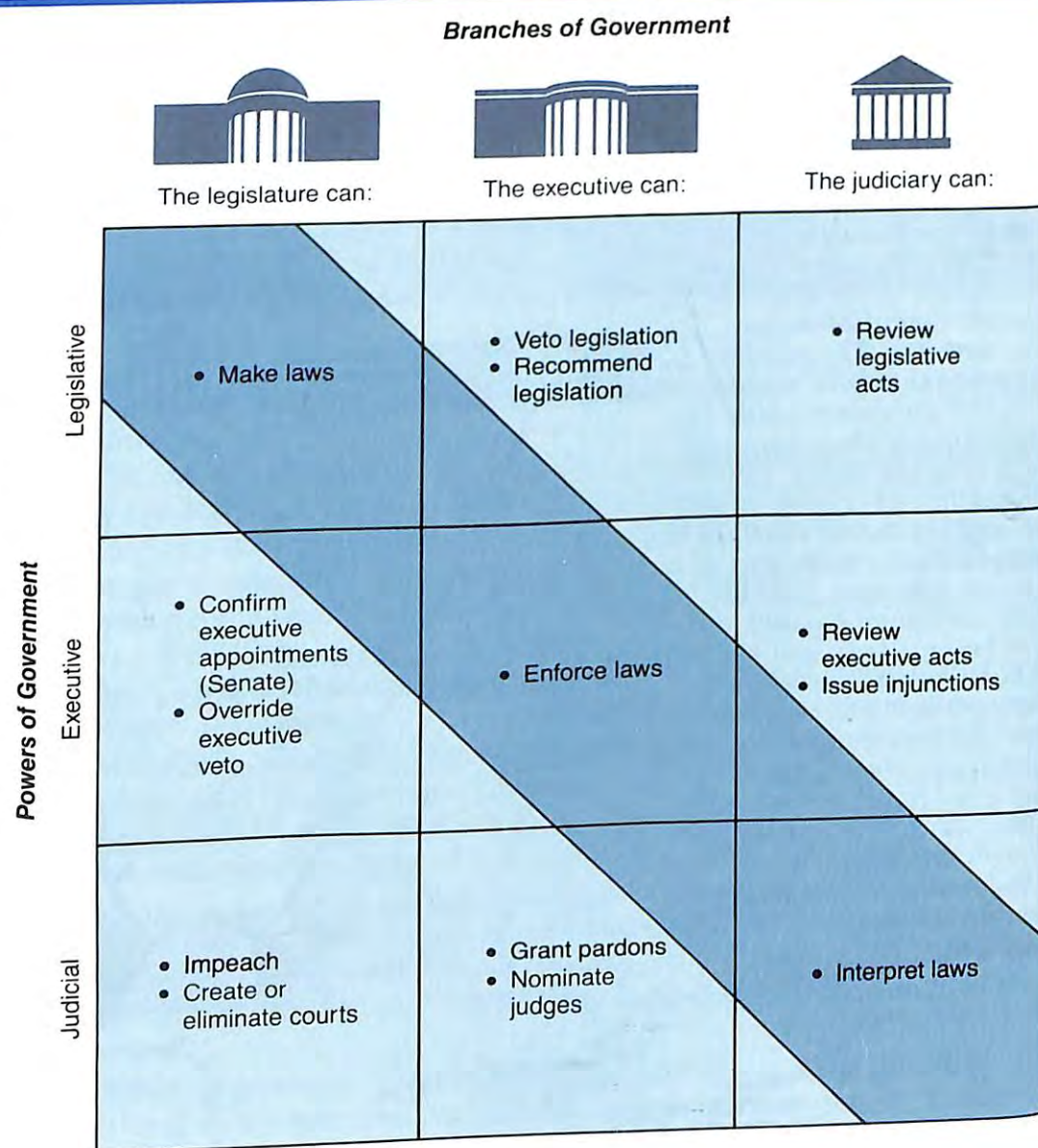
The framers were afraid of majority rule, and that fear is reflected in the electoral process described in the Constitution. The people, speaking through the voters, had direct input only in the choice of their representatives in the House. The president and senators were elected indirectly, through the electoral college and state legislatures. (The direct election of senators did not become law until 1913, when the Seventeenth Amendment was ratified.) Judicial appointments are, and always have been far removed from representative links to the people. Judges are nominated by the president and approved by the Senate.



Separation of powers and checks and balances are two distinct principles, but both principles are necessary to ensure that one branch does not dominate the government. Separation of powers divides government responsibilities among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches; checks and balances prevent the exclusive exercise of those powers by any one of the three branches. For example, only the Congress can enact laws. But both the president (through the power of the veto) and the courts (by finding a law in violation of the Constitution) can nullify them. And the process goes on. In a "check on a check," the Congress can override a president's veto by an extraordinary (two-thirds) majority in each chamber; and it is empowered to propose amendments to the Constitution, counteracting the courts' power to find a national law invalid. Figure 3.2 depicts the relationship between separation of powers and checks and balances.

Figure 3.2
Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances

Separation of powers is the assignment of lawmaking, law-enforcing, and law-interpreting functions to the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. This is illustrated by the diagonal grid in the figure. Checks and balances give each branch some power over the other branches. For example, the executive branch possesses some legislative power, and the legislative branch possesses some executive power. These checks and balances are illustrated within the columns and outside the diagonal grid.



The Articles of the Constitution

In addition to the Preamble, the Constitution includes seven articles. The first three establish the internal operation and powers of the separate branches of government. The remaining four define the relationships among the states, explain the process of amendment, declare the supremacy of national law, and explain the procedure for ratifying the Constitution.

Article I: The legislative article. In structuring their new government, the framers began with the legislative branch because they thought lawmaking was the most important function of a republican government. Article I is the most detailed and therefore the longest of all the articles. It defines the **bicameral** (two-chamber) character of the Congress and describes the internal operating procedures of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Section 8 of Article I expresses the principle of **enumerated powers**, which means that Congress can exercise only the powers that the Constitution assigns to Congress. Eighteen powers are enumerated; the first seventeen are specific powers. For example, the third clause of Section 8 gives Congress the power to regulate interstate commerce. (One of the chief problems with the Articles of Confederation was the lack of a means to cope with trade wars between states. The solution was to vest control of interstate commerce in the national government.)

The last clause in Section 8, known as the **necessary and proper clause** (or the **elastic clause**), gives Congress the means to execute the enumerated powers (see the Appendix). This clause is the basis of Congress's **implied powers**—those powers that Congress must have in order to execute its enumerated powers. The power to levy and collect taxes (Clause 1) and the power to coin money and regulate its value (Clause 5), when joined with the necessary and proper clause (Clause 18), *imply* that Congress has the power to charter a bank. Otherwise, the national government would have no means of managing the funds it collects through its power to tax. Implied powers clearly expand the enumerated powers conferred on Congress by the Constitution.

Article II: The executive article. Article II describes the president's term of office, the procedure for electing a president through the electoral college, the qualifications for becoming president, and the president's duties and powers. The last include acting as commander in chief of the military; making treaties (which must be ratified by a two-thirds vote of the Senate); and appointing government officers, diplomats, and judges (again, with the advice and consent of the Senate).

The president also has legislative powers—part of the constitutional system of checks and balances. For example, the Constitution requires that the president periodically inform the Congress of the "State of the Union" and of the policies and programs that the executive branch intends to advocate in the forthcoming year. Today this is done annually, in the president's State of the Union address. Under special circumstances, the president can also convene or adjourn Congress.

History in the Making

A president gives approval to legislation by signing a bill into law. Since the 1960s, the bill-signing ceremony has become an art form, garnering much attention from the media. Here President Ronald Reagan autographs one of the most significant laws of his administration, the Tax Reform Act of 1986 . . .



The duty to “take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed” in Section 3 has provided presidents with a reservoir of power. President Nixon tried to use this power when he refused to turn over the Watergate tapes despite a judicial subpoena in a criminal trial. He claimed executive privilege, an extension of the executive power implied in Article II. But the Supreme Court struck down his claim, arguing that it violated the separation of powers, that the decision to release or withhold information in a criminal trial is a judicial, not an executive, function.

Article III: The judicial article. The third article was purposely vague. The Constitution established the Supreme Court as the highest court in the land. But beyond that, the framers were unable to agree on the need for, the size of, or the composition of a national judiciary, or on the procedures it should follow. They left these issues to the Congress, which resolved them by creating the federal court system.

Short of impeachment, federal judges serve for life. They are appointed to indefinite terms on “good Behavior,” and their salaries cannot be lowered while they hold office. These stipulations reinforce the separation of powers; they see to it that judges are independent of the other branches, that they do not have to fear retribution in their exercise of judicial power.

The judicial branch can be checked by Congress through its power to create (and eliminate) lower federal courts. Congress can also restrict the power of the lower courts to decide cases. And, as we have noted, the president appoints—with the advice and consent of the Senate—the justices of the Supreme Court and the judges of the lower federal courts.

Article III does not explicitly give the courts the power of **judicial review**, the authority to invalidate congressional or presidential actions.

History for the Taking

. . . and members of Congress appropriate the pens used in the signing ceremony. A presidential aide gathers the remaining souvenirs. These pens serve as mementos of the arduous task of law-making and tokens of appreciation for those who aided in the process.



That power has been inferred from the logic, structure, and theory of the Constitution.

The remaining articles. The remaining four articles of the Constitution cover a lot of ground. Article IV requires that the citizens, judicial acts, and criminal warrants of each state be honored in all other states. This is a provision that promotes equality; it keeps the states from treating outsiders differently from their own citizens. For example, an Illinois court awards Goldman damages against Janda for \$10,000. Janda moves to Alaska to avoid payment. Rather than force Goldman to bring a new suit against Janda, the court in Alaska (Judge Berry presiding), under Article IV's full faith and credit clause, honors the Illinois judgment and enforces it as its own. In other words, you can run but you cannot hide. The origin of this clause can be traced to the Articles of Confederation.

Article IV also allows the addition of new states and stipulates that the national government will protect the states against invasion and domestic violence.

Article V specifies the methods for amending (changing) the Constitution. We have more to say about this shortly.

An important component of Article VI is the **supremacy clause**, which asserts that, when they conflict, the Constitution, national laws, and treaties take precedence over state and local laws. This stipulation is vital to the operation of federalism. In keeping with the supremacy clause, Article VI also requires that all national and state officials, elected or appointed, take an oath to support the Constitution. The article also mandates that religion cannot be a qualification for holding government office.

Finally, Article VII describes the ratification process, that approval

by conventions in nine states was necessary for the "Establishment" of the Constitution.

The Framers' Motives

Some argue that the Constitution is essentially a conservative document written by wealthy men to advance their own interests. One distinguished historian writing in the early 1900s, Charles A. Beard, maintained that the delegates, who were for the most part wealthy men, had much to gain from a strong national government.¹⁴ Many delegates held government securities that were practically worthless under the Articles of Confederation. A strong national government would protect their property and pay off the nation's debts. Beard claimed that the Constitution was crafted to protect the economic interests of this small group of creditors.

Beard's argument provoked a generation of historians to examine the existing financial records of the convention delegates. Their scholarship has largely discredited his once-popular view.¹⁵ For example, it turns out that seven of the delegates who left the convention or refused to sign the Constitution held public securities worth more than twice the holdings of the thirty-nine delegates who did sign. Moreover, the most influential delegates owned no securities. And only a small number of the delegates appeared to benefit economically from the new government.¹⁶

What did motivate the framers? Surely economic issues were important, but they were not the major issues. The single most important factor leading to the Constitutional Convention was the inability of the national or state governments to maintain order under the loose structure of the Articles of Confederation. Certainly order involved the protection of property; but the framers had a broader view of property than their portfolios of government securities. They wanted to protect their homes, their families, and their means of livelihood from impending anarchy.

Although they disagreed bitterly on structure, mechanics, and detail, the framers agreed on the most vital issues. For example, three of the most crucial parts of the Constitution—the power to tax, the necessary and proper clause, and the supremacy clause—were approved unanimously without debate. The convention was successful because experience had taught the delegates that a strong national government was essential if the United States was going to survive.

SELLING THE CONSTITUTION

On September 17, 1787, nearly four months after the Constitutional Convention opened, the delegates convened for the last time, to sign the final version of their handiwork. Because several delegates were unwilling to sign the document, the last paragraph was craftily worded to give the impression of unanimity: "Done in Convention by the Unanimous Consent of the States present."

Before it could take effect, the Constitution had to be ratified by a

crucial. In Pennsylvania, the legislature was slow to convene a ratifying convention. Pro-Constitution forces became so frustrated at this dawdling that they broke into a local boardinghouse and hauled two errant legislators through the streets to the state house so the assembly could schedule the convention.

The proponents of the new charter, who wanted a strong national government, called themselves *Federalists*. The opponents of the Constitution were quickly dubbed *Antifederalists*. They claimed, however, that *they* were true federalists because they wanted to protect the states from the tyranny of a strong national government. Elbridge Gerry, a vocal Antifederalist, called his opponents "rats" (because they favored ratification) and maintained that he was an "antirat."¹⁷ Such is the Alice-in-Wonderland character of political discourse. Whatever they were called, the viewpoints of the two groups formed the bases of the first American political parties.

The Federalist Papers

Beginning in October 1787, a series of eighty-five newspaper articles appeared under the title *The Federalist: A Commentary on the Constitution of the United States*. The essays were reprinted extensively during the ratification battle. They bore the pen name "Publius" (Latin for "the people") and were written primarily by James Madison and Alexander Hamilton, with some assistance from John Jay. Rationally and quietly, Publius argued in favor of ratification. He was avowedly engaged in an exercise of special pleading. But the articles lacked the thunder that was needed to stir citizens to action; the personal influence of Washington and Franklin probably weighed more heavily than the essays in the ensuing debates. But *The Federalist* (also called the *Federalist Papers*) remains the best single commentary we have on the meaning of the Constitution and the political theory it embodies.

The Antifederalists, not to be outdone, offered their own intellectual basis for rejecting the Constitution. In several essays authored by "Brutus," they attacked the centralization of power in a strong national government, claiming it would obliterate the states and destroy liberty in the process. They defended the status quo, maintaining that the Articles of Confederation established true federal principles.¹⁸

Of all the *Federalist Papers*, the most magnificent and most frequently cited is "Federalist No. 10," which was written by James Madison (see the Appendix). He argued that the proposed constitution was designed "to break and control the violence of faction": "By a faction, I understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community."

Of course, Madison was discussing what we described in Chapter 2 as *pluralism*. What Madison called *factions* today are interest groups or even political parties. According to Madison, "The most common and durable source of factions has been the various and unequal distribution of property." Madison was concerned, not with reducing inequalities of

wealth (which he took for granted), but with controlling the seemingly inevitable conflict stemming from them. The Constitution, he argued, was "well-constructed" for this purpose.

Through the mechanism of *representation*, wrote Madison, the Constitution would prevent the tyranny of the majority (mob rule). Government would not be controlled directly by the people, but would be controlled indirectly, by their elected representatives. And those representatives would have the intelligence and the understanding to serve the larger interests of the nation. Moreover, the federal system would require that majorities form first within each state, then organize for effective action at the national level. This and the vastness of the country would make it unlikely that a majority would form "to invade the rights of other citizens."

The purpose of "Federalist No. 10" was to demonstrate that the proposed government was not likely to be ruled by any faction. Contrary to conventional wisdom, Madison argued, the key to controlling the evils of faction is to have a large republic—the larger, the better. The more diverse the society, the less likely it is that an unjust majority can form. Madison certainly had no intention of creating a majoritarian democracy; his view of popular government was much more consistent with the model of pluralist democracy we discussed in Chapter 2.

Madison pressed his argument from a different angle in "Federalist No. 51" (see the Appendix). Asserting that "ambition must be made to counteract ambition," he argued that the separation of powers and checks and balances would control tyranny from any source. If power is distributed equally across the three branches, then each branch has the capacity to counteract the other. In Madison's words, "usurpations are guarded against by a division of the government into distinct and separate departments." Because legislative power tends to predominate in republican governments, legislative authority is divided between the Senate and the House of Representatives, with different methods of selection and terms of office. Additional protection comes through federalism, which divides power "between two distinct governments"—national and state—and subdivides "the portion allotted to each . . . among distinct and separate departments."

The Antifederalists wanted additional separation of powers and additional checks and balances, which, they maintained, would eliminate the threat of tyranny entirely. The Federalists believed that this would make decisive national action virtually impossible. But to ensure ratification, they agreed to a compromise.

A Concession: The Bill of Rights

Despite the eloquence of the *Federalist Papers*, many prominent citizens, including Thomas Jefferson, were unhappy that the Constitution did not list basic civil liberties—the individual freedoms guaranteed to citizens. The omission of a bill of rights was the chief obstacle to the Constitution's adoption by the states. (In fact, seven of the eleven state constitutions that were written in the first five years of independence

already included such a list.) The colonists had just rebelled against the British government to preserve their basic freedoms; why didn't the proposed Constitution spell out those freedoms?

The answer was rooted in logic, not politics. Because the national government was limited to those powers that were granted to it and because no power was granted to abridge the people's liberties, then a list of guaranteed freedoms was not necessary. Hamilton, in "Federalist No. 84," went even further, arguing that the addition of a bill of rights would be dangerous. To deny the exercise of a nonexistent power might lead to the exercise of a power that is not specifically denied. Because it is not possible to list all prohibited powers, wrote Hamilton, any attempt to provide a partial list would make the remaining areas vulnerable to government abuse.

But logic was no match for fear. Many states agreed to ratify the Constitution only after Washington suggested that a list of guarantees be added through the amendment process. Well over a hundred amendments were proposed by the states. These were eventually narrowed down to twelve, which were approved by Congress and sent to the states. Ten of them became part of the Constitution in 1791, when Virginia became the eleventh state to approve them.* (Connecticut, Georgia, and Massachusetts finally approved them in 1939, 150 years after they were introduced.) Collectively, these ten amendments are known as the **Bill of Rights**. They restrain the national government from tampering with fundamental rights and civil liberties and emphasize the limited character of national power (see Table 3.2).

Ratification

Delaware was first to ratify the Constitution. (Today, Delaware license plates bear the motto "The First State.") Massachusetts gave its assent after a close contest (187 yeas to 168 nays), but its convention called for the promised bill of rights. New Hampshire, the ninth state to ratify, did so on June 21, 1788. According to Article VII, the Constitution took effect on that date. But this was true only in a technical sense. Two of the remaining states were absolutely critical to the success of the newly formed United States: Virginia and New York together comprised almost 40 percent of its population.

The debate in these states was filled with invective. Virginia ratified by a vote of 89 to 79, but it recommended a declaration of rights and twenty additional amendments to cure other "defects" in the Constitution. The New York convention voted to ratify a week after Virginia did, by a vote of 30 to 27. Had two Federalist delegates switched votes, the Constitution—and in all likelihood, the Union—would have failed. New York, too, recommended the addition of a bill of rights, along with thirty-two other amendments. By August 1788, eleven states had ratified the Constitution.

* Vermont joined the Union in March 1791, bringing the number of states to fourteen. Three-fourths of the states were necessary for ratification.

Table 3.2
The Bill of Rights

The first ten amendments to the Constitution are known as the Bill of Rights. The following is a list of those amendments grouped conceptually. For the actual order and wording of the Bill of Rights, see the Appendix.

Guarantees	Amendment
Guarantees for Participation in the Political Process	
No government abridgement of speech of press; no government abridgement of peaceable assembly; no government abridgement of petitioning government for redress.	1
Guarantees Respecting Personal Beliefs	
No government establishment of religion; no government prohibition of free religious exercise.	1
Guarantees of Personal Privacy	
Owners' consent necessary to quarter troops in private homes in peacetime; quartering during war must be lawful.	3
Government cannot engage in unreasonable searches and seizures; warrants to search and seize require probable cause.	4
No compulsion to testify against oneself in criminal cases.	5
Guarantees Against Government Overreaching	
Serious crimes require a grand jury indictment; no repeated prosecution for the same offense; no loss of life, liberty, or property without due process; no government taking of property for public use without just compensation.	5
Criminal defendants will have a speedy public trial by impartial local jury; defendants informed of accusation; defendants confront witnesses against them; defendants use judicial process to obtain favorable witnesses; defendants have legal assistance for their defense.	6
Civil lawsuits can be tried by juries if controversy exceeds \$20; in jury trials, factfinding is a jury function.	7
No excessive bail; no excessive fines; no cruel and unusual punishment.	8
Other Guarantees	
No government trespass on unspecified fundamental rights.	9
The states of the people reserve the powers not delegated to the national government or denied to the states.	10
The people have the right to bear arms.	2

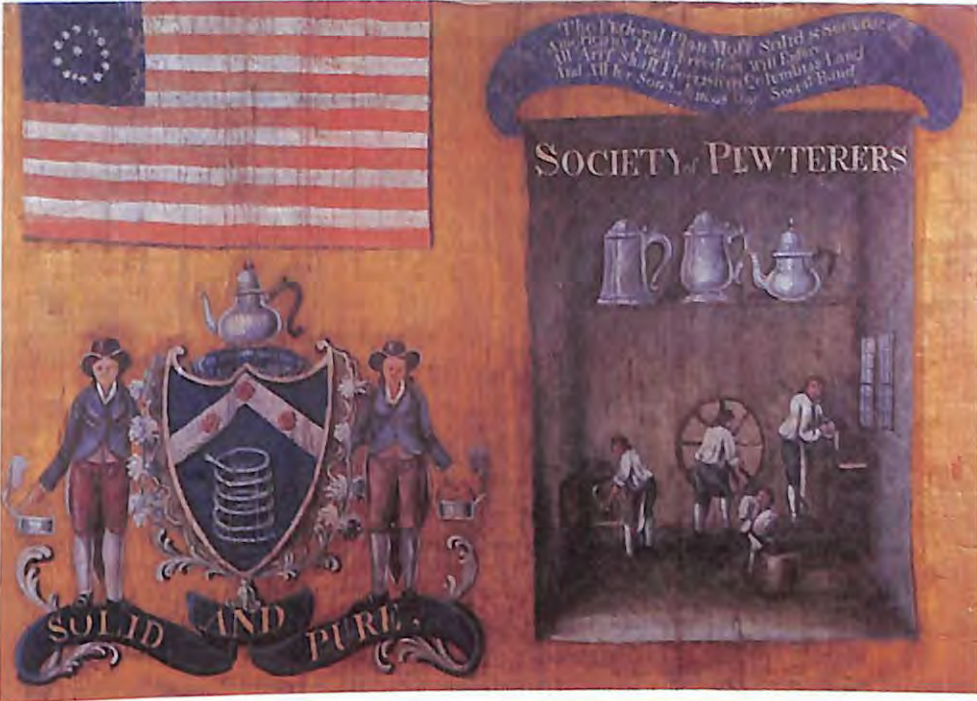
Rhode Island, the only state that did not send a delegate to the Constitutional Convention was the last state to ratify. When Rhode Island finally did approve the Constitution on May 29, 1790, it did so by a vote of only 34 to 32.¹⁹

The reflection and deliberation that attended the creation and ratification of the Constitution signaled to the world that a new government could be launched peacefully. The French observer, Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859) later wrote:

That which is new in the history of societies is to see a great people, warned by its lawgivers that the wheels of government are stopping, turn its attention on itself without haste or fear, sound the depth of the ill, and then wait

Parading for Principle

New Yorkers held a festive procession on July 23, 1788, three days before their state became the eleventh to ratify the Constitution. Among the five thousand tradespeople who participated were members of the Society of Pewterers, who displayed a silk banner emblazoned with a thirteen-star flag, symbols of their work, and slogans that applauded the “federal plan.” The parade was daring for its time: Tailors carried a banner that showed a naked Adam and Eve, which read “And they sewed fig leaves together.”



for two years to find the remedy at leisure, and then finally, when the remedy has been indicated, submit to it voluntarily without its costing humanity a single tear or drop of blood.²⁰

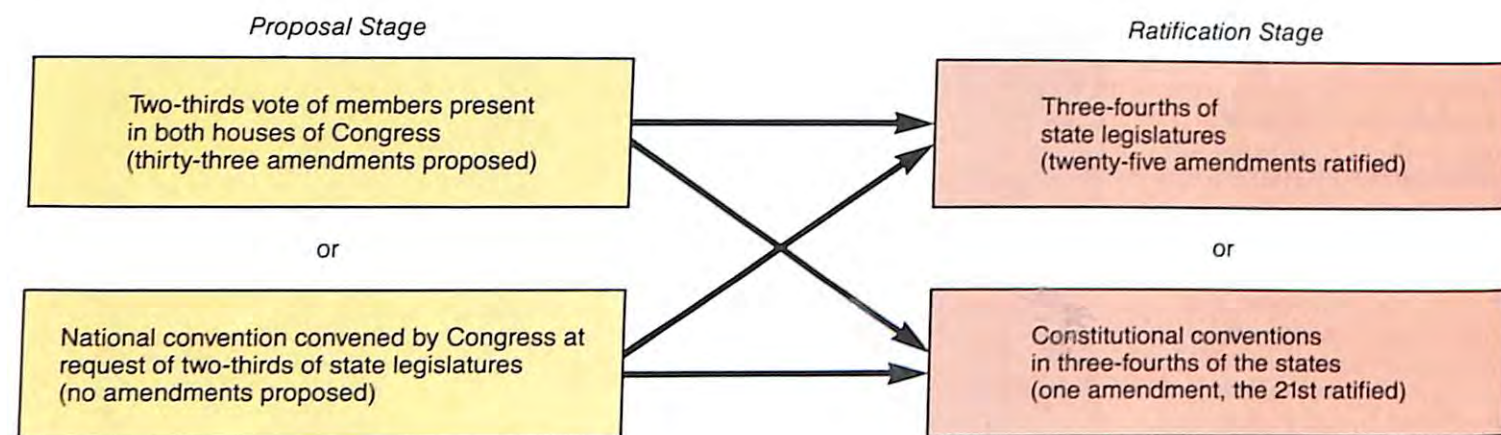
CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

The founders realized that the Constitution would have to be changed from time to time. To this end, they specified a formal amendment process in Article V—a process that was used almost immediately to add the Bill of Rights. With the passage of time, the Constitution also has been altered through judicial interpretation and changes in political practice.

The Formal Amendment Process

There are two stages in the amendment process, **proposal** and **ratification**; both are necessary for an amendment to become part of the Constitution. The Constitution provides two alternative methods for completing each stage (see Figure 3.3). Amendments can be proposed (1) by a two-thirds vote of the House of Representatives and of the Senate or (2) by a national convention, summoned by Congress at the request of two-thirds of the state legislatures. All constitutional amendments to date have been proposed by the first method; the second has never been used.

A proposed amendment can be ratified (1) by a vote of the legislatures of three-fourths of the states, or (2) by a vote of constitutional conven-



Amending the Constitution

There are two stages in amending the Constitution: proposal and ratification. Congress has no control over the proposal stage, but it prescribes the ratification method. Once it has ratified an amendment, a state cannot retract its action. A state's rejection of an amendment does not bar future reconsideration, however.

Figure 3.3

tions held in three-fourths of the states. Congress chooses the method of ratification. It has used the state convention method only once, for the Twenty-first Amendment, which repealed the Eighteenth (Prohibition).

Notice that the amendment process requires the exercise of **extraordinary majorities**. The framers purposely made it difficult to propose and ratify amendments (although nowhere near as difficult as the amendment process under the Articles of Confederation). They wanted only the most significant issues to lead to constitutional change. Notice, too, that the president plays no formal role in the process. His approval is not required to amend the Constitution, although his political influence affects the success or failure of any amendment effort.

Calling a national convention to propose an amendment has never been tried. Certainly the method raises several thorny questions. For example, the Constitution doesn't address the number of delegates who should attend, the method by which they should be chosen, or the rules for debating and voting on a proposed amendment. But the major issue is the limits, if any, on the business of the convention. Remember that the convention in Philadelphia in 1787 was charged with revising the Articles of Confederation, yet it drafted an entirely new charter. Would a national convention, called to consider a particular amendment, be within its bounds to rewrite the Constitution? No one really knows. But the question may soon be put to a test. A movement is under way to convene a constitutional convention to write an amendment that would require a balanced budget. Thirty-two states have voted to issue a convention call on the budget issue. When thirty-four approve, the Constitution requires that a convention be held.

Most of the Constitution's twenty-six amendments were adopted to help keep it abreast of changes in political thinking. The first ten amendments (the Bill of Rights) were the price of ratification, but they have

Roll Out the Barrels

The Eighteenth Amendment, which was ratified by the states in 1919, banned the manufacture, sale, or transportation of alcoholic beverages. The amendment was spurred by moral and social reform groups, like the Women's Christian Temperance Union, founded by Evanston, Illinois, resident Frances Willard in 1874. The amendment proved to be an utter failure. People continued to drink, but their alcohol came from illegal sources.



been important to our current system of government. The last sixteen amendments fall into three main categories: They make *public policy*; they correct deficiencies in *government structure*; or they promote *equality* (see Table 3.3). One attempt to make public policy through a constitutional amendment was disastrous. The Eighteenth Amendment (1919) prohibited the manufacture or sale of intoxicating beverages. Prohibition lasted for fourteen years and was an utter failure. Gangsters began bootlegging liquor; people died from drinking home-made booze; and millions regularly broke the law by drinking anyway. Congress had to propose another amendment in 1933 to repeal the Eighteenth. The states ratified this amendment, the Twenty-first, in less than ten months, less time than it took to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment, guaranteeing citizenship, due process, and equal protection.

Since 1787, about ten thousand constitutional amendments have been introduced; only a fraction have passed through the proposal stage. Once an amendment has been voted by the Congress, however, the chances of ratification are very high. Only seven amendments submitted to the states have failed to be ratified. The latest, which called for full congressional representation for Washington, D.C., mustered approval in just sixteen states, twenty-two states short of the required three-fourths.

Interpretation by the Courts

In 1803, in its decision in *Marbury v. Madison*, the Supreme Court declared that the courts have the power to nullify government acts when they conflict with the Constitution. (We elaborate on the power of *judicial review* in Chapter 13.) The exercise of judicial review forces the

Table 3.3
Constitutional Amendments: 11 through 26

No.	Proposed	Ratified	Intent	Subject
11	1794	1795	G	Prohibits an individual from suing a state in a federal court without the state's consent.
12	1803	1804	G	Requires the electoral college to vote separately for president and vice president.
13	1865	1865	E	Prohibits slavery.
14	1866	1868	E	Gives citizenship to all persons born or naturalized in the United States (former slaves); prevents states from depriving any "person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law."
15	1869	1870	E	Guarantees that citizens' right to vote cannot be denied "on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."
16	1909	1913	E	Gives congress power to collect an income tax.
17	1912	1913	E	Provides for popular election of senators, who were formerly elected by state legislatures.
18	1917	1919	P	Prohibits making and selling intoxicating liquors.
19	1919	1920	E	Gives women the right to vote.
20	1932	1933	G	Changes the presidential inauguration from March 4 to January 20 and sets January 3 for the opening date of Congress.
21	1933	1933	P	Repeals the Eighteenth Amendment.
22	1947	1951	G	Limits a president to two terms.
23	1960	1961	E	Gives citizens of Washington D.C., the right to vote for president.
24	1962	1964	E	Prohibits charging citizens a poll tax to vote.
25	1965	1967	G	Provides for succession in event of death, removal from office, incapacity, or resignation of the president or vice president.
26	1971	1971	E	Lowers the voting age to eighteen.

P Amendments legislating public policy.
G Amendments correcting perceived deficiencies in government structure.
E Amendments advancing equality.

courts to interpret the Constitution. In a way, this makes a lot of sense. The judiciary is the law-interpreting branch of the government; the Constitution is the supreme law of the land, fair game then for judicial interpretation. But in interpreting the Constitution, the courts cannot help but give new meaning to its provisions. This is why judicial interpretation is a principal form of constitutional change.

What guidelines should judges use in interpreting the Constitution? For one thing, they must realize that our language—particularly the usage

and meaning of many words—has changed over the last two hundred years. They must be careful to think about what the words meant at the time the Constitution was written. Some insist they also must consider the original intent of the framers—not an easy task. Of course, there are records of the Constitutional Convention and the debates surrounding ratification. But there are also many questions about the completeness and accuracy of those records, even Madison's detailed notes. And, at times, the framers chose to be general or vague in writing the document. In part, this may reflect their lack of agreement on or universal understanding of certain provisions in the Constitution.

Political Practice

The Constitution remains silent on many issues. For example, it says nothing about political parties or the president's cabinet, yet both parties and cabinets have exercised considerable influence in American politics. Some constitutional provisions have fallen out of use. The electors in the electoral college, for example, were supposed to exercise their own judgment in voting for president and vice president. Today the electors function simply as a rubber stamp, reflecting the outcome of election contests in their states.

Political practice has altered the distribution of power without changes in the Constitution. The framers intended Congress to be the strongest branch of government. But the president has come to overshadow Congress. Presidents like Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt used their powers imaginatively to respond to national crises. And their actions served as springboards for future presidents to further enlarge the powers of the office.

The framers could scarcely imagine an urbanized nation of 240 million people stretching across a land mass some 3,000 miles wide. They could never in their wildest nightmares have foreseen the destructiveness of nuclear war or envisioned the influence this would have on the power to declare war. The Constitution gives that power to Congress, to consider and debate this momentous step. But with nuclear annihilation perhaps only minutes away, the legislative power to declare war must give way to the president's power to wage war as the nation's commander in chief. Strict adherence to the Constitution here could destroy the nation's ability to protect itself.

AN EVALUATION OF THE CONSTITUTION

The U.S. Constitution is one of the world's most praised political documents. It is the oldest written national constitution and one of the most widely copied, sometimes word for word (see Compared With What? 3.1). It is also one of the shortest, containing about 4,300 words, not counting the amendments. In fact, the twenty-six amendments (about 3,500 words) are nearly as long as the Constitution itself. The brevity of the Constitution may be one of its greatest strengths. As we noted earlier,

COMPARED WITH WHAT? 3.1

Exporting the Constitution

Entering its third century of existence, the U.S. Constitution is the oldest written national charter still in effect. Its stability and the ideals it expresses have inspired imitations throughout the world.

In overwhelmingly Catholic Ireland, the constitution outlaws abortion and divorce and proclaims the Holy Trinity the source of all political power. Japan's national charter renounces war. Portugal's forbids private ownership of television stations. Peru reprints its charter in the Lima telephone directory, filling pages of fine print. Yet beneath such diversity, each document can trace its rights and freedoms to U.S. soil. Says Joseph Magnet, a law professor at Canada's University of Ottawa: "America has been and remains the great constitutional laboratory for the entire world."

Of the 170 countries that exist today, more than 160 have written charters modeled directly or indirectly on the U.S. version. Those states range from the giant Soviet Union to the tiny Caribbean island country of Grenada. While Poland and France became the first to follow America's lead when they drafted modern constitutions in 1791, the largest impact has been recent. More than three-quarters of today's charters were adopted after World War II. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, could have been speaking for the rest of the Third World when he told the U.S. Congress in 1949, "We have been greatly influenced by your own Constitution."

Some charters are roundly ignored. China's declaration of human rights was powerless to

stop the abuses of the 1960s Cultural Revolution. In Latin America dictators often simply disregard national charters during times of unrest. Many African leaders have stymied democracy by outlawing opposing political parties and turning their countries into one-party states, often without bothering to amend their charters. Yet so strongly have constitutional ideals taken hold worldwide that few countries dare to abandon them completely.

Indeed, constitutions are living documents that are constantly being created and reshaped. Voters in the Philippines went to the polls in [1987] to approve a new charter, the country's fifth, that prohibits human rights violations and retains Corazon Aquino as President until 1992. In Nicaragua . . . , the Marxist-influenced Sandinista leadership unveiled that country's twelfth constitution in 149 years. . . .

As such figures show, many constitutions have managed to survive only until the next upheaval or military coup. Three-quarters of the world's constitutions have been completely rewritten since they were first adopted, making America's fidelity to a single charter highly unusual. Some experts contend that frequent constitutional changes can be healthy. Says Albert Blaustein, a Rutgers University law professor who has helped draft six foreign charters: "Jefferson concluded that every 20 years the new generation should have its own constitution to meet current needs. That might not be a good idea for the U.S., but it's really not a bad idea for other countries."

the framers simply laid out a structural framework for government; they did not describe relationships and powers in detail. For example, the Constitution gives Congress the power to regulate "Commerce . . . among the several States," but does not define *interstate commerce*. This kind of general wording allows interpretation in keeping with contemporary political, social, and technological developments. Air travel, for instance, was unknown in 1787, but it now falls easily within Congress's power to regulate interstate commerce.

The generality of the U.S. Constitution stands in stark contrast to the specificity of most state constitutions. The constitution of California, for example, provides that "fruit and nut-bearing trees under the age of

Some constitutions are born of disaster. After World War II, Americans played a key role in drafting charters for the defeated nations of Japan and West Germany. The Japanese charter declares that the country will never again make war or maintain an army, navy or air force. As a result, Japan spends only about 1% of its gross national product on defense, freeing the economy for more productive purposes. Ironically, the U.S. is pressing the Japanese to boost defense outlays.

The West German constitution, written under the watchful eye of U.S. occupation leaders, sought to prevent the rise of another Hitler by limiting the executive branch. Recalls Joachim von Elbe, a Bonn legal expert: "We did not want to make the Germans just imitate the American constitutional model but rely on themselves to reform, rebuild and overcome the Nazi period." The framers decreed that the Bundestag, or parliament, could not oust a Chancellor without first choosing a successor. That has helped prevent a return of the political chaos that brought the Nazis to power in the 1930s.

Italians, with memories of Mussolini still fresh in their minds, went even further than the Germans in reining in the executive branch. While this has guarded against a new outbreak of tyranny, the inability of any one of Italy's parties to win a majority in parliament has led to frequent political turnover: Italy has had 46 governments since 1945. . . .

Among Third World nations, India has

often seemed the most faithful to its U.S.-inspired constitutional ideals. The world's largest democracy included a declaration of "fundamental rights" in its 1949 charter and backed them up by borrowing the U.S. system of judicial review. "Thank God they put in the fundamental rights," says Nani Palkhivala, a constitutional expert who was India's Ambassador to Washington in the late 1970s. He observes, "Since 1947 we have had more harsh and repressive laws than were ever imposed under British rule." Indian courts, however, overturned most of them. . . .

Though many U.S.-inspired constitutions have gone their own ways over the years, the seed planted in Philadelphia in 1789 should continue to flower. "The idea that individuals have rights against government is probably the most profound influence of the U.S. Constitution," says Oscar Schachter, professor emeritus of international law and diplomacy at Columbia University. "The whole notion of human rights as a worldwide movement was grounded in part in the Constitution." Those rights may not always be honored, but they have fired the imaginations of individuals, free and otherwise, around the world. After two centuries, the U.S. Constitution remains the standard against which people of all sorts measure their governments, and some governments even measure themselves.

Source: John Greenwald, "A Gift to All Nations," *Time*, 6 July 1987, pp. 92ff. Copyright 1987 Time Inc. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission from TIME.

four years from the time of planting in orchard form and grapevines under the age of three years from the time of planting in vineyard form . . . shall be exempt from taxation" (Article XIII, Section 12). Because they are so specific, most state constitutions are much longer than the U.S. Constitution.

Freedom, Order, and Equality in the Constitution

The revolutionaries' first try at government was embodied in the Articles of Confederation. The result was a weak government that leaned

too much toward freedom at the expense of order. Deciding that the confederation was beyond correcting, the revolutionaries chose a new form of government—a *federal* government—and wrote a new constitution. That constitution was aimed at structuring a national government strong enough to maintain order but not so strong that it could dominate the states or infringe on individual freedoms. In short, the Constitution provided a judicious balance between order and freedom. It paid virtually no attention to equality.

Consider social equality. The Constitution never mentioned slavery—a controversial issue even then. In fact, as we discussed earlier, the Constitution implicitly condones slavery in the wording of several articles. Not until the Thirteenth Amendment's ratification in 1865 was slavery prohibited.

The Constitution was designed long before social equality was ever even thought of as an objective of government. In fact, in "Federalist No. 10," Madison held that protection of the "diversities in the faculties of men from which the rights of property originate" is "the first object of government." Over a century later, the Constitution was changed to incorporate a key device for the promotion of social equality—the income tax. The Sixteenth Amendment (1913) gave Congress the power to collect an income tax; it was proposed and ratified to replace a law that had been declared unconstitutional in an 1895 court case. The idea of **progressive taxation** (in which the tax rate increases with income) had long been closely linked to the income tax, and the Sixteenth Amendment gave it a constitutional basis.²¹ Progressive taxation later helped promote social equality through the redistribution of income. That is, higher-income people are taxed at higher rates to help fund social programs that benefit low-income people. Social equality itself has never been, and is not now, a prime *constitutional* value. The Constitution has been much more effective in securing order and freedom. A recent poll of Americans reinforces this evaluation (see Figure 3.4).

The Constitution also did not take a stand on political equality. It left voting qualifications to the states, specifying only that people who could vote for "the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature" could also vote for representatives to Congress (Article I, Section 2). In most states at that time, only tax-paying or property-owning white males could vote; blacks and women were universally excluded. These inequalities have been rectified by several amendments (see Table 3.3).

The Constitution did not guarantee blacks citizenship until the Fourteenth Amendment was ratified (1868) and did not give them the right to vote until the Fifteenth Amendment (1870). Women were not guaranteed the right to vote until the Nineteenth Amendment (1920). Finally, the *poll tax* (a tax that people had to pay in order to vote and that tended to disenfranchise blacks) was not eliminated until the Twenty-fourth Amendment (1964). Two other amendments expanded the Constitution's grant of political equality. The Twenty-third Amendment (1961) allowed citizens of Washington, D.C., who are not considered residents of any state, to vote for president. The Twenty-sixth Amendment (1971) extended voting rights to all citizens who are at least eighteen years old.

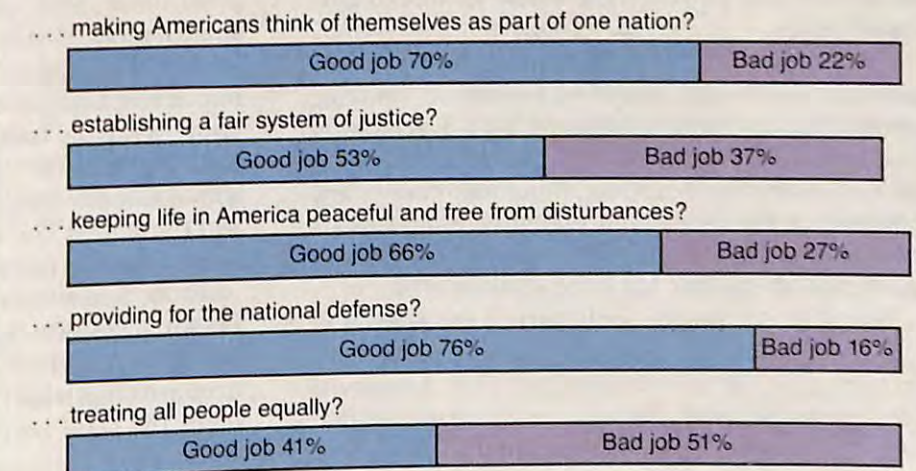
"We the People" Evaluate the Constitution

Two hundred years after the Constitutional Convention, a survey of Americans evaluated the success of the goals articulated in the Constitution's preamble. According to the results, the Constitution has done a good job of forging one nation from separate states and securing an orderly and free society. Though not an explicit goal in the preamble, the Constitution's success in treating all people equally received a relatively poor grade. (Source: New York Times, 26 May 1987, p. 10. Copyright © 1987 by the New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission.)

Figure 3.4

"We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

Think about the system of government established by the Constitution. How good a job has it done in . . .



Based on 1,254 telephone interviews conducted May 11-14, 1987. Those with no opinion are not shown.

The Constitution and Models of Democracy

Think back to our discussion of the models of democracy in Chapter 2. Which model does the Constitution fit: the pluralist or majoritarian? Actually, it is hard to imagine a government framework better suited to the pluralist model of democracy than the Constitution of the United States. It is also hard to imagine a document more at odds with the majoritarian model. Consider Madison's claim, in "Federalist No. 10," that government inevitably involves conflicting factions. This concept fits perfectly with the idea of competing groups in pluralist theory (see Chapter 2). Think about his description in "Federalist No. 51" of the Constitution's ability to guard against the concentration of power in the majority through its separation of powers and checks and balances. This concept—avoiding a single center of government power that might fall under majority control—fits perfectly with pluralist democracy.

The delegates to the Constitutional Convention intended to create a republic, a government based on majority consent; they did not intend to create a democracy, which rests on majority rule. They succeeded admirably in creating that republic. Along the way, they also produced a government that grew into a democracy . . . but a particular type of democracy. The framers neither wanted nor got a democracy that fit the majoritarian model. They perhaps wanted and certainly did get a government that conforms to the pluralist model.

SUMMARY

The U.S. Constitution is more than a historic document, an antique curiosity. Although over two hundred years old, it still governs the politics of a mighty modern nation. It still has the power to force from office a president who won re-election by a landslide and the power to see the country through government crises.

The Constitution was the end product of a revolutionary movement aimed at preserving existing liberties. That movement began with the Declaration of Independence, a proclamation that everyone is entitled to certain rights (among them, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness) and that government exists for the good of its citizens. When government denies those rights, the people have the right to rebel.

War with Britain was only part of the process of independence. Some form of government was needed to replace the British monarchy. The Americans chose a republic, and defined the structure of that republic in the Articles of Confederation. The Articles were a failure. Although they guaranteed the states their coveted independence, they left the central government too weak to deal with disorder and insurrection.

The Constitution was the second attempt at government. It created a strong national government, incorporating four political principles: republicanism, federalism, separation of powers, and checks and balances. Republicanism is a form of government in which power resides in the people and is exercised by their elected representatives. Federalism is a division of power between the national government and the states. Separation of powers is a further division of the power of the national government into legislative (lawmaking), executive (law-enforcing), and judiciary (law-interpreting) branches. Finally, the Constitution established a system of checks and balances, giving each branch some scrutiny of and control over the others.

The document written, work began on ratification. A major stumbling block was the Constitution's failure to list the individual liberties the Americans had fought to protect. With the promise of a bill of rights, the Constitution was ratified. These ten amendments guaranteed participation in the political process, personal beliefs, and personal privacy. They also embodied guarantees against government overreaching in criminal prosecutions. Over the years the Constitution has evolved through the formal amendment process, through the exercise of judicial review, and through political practice.

The Constitution was designed to strike a balance between order and freedom. It was not designed to promote equality; in fact, it had to be amended to redress inequality. The framers did not set out to create a democracy. There was little faith in government by the people two centuries ago. Nevertheless, they produced a democratic form of government. That government, with its separation of powers and checks and balances, is remarkably well suited to the pluralist model of democracy. Simple majority rule, which lies at the heart of the majoritarian model, was precisely what the framers wanted to avoid.

The framers also wanted a government that would balance the powers of the national government and the states. The exact balance was a touchy issue, skirted by the delegates at the Constitutional Convention. Some seventy years later, a civil war was fought over that balance of power. That war and countless political battles before and after it have demonstrated that the national government dominates the state governments in our political system. In the next chapter, we look at how a loose confederation of states has evolved into a "more perfect Union."

Key Terms

Continental Congress
Declaration of Independence
social contract theory
republic
confederation
sovereignty
Articles of Confederation
Shays's Rebellion
Virginia Plan
legislative branch
executive branch
judicial branch
New Jersey Plan
Great Compromise
electoral college
republicanism

federalism
unitary government
separation of powers
checks and balances
bicameral
enumerated powers
necessary and proper clause
elastic clause
implied powers
judicial review
supremacy clause
Bill of Rights
proposal
ratification
extraordinary majorities
progressive taxation

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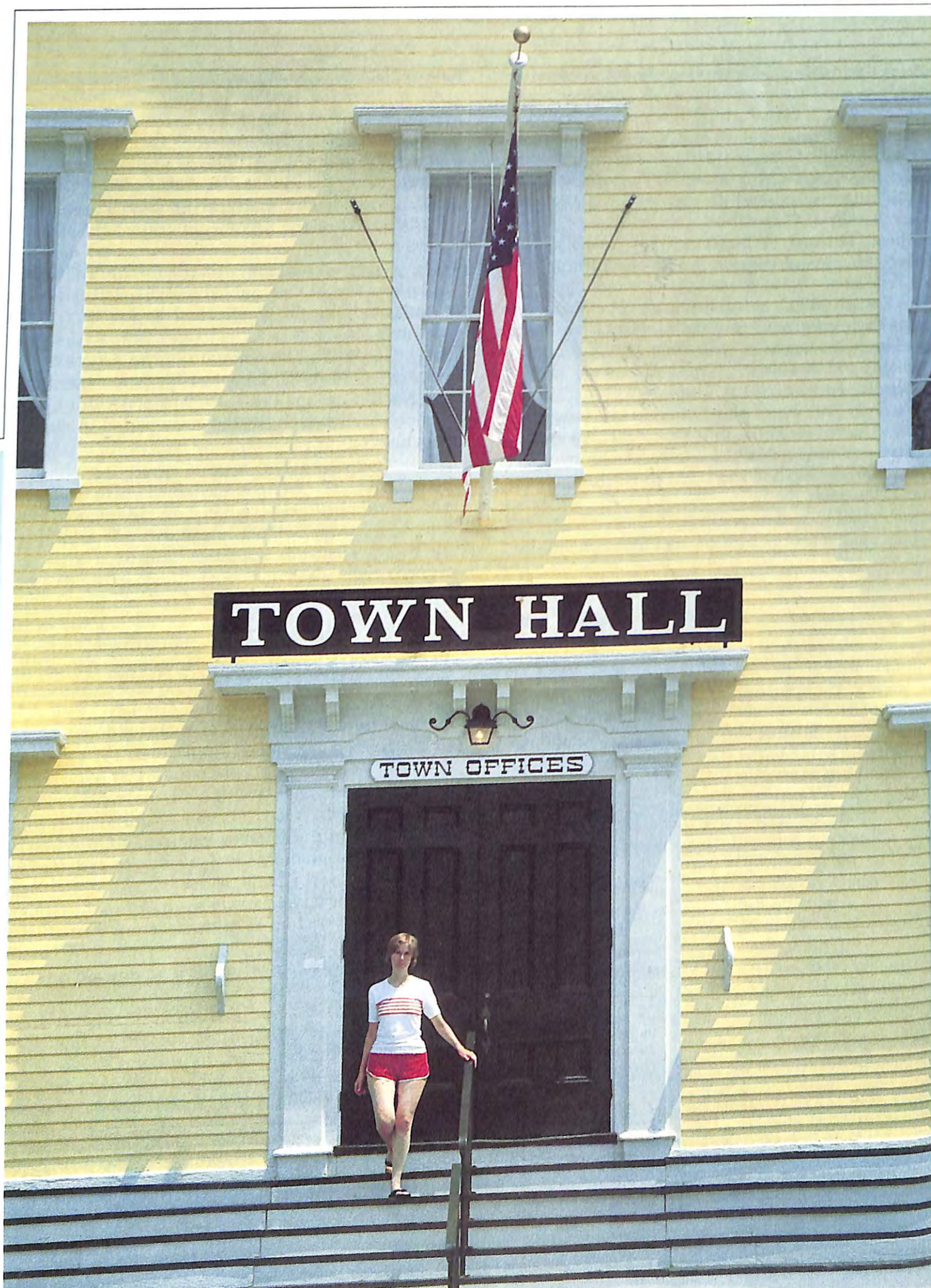
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4

Federalism

Federalism and American Ideology: Myths and Metaphors

The Mythology of American Federalism • Dual, or "Layer Cake," Federalism • Cooperative, or "Marble Cake," Federalism

The Dynamics of Federalism: Legal Sticks and Financial Carrots

Legislation and the Elastic Clause • Judicial Interpretation • Grants-in-Aid

The Developing Concept of Federalism: From Layer Cake to Marble Cake

McCulloch v. Maryland • States' Rights and Dual Federalism • The New Deal and Its Consequences • Desegregation and the War on Poverty

The Pendulum Swings Back . . . Maybe

Nixon's New Federalism: Revenue Sharing • Reagan's New Federalism: Budget Reductions

Other Governments in the Federal System

The Kinds of Local Governments • So Many Governments: Advantages and Disadvantages

Contemporary Federalism and the Dilemmas of Democracy

Federalism and the Values of Freedom, Order, and Equality • Federalism and Pluralism

Steve Oligmueller, age nineteen, Highmore High School class of 1986, had just returned home to South Dakota for the summer. Tonight, he would get together with old friends and swap stories about freshman year at college. They would meet at The Stable, a local bar, to sit, talk, listen to music, and have a couple of beers. In the spring of 1987, South Dakota was one of four states that still allowed people under twenty-one to drink beer. Soon, however, the cost of letting nineteen-year-olds drink beer would go up drastically—not just for Steve and his friends, but for all the taxpayers of South Dakota. The state stood to lose nearly \$10 million in federal highway funds unless it raised its minimum drinking age to twenty-one.

Just three years earlier, twenty-nine states and the District of Columbia allowed people under twenty-one to purchase and consume some forms of alcoholic beverages. In 1984, however, an action taken in Washington, D.C., marked the beginning of the end of legalized drinking for those under twenty-one. What happened? Did Congress establish a national minimum drinking age? No, at least not directly. Congress simply added a provision to a highway bill. Under that provision, states would lose 5 percent of their federal highway funds in 1986 and 10 percent in 1987 if they allowed the purchase or consumption of alcohol by those under twenty-one. States themselves would have to change their own laws or risk losing federal funds. But why adopt such a roundabout method to achieve a national objective? If the national government wanted to set twenty-one as a national drinking age, why not act directly and pass legislation to do so?

The simplest answer has to do with the federal system of government. The Constitution divided power between the national and state governments. Regulating liquor sales and setting minimum drinking ages

had always been the responsibilities of state governments. But over the years, the national government has found ways to extend its influence into areas well beyond those originally defined in the Constitution.

How did the national government become concerned about the drinking age? Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and other interest groups had fought hard to increase public awareness of the dangers of driving drunk, and they argued that a uniform drinking age of twenty-one would reduce highway fatalities. The National Transportation Safety Board estimated that 1,250 lives could be saved each year by raising the drinking age. But campaigning for change on a state-by-state basis would be slow and might even be dangerous. As long as some states allowed teenagers to drink, young people would drive across state lines in order to drink legally. The borders between states would become "blood borders," strewn with the victims of teenage drinking and driving.

Supporters of the legislation believed that the national government's responsibility to maintain order justified intervention here. The lives and safety of people were at stake. Opponents of the plan argued that it constituted age discrimination and infringed on states' rights. They claimed the act was an unwarranted extension of national power, that it limited the freedom of the states and of their citizens.

The bill passed handily and went to President Reagan for signing. Reagan had campaigned on a pledge to reduce the size and scope of the national government, and he strongly opposed replacing state standards with national ones. Where would he come out on this issue, which pitted order against freedom and national standards against state standards? Early on, he opposed the bill; later, he changed his position. At the signing ceremony, he said, "This problem is bigger than the individual states. It's a grave national problem and it touches all our lives. With the problem so clear cut and the proven solution at hand we have no misgiving about this judicious use of federal power. I'm convinced that it will help persuade state legislators to act in the national interest."¹

Several states took the matter to court, hoping to have the provision declared unconstitutional. In June 1987, the Supreme Court reached its decision in *South Dakota v. Dole*.² The Court argued that, far from being an infringement on states' rights, the law was a "relatively mild encouragement to the states to enact higher minimum drinking ages than they otherwise would choose." After all, Chief Justice William Rehnquist wrote, the goal of reducing drunk driving was "directly related to one of the main purposes for which highway funds are expended: safe interstate travel."

Rehnquist's words show how much the role of the national government has changed since the Constitution was adopted. In 1985, for example, the national government gave the states close to \$15 billion for projects ranging from the research, planning, and construction of roads to state and community safety and outdoor advertising control. Yet, in the early part of the last century, chief executives routinely vetoed bills authorizing roads, canals, and other interstate improvements. The reason? They believed these kinds of projects exceeded the constitutional authority of the national government.

Eventually, of course, the national government did use its authority over interstate commerce and post roads to justify a role in building

Unsafe at Any Speed

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) campaigned hard to get drunken drivers off the road. Their strategies included national advertising—and national legislation. They also took aim at state legislatures, urging tougher sanctions for driving "under the influence." MADD organized this candlelight vigil in memory of victims of drunken drivers.



roads. Witness the 46,000-mile interstate highway system. In the Highway Act of 1984, however, Congress went a step further. Although it recognized the formal power of the states to regulate the minimum drinking age, it used its own powers to tax and spend to encourage the states to implement a national standard. Lawmakers in Washington believed that few states would pass up highway funds to retain power, and they were right.

An important element of federalism was at work here: the dual sovereignty of national and state governments. Congress acknowledged the sovereignty of the states by not legislating a national drinking age. And the states were willing to barter their sovereignty in exchange for needed revenues. As long as this remains true, there are few areas where national power cannot reach.

In this chapter, we examine American federalism in theory and in practice. Is the division of power between nation and states a matter of constitutional principle or practical politics? How does the balance of power between nation and states relate to the conflicts between freedom and order, and between freedom and equality? Does federalism reflect the pluralist or the majoritarian model of democracy?

FEDERALISM AND AMERICAN IDEOLOGY: MYTHS AND METAPHORS

The delegates who met in Philadelphia in 1787 were supposed to repair weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation. Instead, they tackled the problem of making one nation out of thirteen independent states by doing something much more radical. They wrote a new Constitution

Local Cops, National Cops

Local, state, and national governments share certain powers, such as law enforcement. A Los Angeles police officer enforces local criminal laws, against gang activity and drugs, for example (left). The Federal Bureau of Investigation is the principal investigative arm of the national government. Here a FBI SWAT team arrives to quiet a 1988 riot at a federal penitentiary in Atlanta (right).



FEATURE 4.1

Will Massachusetts Invade Central America?

"Will Massachusetts invade Central America?" That's the question peace groups in Massachusetts were asking in 1986. And the answer they got was "No." Governor Michael Dukakis assured the Central America Solidarity Association (CASA) and the Citizens for Political Participation and Action (CPPAX) that he would turn down all invitations to have the Massachusetts National Guard train in Central America. Soon, the governors of Maine, New York, and Vermont announced they too would refuse to send state troops to Central America. And campaigns were launched in Arizona, Arkansas, Iowa, Kentucky, Wisconsin, and other states to convince the governors there to follow suit.

Since the military draft ended in the 1970s, the Defense Department has considered the National Guard forces—the state militias—an integral part of the nation's military strength. President Reagan planned to use these troops to project U.S. power in Central America. In 1986, for example, over five thousand guardsmen from twenty-three states trained in Honduras.

The governors' refusal raised an important question: Who commands the National Guard? The Guard is the state militia, the most powerful tool a governor has to secure order. National Guard troops are often called to quell riots or clean up after floods. But the Guard has ties to the national government as well. In Article I, Section 8, the Constitution provides that Congress may call out or federalize the militia "to execute the Laws of the Union, suppress insurrections and repel invasions." Congress is also empowered to organize, arm, and discipline

the militia. The states have reserved to them the authority to appoint officers and to train the militia "according to the discipline prescribed by Congress." Under national law, the governor is commander in chief of the state militia unless the Guard is federalized. But Congress had not federalized the Guard troops before they went to train in Central America. As a result, Dukakis and other like-minded governors stood poised for conflict with the national government.

In the summer of 1986, however, Congress passed a Reagan-backed amendment to a defense appropriations act. This amendment was aimed at preventing governors from blocking the overseas training of National Guard troops. In May 1988 a U.S. District Court judge upheld the constitutionality of the amendment. Nevertheless, some experts believe that the measure does not give the national government the power to override gubernatorial authority; to do that, Congress would have to declare an emergency and federalize the Guard or pass a constitutional amendment limiting the governors' power.

Although the Reagan administration shied away from either of these courses, the intent of its policy was clear. When its professed commitment to returning power to the states ran counter to other policy objectives, the Reagan administration's commitment to states' rights did not stand. Annually, thousands of guardsmen still train in Central America. And one day, Massachusetts militiamen may be called for duty there despite their governor's wishes!

and invented a new political form: federal government. Under this **federalism**, two or more governments would exercise power and authority over the same people and the same territory. Thus, people living in Pennsylvania would be citizens of both the United States and Pennsylvania. Although the governments of the United States and Pennsylvania would share certain powers (the power to tax, for instance), other powers would belong exclusively to one or the other. As Madison wrote in "Federalist No. 10," "The federal Constitution forms a happy combination . . . the great and aggregate interests being referred to the national, and the local and particular to state governments." So the power to coin money belongs to the national government; the power to grant divorces remains a state prerogative. By contrast, authority over the state militia may sometimes belong to the national government and sometimes to the state government (see Feature 4.1). The history of American feder-

COMPARED WITH WHAT? 4.1

Federalism Around the World

Question: What do the following nations have in common: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Switzerland, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United States of America, and Yugoslavia?

Answer: Today, these are the only nations in the world with a federal form of government. There are just thirteen of them, a small fraction of the world's countries.

Why would a nation adopt a federal form of government? In theory, a federal system provides a

means of recognizing local diversity while allowing some centralized authority. It also offers a defense against the national government's becoming too powerful. In practice, federalism is often used as a means of governing a large territory or a heterogeneous population (a population with many ethnic, religious, or linguistic groups, for example).

The table below lists some geographic and social characteristics of the world's federal nations, some clues as to why they use the federal form. Several of these nations, though, do not conform to the usual pattern. Why do you think they adopted federalism?

Nation	Population (millions)	Area (million sq. mi.)	Major Racial or Ethnic Groups	Major Languages	Major Religions
Argentina	29.6	1.10	European ancestry (97%)	Spanish	Roman Catholic (92%)
Australia	15.3	7.70	European ancestry (97%)	English	Anglican (36%) Roman Catholic (33%)
Austria	7.6	0.76	Germanic (98%)	German	Roman Catholic (85%)
Brazil	122.0	3.29	Caucasian (60%) Mixed (30%) Black (8%) Indian (2%)	Portuguese	Roman Catholic (93%)
Canada	25.2	9.92	British (45%) French (29%) Other European (23%) Indian, Eskimo (1.5%)	English French	Roman Catholic (45%) United Church (18%) Anglican (12%)
Federal Republic of Germany	59.0	0.25	German	German	Roman Catholic (45%) Protestant (44%)

alism reveals that it has not always been easy to draw a line between what is "great and aggregate" and what is "local and particular."^{*}

Federalism offered a solution to the problem of diversity in America. It also provided a new political model. Although federal systems are fairly rare, as Compared With What? 4.1 shows, a number of other nations have adopted them, often to deal with their own special forms of diversity.

* The everyday phrase Americans use to refer to their central government—*federal government*—muddies the waters even more. Technically speaking, we have a *federal system of government* that includes both national and state governments. To avoid confusion from here on, we use the term *national government* rather than *federal government* when we are talking about the central government.

Nation	Population (millions)	Area (million sq. mi.)	Major Racial or Ethnic Groups	Major Languages	Major Religions
India	746.0	3.28	Indo/Aryan (72%) Dravidian (25%) Mongoloid (2%)	Hindu English 14 others	Hindu (83%) Moslem (11%) Sikh Buddhist (2.6%)
Malaysia	14.1	0.33	Malay (50%) Chinese (36%) Indian (10%)	Malay Chinese English Tamil	Muslim Hindu Buddhist Confucian Christian
Mexico	76.0	0.76	Indian-Spanish (55%) American Indian (29%) Caucasian (10%)	Spanish	Christian (97%)
Switzerland	6.5	0.02	Mixed European	German (65%) French (18%) Italian (12%) Romansh (1%)	Roman Catholic (49%) Protestant (48%)
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	273.8	8.65	Russian (52%) Ukrainian (6%) Uzbek (5%) Belorussian (4%)	Russian 18 others	Russian Orthodox Muslim
United States	226.0	3.54	Caucasian (83%) Black (12%) Other (5%)	English	Protestant (65%) Roman Catholic (25%) Jewish (2%)
Yugoslavia	23.1	1.00	Serbian (35%) Croatian (19%) Muslim (8.9%) Slovene (7.8%) Albanian (7.7%) Macedonians (5.9%) Yugoslavs (5.4%) Montenegrins (2.5%)	Serbo-Croatian Slovene Macedonian Albanian Hungarian Italian	Eastern Orthodox (41%) Roman Catholic (32%) Muslim (12%)

The Mythology of American Federalism

The founding of America is a comparatively recent, well-documented event; yet, like the founding of Rome and of other ancient states, the beginning of the American republic is shrouded in political mythology. There are truths in these stories, truths that can help us understand people's beliefs and current political practices. The difficulty is in determining just what these truths are.

Federalism in America and the political maneuvering that gave birth to it have given us two very different myths. The first, called **dual federalism**, sees the Constitution as a compact among sovereign states. Of primary importance here are **states' rights**, a concept that reserves to the states all rights not specifically conferred on the national government. According to the myth of dual federalism, a rigid wall separates

nation and states. The second myth—**cooperative federalism**—plays down the importance of the states. It describes the Constitution as an agreement made by the people and emphasizes their role as citizens of both nation and state. According to the myth of cooperative federalism, if there is a barrier between federal and state power, it is highly permeable and flexible. Traditionally, dual federalism has been associated with conservatives; cooperative federalism, with liberals. But this distinction may no longer be as sharp as it once was.

A critical difference between dual federalism and cooperative federalism is the way they interpret two sections of the Constitution that set out the terms of the relationship between the national and state governments. Article I, Section 8, lists the enumerated powers of the Congress, then concludes with the **elastic clause**, which gives Congress the power to “make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers.” The Tenth Amendment says that “powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”

Dual, or “Layer Cake,” Federalism

In his first inaugural address, President Reagan noted that “the federal government did not create the states; the states created the federal government.” In making this statement, Reagan was affirming his belief in dual federalism, in states’ rights and sovereignty. Dual federalism portrays the states as powerful components of the federal system—in some ways, the equals of the national government. After all, if the states created the nation, by implication, they can set limits on the activities of the national government. Proponents of states’ rights believe that the powers of the national government should be interpreted very narrowly. They insist that, despite the elastic clause, the activities of Congress should be confined to the enumerated powers. And they support their view by quoting the Tenth Amendment.

Political scientists use a metaphor to describe dual federalism. They call it *layer cake federalism*. The powers and functions of national and state governments are distinct and separate—as distinct and separate as the layers of a cake (see Figure 4.1). Each government is supreme in its own “layer,” its own sphere of action; the two layers are distinct; and the dimensions of each layer are fixed by the Constitution.

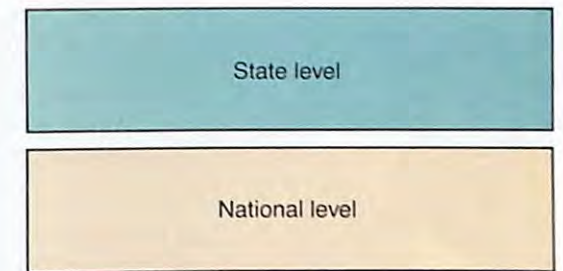
This understanding of federalism has found its way into Supreme Court opinions, particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, in *Hammer v. Dagenhart* (1918), which declared that child labor laws were unconstitutional, Justice William Day wrote that “the powers not expressly delegated to the national government are reserved” to the states and to the people.³ In his wording, Day revised the Constitution slightly and changed the intent of the framers: The Tenth Amendment does not say “expressly.” The framers purposely left the word *expressly* out of the amendment because they believed they could not possibly specify every power that might be needed in the future to run the government. Those powers not specifically mentioned, but

The Myths and Their Metaphors
The two views of federalism can be represented graphically.

Figure 4.1

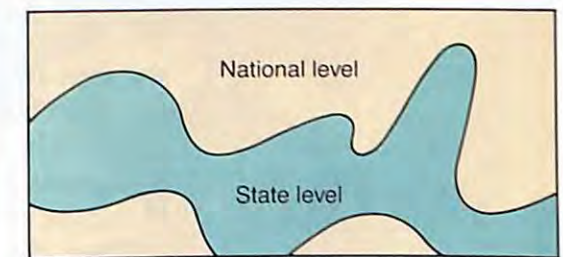
*The Myth of Dual Federalism:
The Layer Cake Metaphor*

Citizens cutting into the political system will find clear differences between state and national powers, functions, and responsibilities



*The Myth of Cooperative Federalism:
The Marble Cake Metaphor*

Citizens cutting into the political system at any point will find national and state powers, functions, and responsibilities mixed and mingled



necessary for the implementation of the enumerated powers, are called the **implied powers**.⁴

Dual federalism—the myth that underlies the layer cake metaphor—has been challenged on historical and other grounds. Some critics argue that if the national government is really a creation of the states, it is a creation of only thirteen states—those that ratified the Constitution. The other thirty-seven states were admitted after the national government came into being and were created by that government out of land it had acquired. Another challenge has to do with the ratification process. Remember, the original thirteen states ratified the Constitution in special conventions, not in state legislatures. Ratification, then, was an act of the *people*, not the *states*. The question of just where the people fit into the federal system is not handled very well by dual federalism. The full text of the Tenth Amendment says that powers not given to the national government are reserved to the states or *to the people*. These last four words are very important to critics of the states’ rights view. Why can’t the people assign more or less power to the national government? Why shouldn’t the people exercise power or seek protection of their rights through the national government rather than through state government?

Cooperative, or “Marble Cake,” Federalism

The myth of cooperative federalism revolves around the idea that the people are citizens of both nation and state. The emphasis here is on the elastic clause, the phrase in Article I, Section 8, that grants the national government the power to make laws that are *necessary and proper*, and the role of the national government. Unlike dual federalism, cooperative federalism blurs the distinction between national and state powers. The metaphor we use to describe this kind of federalism is a

marble cake. The national and state governments do not act in separate spheres; they are intermingled. Some scholars argue that the layer cake metaphor has never accurately described the American political structure.⁵ National and state governments have many common objectives and have often cooperated to achieve them. In the nineteenth century, for example, cooperation—not separation—made it possible to develop transportation systems and to establish land grant colleges. The layer cake might be a good model of what dual federalists *think* the relationship between national and state governments should be, but it does not square with the facts of American history.

Marble cake federalism is not without its critics. They insist that the founders made a distinction between national and state powers, a distinction that marble cake federalism erases.

In fact, at different times in our history, one or the other of these metaphors has been considered an appropriate description of the relationships between levels of government. Conservatives, in their efforts to limit the scope of the national government, have given credence to the layer cake metaphor. At other times, liberals, using the national government to bring about equality, have made the marble cake metaphor more accurate. The truth about federalism in the United States, then, isn't what's written or implied in the Constitution. The Constitution is only the starting point in the debate. The real meaning of American federalism can be found in its implementation.

THE DYNAMICS OF FEDERALISM: LEGAL STICKS AND FINANCIAL CARROTS

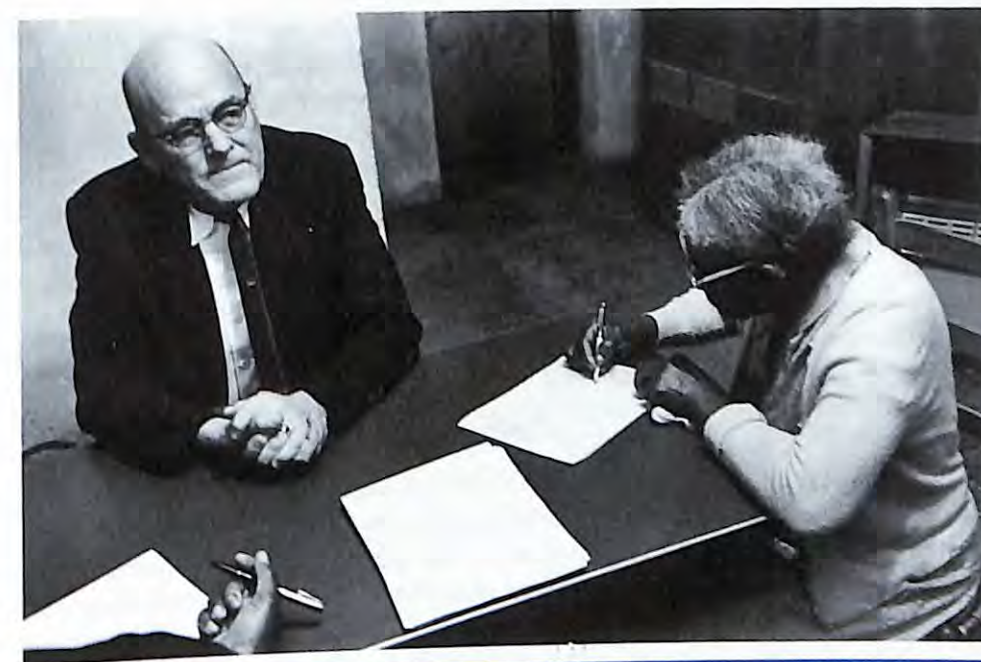
Although the Constitution defines a kind of federalism, the actual balance of power between nation and states has always been more a matter of politics than of formal authority. A discussion of federalism, then, must do more than simply list the powers the Constitution assigns the levels of government. The balance of power has shifted substantially since President Madison agonized over the proper role the national government should play in funding roads. Today, that government has assumed functions never dreamed of in the nineteenth century.

Why has power shifted so dramatically from the states to the national government? The answer lies in historical circumstances, not debates over constitutional theory. For example, the greatest test of states' rights came when several Southern states attempted to secede from the Union. The threat of secession challenged the national government's supremacy, a supremacy that Northern armies established militarily on the battlefields of the Civil War. But the Civil War by no means settled all the questions about relations between governments in the United States. Many more remained to be answered, and new issues kept cropping up.

Some changes in the balance of power were the product of constitutional amendments. Several amendments have had an enormous impact, either direct or indirect, on the shape of the federal system. For example, the due process and equal protection clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment (1868) limited states' rights, as did the income tax mandated

Signing Up to Vote

An elderly black woman registers to vote. Compared with actual voting, registering is a time-consuming activity. After this woman's state failed to do the job, the national government stepped in to protect her rights under the Voting Rights Act of 1965.



by the Sixteenth Amendment (1913) and the Seventeenth Amendment's provision for the direct election of senators (1913).*

But most of the national government's power has come to it through legislation, judicial interpretation, and political bartering. There is a saying that there are two ways to get things done, with a stick or a carrot. The national government has used both sticks (legislation, judicial interpretation) and carrots (financial incentives) to expand its power. Here we look at these tools of political change.

Legislation and the Elastic Clause

The elastic clause of the Constitution gives Congress the power to make all laws that are "necessary and proper" to carry out its responsibilities. By using this power in combination with its enumerated powers, Congress has been able to increase the scope of the national government tremendously over the last two centuries. Change has often come in times of crisis and national emergency—during the Civil War, the Great Depression, the world wars. The role of the national government has grown as it has responded to needs and demands that state and local governments were unwilling or unable to meet.

Legislation is one of the sticks the national government has used to achieve goals at the state level, to force the states to comply. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is a good example. Section 2 of Article I of the Constitution gives the states the power to set voter qualifications. But the Fifteenth Amendment (1870) provides that no person should be denied the right to vote "on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." Before the Voting Rights Act, states could not specifically

* The Fourteenth Amendment was itself a product of the Civil War.

deny blacks the right to vote, but they could require that voters pass literacy tests or pay poll taxes, requirements that virtually disenfranchised blacks in many states. The Voting Rights Act was designed to correct this political inequality. It gives officials of the national government the power to decide whether individuals are qualified to vote and requires that qualified individuals be allowed to vote in all elections—including primaries and national, state, and local elections. The constitutional authority for the act was found in the elastic clause and in the second section of the Fifteenth Amendment, which gives Congress the power to enforce the amendment through “appropriate legislation.”

Judicial Interpretation

The Voting Rights Act was not a unanimous hit. Its critics adopted the language of dual federalism and insisted that the Constitution gives the states the power to determine voter qualifications. Its supporters claimed that the Fifteenth Amendment guarantee of voting rights takes precedence over states’ rights and gives the national government new responsibilities. In this instance, the states tried to defend their freedom to set voter qualifications against the national government’s effort to promote political equality.

The conflict was ultimately resolved by the Supreme Court, the arbiter of the federal system. The Court settles disputes over the powers of the national and state governments by deciding whether actions of the national or state governments are constitutional (see Chapter 13). In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Supreme Court often decided in favor of the states; however, since 1937, it has almost always supported the national government in contests involving the balance of power between nation and states.

The growth of national power has been accomplished through a variety of routes. One is the Supreme Court’s interpretation of the Constitution’s **commerce clause**. The third clause of Article I, Section 8 states that “Congress shall have the power . . . to regulate Commerce . . . among the several States. . . .” In early Court decisions Chief Justice John Marshall (1801–1835) interpreted the word “Commerce” broadly to include virtually every form of commercial activity. The clause’s grant of commerce power to the national government substantially withdrew that power from the states. Later decisions by the Court attempted to restrict the national commerce power, but events such as the Great Depression necessitated an enlargement of it. Today, the only limit on the exercise of the commerce power is Congress itself.

During Chief Justice Earl Warren’s term (1953–1969), the Court used the Fourteenth Amendment to extend various provisions of the Bill of Rights to the states, shifting power from the states to the national government. Court decisions seriously reduced the states’ freedom to decide what constitutes due process of law within their jurisdictions. For example, in one decision, the Court ordered that citizens apprehended by the police must be informed of their constitutional rights and that the arresting officer must preserve those rights.⁶ Through the Supreme Court, the national government set minimum standards for due process in

criminal cases, standards that the states would have to meet. These standards provide equality before the law for individuals who are suspected of crimes, but critics argue that they hamper state officials in trying to maintain order.

A series of decisions concerning reapportionment—resetting the boundaries of electoral districts—also eroded the power of the states in the early 1960s.⁷ Until that time, states had set the boundaries of voting districts, but some had failed to adjust those boundaries to reflect changes in population. As a result, in certain areas, small numbers of rural voters were able to elect as many representatives as were large numbers of urban voters. In deciding cases involving reapportionment, the Court set down a new standard of one person, one vote and forced the states to apply this principle in redrawing their districts and apportioning their legislatures.

In the due process and reapportionment cases, the Supreme Court protected individual rights, in the process championing political equality. But remember, the Supreme Court is part of the national government. When it defends the rights of an individual against a state, it also substitutes a national standard for the state standard governing that relationship.

Grants-in-Aid

In the last three decades, Washington’s use of financial “carrots” has rivaled its use of legislation and judicial interpretation as a means of shaping relationships between national and state governments. Since the 1960s, state and local governments have looked to Washington for money more and more often. In 1960, the national government provided 15 percent of the funds spent by state and local governments; by 1980, it was providing 23 percent of those funds. The principal method the national government uses to make money available to the states is through grants-in-aid.

A **grant-in-aid** is money paid by one level of government to another, to be spent for a specific purpose. Most grants-in-aid come with standards or requirements prescribed by Congress. Many are awarded on a matching basis; that is, recipients must make some contribution of their own, which is then matched by the national government. Grants-in-aid take two general forms: categorical grants and block grants.

Categorical grants are targeted for very specific purposes, and restrictions on their use often leave the recipient government relatively little discretion. There are two kinds of categorical grants: formula grants and project grants. **Formula grants**, as their name implies, are distributed according to a particular formula, which specifies who is eligible for the grant and how much each eligible applicant will receive. The formulas used to distribute grant money vary from one grant to another. They may weigh such factors as state per capita income, number of school-age children, urban population, and number of families below the poverty line. In 1987, 134 of the 422 categorical grants offered by the national government were formula grants. The remaining 288 grants were **project grants**—grants awarded on the basis of competitive applications.

Table 4.1
Block and Categorical Grants

Block Grants	Recipient
Urban mass transit	Local government
Community development (two grants)	State and local governments
Elementary, secondary, and vocational education	State government
Job training for disadvantaged adults and youth	State government
Social services	State government
Community services	State government
Preventive health and health services	State government
Alcohol, drug abuse, and mental health services	State government
Alcohol and drug abuse treatment and rehabilitation	State government
Maternal and child health services	State government
Low-income energy assistance	State government
Criminal justice	State government
Examples of Categorical Grants	Recipient
Highway beautification: control of outdoor advertising and junkyards	State government
Vocational education: consumer and homemaking education	State government
Library literacy	State and local governments
Urban park and recreation recovery	Local government

In contrast with categorical grants, **block grants** are awarded for broad, general purposes. They allow recipients considerable freedom in deciding how to allocate money to individual programs. While a categorical grant might be given to promote a very specific activity—say, ethnic heritage studies—a block grant could be offered for elementary, secondary, and vocational education. The state or local government receiving the block grant would then choose the specific educational programs to fund with it. The recipient might use some of the money to support ethnic heritage studies and some to fund consumer education programs. Or the recipient might choose to put all of the money into consumer education programs and spend nothing on ethnic heritage studies. Table 4.1 lists all thirteen block grants and some of the categorical grants made in 1987.

Grants-in-aid are a method of redistributing income. Money is collected by the national government from citizens of all fifty states, then allocated to other citizens, supposedly for worthwhile social purposes. Many grants have worked to remove gross inequalities among states and their citizens. But the formulas used to redistribute this income are not impartial; they are themselves highly political and often subject to debate in Congress.

Whatever its form, grant money comes with strings attached. Many of the strings are there to ensure that the money is used for the purpose

ient may be required to adopt particular accounting procedures or set up special agencies to guarantee that the funds are administered properly.

The national government may also attach other restrictions to the money it grants. Often, these restrictions are designed to achieve some broad national goal, a goal that is not always closely related to the specific purpose of the grant. For example, as we have seen, the Highway Act of 1984 reduced the amount of money available to states that allowed those under age twenty-one to purchase and consume alcoholic beverages. Other grants prohibit discrimination in the activities funded through them. States have been more than willing to accept these limitations. Returning again to the case of the Highway Act. By March 1988, every state in the nation had approved legislation setting twenty-one as the minimum drinking age. The carrot of financial aid has proved to be a powerful incentive for states to relinquish the freedom to set their own standards and to accept those set by the national government.

THE DEVELOPING CONCEPT OF
FEDERALISM: FROM LAYER CAKE TO
MARBLE CAKE

A student of federalism once remarked that “each generation faced with new problems has had to work out its own version of federalism.” Succeeding generations have used sticks and carrots in varying degrees to shift the balance of power back and forth between national and state governments.

McCulloch v. Maryland

Early in the nineteenth century, the nationalist interpretation of federalism triumphed over states’ rights. In 1819, under Chief Justice Marshall, the Supreme Court expanded the role of the national government in its decision in *McCulloch v. Maryland*.⁸ The Court was asked to rule whether Congress had the power to establish a national bank and, if so, whether states had the power to tax that bank. In writing the majority opinion, Marshall supported a broad interpretation of the elastic clause: “Let the end be legitimate, let it be within the scope of the constitution, and all means which are appropriate, which are plainly adapted to that end, which are not prohibited, but consistent with the letter and spirit of the constitution, are constitutional.”

The Court clearly agreed that Congress had the power to charter a bank. But did the states—in this case, Maryland—have the power to tax the bank? Arguing that “the power to tax is the power to destroy,” Marshall insisted that states could not tax the national government because the powers of the national government came, not from the states, but from the people. Marshall here was embracing cooperative federalism, which sees a direct relationship between the people and the national government, with no need for the states to act as intermediaries. To assume that states had the power to tax the national government would be to give them supremacy over the national government. In that case,

Marshall wrote, "the declaration that the constitution, and the laws made in pursuance thereof, shall be the supreme law of the land is empty and unmeaning declamation." The framers of the Constitution did not intend to create a meaningless document, he reasoned. Therefore, they must have meant to give the national government all the powers necessary to carry out its assigned functions, even if those powers are only implied.

States' Rights and Dual Federalism

Roger B. Taney became Chief Justice in 1836, and during his tenure (1836–1864), the balance of power began to shift back toward the states. The Taney Court recognized firm limits on the powers of the national government. As Taney saw it, the Constitution spoke "not only in the same words but with the same meaning and intent with which it spoke when it came from the framers." In the infamous *Dred Scott* decision (1857), for example, the Court decided that Congress had no power to prohibit slavery in the territories.⁹

Many people assume that the Civil War was fought over slavery. It was not. The real issue was the character of the federal union, of federalism itself. At the time of the Civil War, regional variations between Northern and Southern states were considerable. The Southern economy was based on labor-intensive agriculture, very different from the mechanized manufacturing that was developing in the North. As a result, Southerners wanted cheap manufactured goods and cheap plantation labor. This led them to support both low tariffs on imported goods and slavery. Northerners, to protect their own economy, wanted high tariffs. When they sought national legislation that threatened Southern inter-

Made in the U.S.A.

A young factory worker in the early part of this century. The Supreme Court decided in 1918 that Congress had no power to limit child labor. That power belonged to the states, which resisted imposing limits for fear that such legislation would drive business to other (less restrictive) states.



ests, Southerners demanded states' rights. They even introduced the theory of **nullification**—the idea that a state could declare a particular action of the national government null and void. The Civil War rendered the idea of nullification null and void, but it did not settle the balance between national and state power.

In the decades after the Civil War, the Supreme Court continued to place limits on national power, particularly when the national government attempted to regulate industry. Early in the nineteenth century, the Court decided that the national government had supreme power to regulate interstate commerce.¹⁰ Later on, however, the Court rejected the idea that this power could be used to justify policies not directly related to the smooth functioning of interstate commerce—policies such as setting a national minimum wage or abolishing child labor. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the justices were influenced by laissez-faire economic theory, a hands-off approach to business. Time and again the Court ruled that congressional legislation that limited the activities of corporations was unconstitutional because it invaded the domain of the states.

In 1918, for example, when Congress tried to use its power to regulate interstate commerce as the basis for legislation regulating child labor, the Court declared the law unconstitutional. The national government argued that national child labor laws were necessary because individual states would not enact them; to do so would increase the cost of labor in the state, making it less attractive to industry. The Court recognized this argument but was not persuaded, ruling that national legislation regulating child labor ran counter to both the commerce clause (of Article I, Section 8) and the Tenth Amendment. As Justice Day wrote in *Hammer v. Dagenhart*:

The commerce clause was not intended to give Congress a general authority to equalize conditions [of competition between the states]. If Congress can thus regulate matters intrusted to local authority . . . all freedom of commerce will be at an end, and the power of the states over local matters may be eliminated, and thus our system of government practically destroyed.

The New Deal and Its Consequences

It took the Great Depression to test the limits of dual federalism. The problems of the Depression proved too extensive for either state governments or private businesses to handle. So the national government assumed a heavy share of responsibility for providing relief and directing efforts toward economic recovery. Under the "New Deal," President Franklin D. Roosevelt's response to the Depression, Congress enacted various emergency relief programs to restore economic activity and help the unemployed. Many of these measures required the cooperation of national and state governments. For example, the national government offered funds to stimulate state relief efforts. To receive these funds, however, states were usually required to provide administrative supervision or to contribute some money of their own. Relief efforts were

At first, the Supreme Court's view of the Depression was different from that of the other branches of the national government. The justices believed the Depression was an accumulation of local problems, not a national problem demanding national action. In the Court's opinion, the whole structure of federalism was threatened when collections of local troubles were treated as one national problem. Justice Owen Roberts, in the decision in *United States v. Butler* (1936), wrote: "It does not help that local conditions throughout the nation have created a situation of national concern; for this is but to say that whenever there is a widespread similarity of local conditions, Congress may ignore constitutional limitations on its own powers and usurp those reserved to the states."¹² In this decision and others, the Court struck down several pieces of regulatory legislation, including the National Industrial Recovery Act, which would have regulated wages, working hours, and business competition.

In 1937, though, with no change in personnel, the Court began to alter its course. It upheld the Social Security Act and the National Labor Relations Act—both New Deal measures. Perhaps the Court had studied the 1936 election returns and was responding to the new nationalist mood in the country. In any event, the Court gave up its effort to set a rigid boundary between national and state power. Only a few years earlier, the Supreme Court had based its thinking about federalism on the Tenth Amendment; but in 1941, Justice Harlan Stone referred to the Tenth Amendment as "a truism that all is retained that has not been surrendered."¹³ In short, the Court agreed that the layer cake was stale. From then on, the division of power in the federal system became less relevant, and the relationship between governments became increasingly important.

Some call the New Deal era "revolutionary." There is no doubt that the period was critical in reshaping federalism in the United States. The national and state governments had cooperated before, but the extent of nation-state interaction during Franklin Roosevelt's administration clearly made the marble cake the more accurate metaphor for American federalism. In addition, the size of the national government and its budget increased tremendously. But perhaps the most significant change was in the way Americans thought about both their problems and the role of the national government in solving them. Difficulties that at one time had been seen as personal or local problems now became national problems, requiring national solutions. The *general welfare*, broadly defined, had become a legitimate concern of the national government.

In other respects, however, the New Deal was not very revolutionary. Congress, for example, did not claim that any new powers were needed to deal with the nation's economic problems; it simply used the constitutional powers it had to suit the circumstances. And from the late 1930s on, the Supreme Court upheld Congress's work.

Desegregation and the War on Poverty

During the 1950s and 1960s, the national government assumed the task of promoting social equality by combating racism and poverty. Both of these problems had seemed impossible to solve at the state level.

Matters of race relations had generally been left to the states, which more or less ignored them despite the constitutional amendments passed after the Civil War. Moreover, when the Supreme Court adopted the separate-but-equal doctrine in 1896, states were free to do as much—or as little—as they pleased about racial inequality.¹⁴

In 1954, however, in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court decided that separate was inherently unequal.¹⁵ This put the national government in the position of ordering the integration of public schools. As the civil rights movement focused increasing attention on the problems of discrimination, Congress passed two important pieces of legislation: the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Through these acts, the national government used its legislative stick to outlaw racial discrimination in employment, in public accommodations, and in voter qualifications. The acts themselves sharply limited states' rights where the effect of those rights had been to deny equality.

In the 1960s, President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty generated an enormous amount of social legislation and a massive increase in the scope of the national government. In an attempt to provide equality of opportunity and improve the quality of life throughout the United States, the national government used financial carrots—money—to introduce a number of new programs, including vastly increased aid to higher education, aid to elementary and secondary schools, school breakfasts and lunches, food stamps, and a huge array of economic development, public service, and employment-training projects. To administer these programs, government bureaucracies were enlarged, on both national and

Reach Out and Touch Someone

The levels of government in the federal system are now intertwined. Here, in an intergovernmental conference call, New York Senators Daniel Moynihan and Alphonse D'Amato discuss funding projects with New York Governor Mario Cuomo and New York City Mayor Ed Koch.



state levels. In fact, during the 1960s and 1970s, state bureaucracies grew even faster than the national bureaucracy.

Johnson's recipe for marble cake federalism included some new ingredients. Before 1960, nearly all intergovernmental assistance (that is, aid from one level of government to another) had gone from the national government to state governments. But the War on Poverty often gave aid directly to local governments or even to community groups.

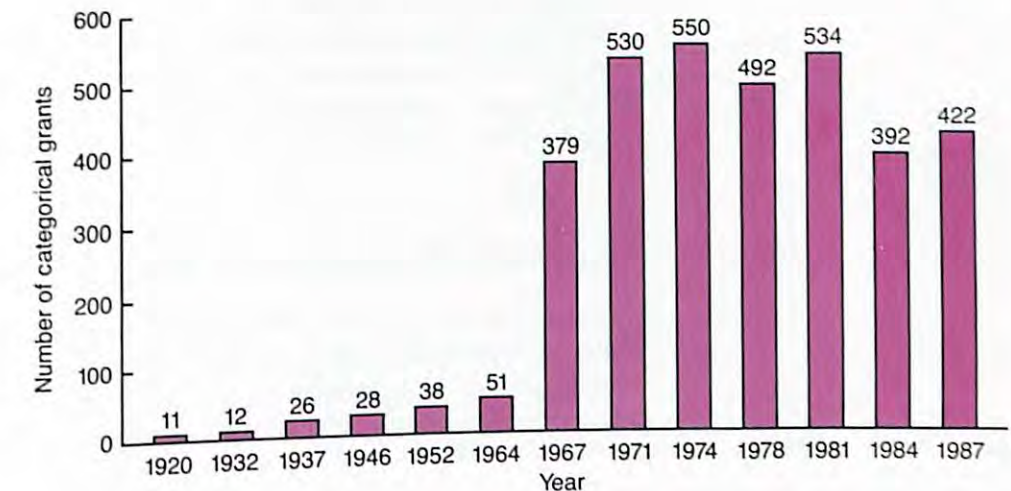
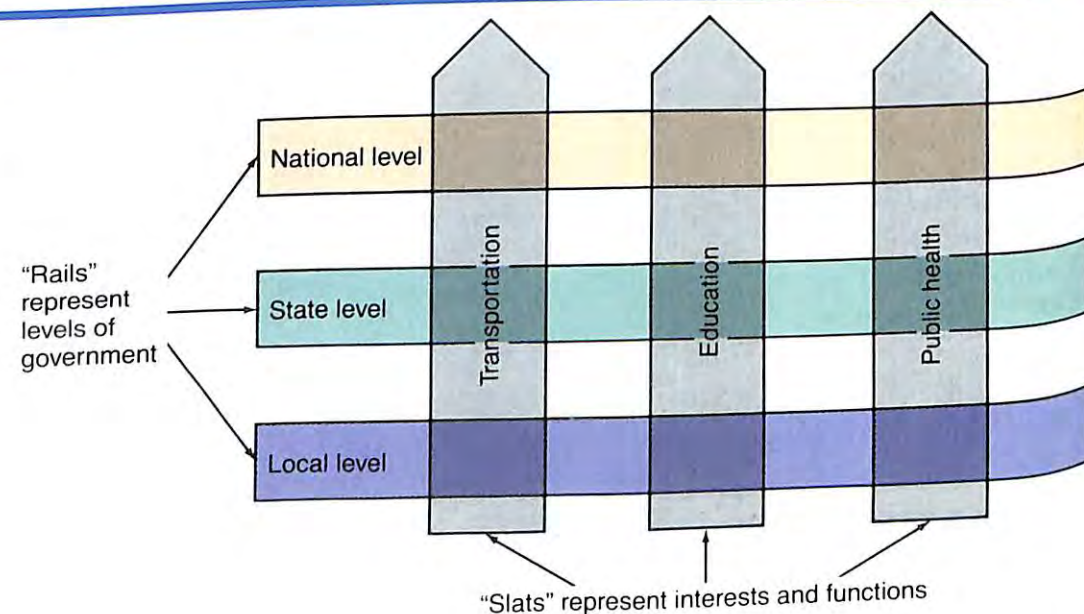
As the role of the national government grew larger and was more generally accepted, the focus of the debate over federalism changed. National and state governments were no longer separate, distinct layers; they interacted. But how? The search for answers to this question placed **intergovernmental relations** at center stage. The various levels of American government have become highly interdependent. The study of intergovernmental relations looks at that interdependence and the connections among personnel and policies at different levels of government. It also examines the ways that national, state, and local governments influence one another.

The political dynamics of intergovernmental relations since the 1960s have led to a new metaphor for federalism: **picket fence federalism** (see Figure 4.2). Here, the fence rails are the levels of government—national, state, and local; and the fence slats are the interests of lobbies and groups, both inside and outside of government, and the functions of government. The communities of interest (or functions) represented by each slat make contact at each of the three levels of government. They are able to share information, develop common standards, and exert pressure on each level of government. Government officials themselves may move along the interest slats to influence officials on other rails. On a typical trip to Washington, for instance, the head of a state department of education might have a morning meeting with members of the state's congressional delegation to make them aware of the state's educational needs and priorities; then go on to lunch with lobbyists from the National Education Association (NEA) before testifying in front of a

Figure 4.2

Picket Fence Federalism

The picket fence model shows how functions cross government lines and also connect the officials who work at different levels of government.



The Growth and Decline of Categorical Grants

National government programs increased as a result of the New Deal and the War on Poverty. Cuts in programs during the Carter and Reagan years brought a temporary halt in the growth of programs, but by the late 1980s, new programs were again being added to meet new needs. (Sources: Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations [ACIR], *The Federal Role in the Federal System: The Dynamics of Growth* [Washington, D.C., 1980], pp. 120–121; ACIR, *Significant Features of Fiscal Federalism* [Washington, D.C., 1983], p. 120; and ACIR, *A Catalogue of Federal Grant-in-Aid Programs to State and Local Governments, Grants Funded FY 1987* [Washington, D.C., 1987], p. 1.)

Figure 4.3

congressional committee on education and meeting with officials from the U.S. Department of Education. Our tired official might return to the office the next day to find an education chief from a neighboring state on the phone, hoping to find out how the visit went.

Since the 1960s, the national government has provided money for all sorts of local programs—rat control, jellyfish control, crime control, bike path construction, urban gardening, rural fire protection, solid waste disposal, home insulation, library services (see Figure 4.3). Far from being unresponsive, Congress became hyperresponsive. And its willingness to spend national funds increased the importance of existing interest groups and led to the creation of new ones. The result was not just pluralist democracy, but *hyperpluralism*—every conceivable interest had its group. Many smaller (and weaker) state groups united nationally to lobby for national solutions (via national money) to their problems. A number of state and local governments saw a need to lobby for their own interests, perhaps in self-defense.

The growth of government programs, the hyperresponsiveness of Congress, and the pressure of interest groups created a federal system that critics described as "overloaded and out of control." In keeping with that critics described as "overloaded and out of control." In keeping with the bakery-shop metaphors often used to describe federalism, one writer suggested that layer cake federalism and marble cake federalism had given way to "fruitcake" federalism—a federalism that is formless and indestructible, and offers lots of plums for everyone.¹⁶

When the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR), a group created by Congress to monitor the federal system,

reviewed the operation of that system in 1980, it concluded that fruitcake federalism was dysfunctional, it just did not work. Over the last two decades, the commission said, the system of intergovernmental relations had become "more pervasive, more intrusive, more unmanageable, more ineffective, more costly and more unaccountable."¹⁷

THE PENDULUM SWINGS BACK . . . MAYBE

Every president since Richard Nixon has expressed disenchantment with the hyperpluralist system of intergovernmental relations. Every president since Nixon has pledged to cut the size of the bureaucracy and return power to the states. Yet reform has been difficult to implement.

Nixon's New Federalism: Revenue Sharing

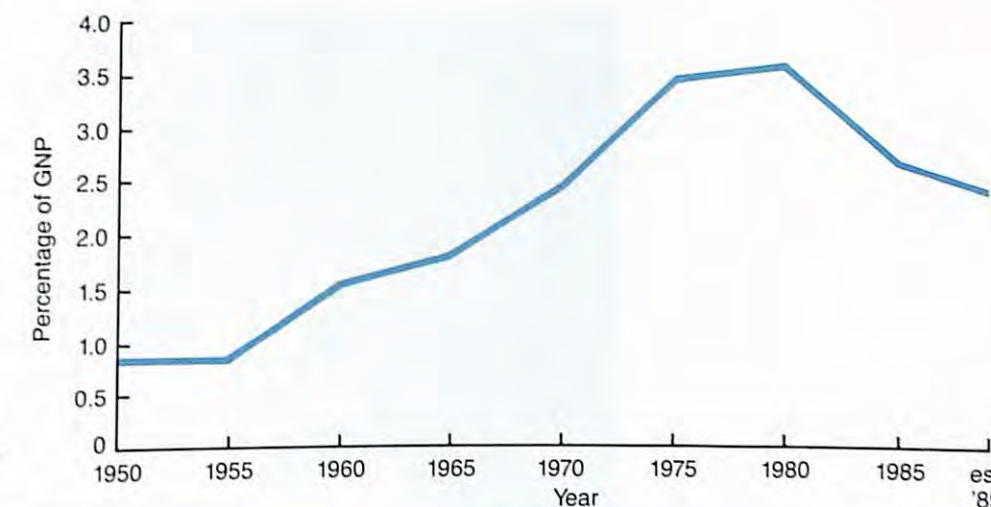
When Nixon came to office in 1969, he pledged to change a national government he characterized as "overly centralized, overbureaucratized . . . unresponsive as well as inefficient." He dubbed his solution to the problem "new Federalism" and claimed it would channel "power, funds and authority . . . to those governments closest to the people." He expected New Federalism to help restore control of the nation's destiny "by returning a greater share of control to state and local authorities."¹⁸

The centerpiece of Nixon's New Federalism was *revenue sharing*, in which the national government would turn tax revenues over to the states and localities to spend as they pleased. The plan had two parts: general revenue sharing and special revenue sharing. **General revenue sharing** provided new money to be used as state and local governments saw fit, with very few strings attached. Initially, Congress was quite willing to fund the general revenue sharing program. Because it was a new program, no one was required to give up anything for it. And, when general revenue sharing began in 1972, many states and cities were in the middle of financial crises. The program was very popular with the governments it helped, but over the years members of Congress became less enamored of it. They did not have the same control over revenue sharing funds that they had over the more traditional categorical grants. As a result, Congress did not allow the funding for general revenue sharing to grow as categorical grant funds had. In 1986, general revenue sharing was phased out completely.

The second part of Nixon's New Federalism, **special revenue sharing**, was a plan to consolidate existing categorical grant programs. Money available under several categorical programs in a particular area (for example, health services) would be combined into one large block grant. But Congress was reluctant to lose the political credit and control it had under the existing grant system. In addition, the dynamics of intergovernmental relations worked against the consolidation of programs: Interest groups lobbied hard to keep their pet projects from being consolidated. All of this combined to slow the progress of special revenue sharing during the Nixon years.

Nixon's New Federalism, then, was not very successful in stemming the flow of power from the states to the national government. The dollar

National Government Grants as a Percentage of Gross National Product
From 1955 to 1978, national government grants consumed an ever-increasing share of the gross national product (GNP).
(Source: Special Analyses of the Budget of the United States Government [annual].)
Figure 4.4



amounts of aid continued to grow, and the programs funded continued to increase in number and kind. The national government gave more aid to the states, and that aid carried more and more strings.

The perception that the federal system was bloated and out of control began to take hold. In 1976, Jimmy Carter campaigned for president as an outsider who promised to reduce the size and cost of the national government. And he did have some success. As Figure 4.4 shows, after 1978, federal aid to states and localities actually did begin to drop as a percentage of the gross national product (GNP), the total value of all goods and services produced in the nation in a year.

Reagan's New Federalism: Budget Reductions

Ronald Reagan took office in 1981 promising a "new New Federalism" that would "restore a proper constitutional relationship between the federal, state and local governments." He criticized the contemporary version of federalism, charging that "the federal system had been bent out of shape." The national government had become the senior partner in intergovernmental relations, treating "elected state and local officials as if they were nothing more than administrative agents for federal authority."

Reagan's commitment to reduce taxes as well as government spending meant he could not offer the carrot of new funding to make his New Federalism palatable. He did resurrect an element of Nixon's New Federalism, however—the use of block grants. In the first year of the Reagan administration, Congress agreed to combine seventy-seven categorical grants into nine block grants. To build support for the plan, Reagan emphasized the freedom state officials would have in using their block grant money. He pointed out that the elimination of restrictive categorical programs would reduce administrative burdens, and, as a result, state and local programs could be run at lower cost. State officials were enthusiastic about the prospect of having greater control over grant funds; they were less enthusiastic when they realized that the amounts they



Cities YES! Missiles NO!
Under the Reagan administration's domestic policy, New Federalism meant cuts in national government funds for cities. Reagan's priorities placed defense spending ahead of domestic spending.

received would be cut by approximately 25 percent. The share of state and local bills footed by the national government began to fall (see Figure 4.5).

In 1982, Reagan proposed a more thorough overhaul of the federal system. This time he offered a *program swap*, in which some forty-four programs previously funded or administered by the national government would be put under state control. At the same time, the national government would take over responsibility for Medicaid, a program of health care for the poor. Initially, Washington would turn back to the states revenues raised through various federal excise and energy taxes, providing them with the money they needed to run the new programs. Eventually, however, the states would be expected to pick up the costs themselves or eliminate the programs.

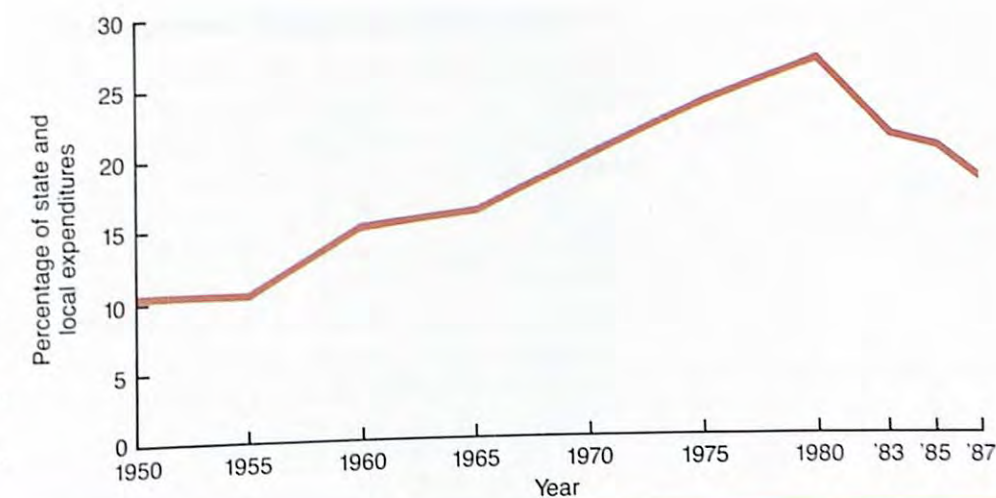
Reagan's proposed exchange of programs aroused intense opposition. He could not build a winning coalition in support of the plan, and, as a result, his most ambitious effort to remake American federalism failed.

National Government Grants as a Percentage of State and Local Expenditures

States and localities had looked to Washington to provide larger and larger shares of their expenditures. But Reagan's New Federalism and budget cuts forced them to come up with more of their own money.

(Source: Special Analyses of the Budget of the United States Government [annual].)

Figure 4.5



Furthermore, after his initial success in 1981, the momentum behind Reagan's efforts to reduce the proliferation of categorical grant programs also slowed considerably. In fact, as Figure 4.3 shows, the number of categorical grants is again on the increase. Many grant programs have been added to respond to new problems and national priorities—for example, halting the spread of AIDS and fighting drug abuse.

If the Reagan administration did not achieve a wholesale reorganization of the federal system, it did prompt a reevaluation of the role of the national government in that system. For example, in the years before Reagan took office, the national government had been used to foster greater economic equality through the redistribution of wealth. The national government played a large part in setting eligibility requirements and benefit levels for food stamps, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), and other programs that help the poor. Liberals preferred to use this centralized power to set minimum standards because the national government was willing to do more for the poor than many individual states would have chosen to do had they been left completely to their own devices. But when conservatives, who did not share this commitment to equality, came to power in Washington, these very aid programs proved most vulnerable. Many of Reagan's budget reductions came about by raising eligibility requirements and cutting available benefits of programs designed to assist those living in poverty. As a result, "in the final analysis, Reagan's cuts in federal aid . . . fell disproportionately on one segment of the population: the poor."¹⁹

OTHER GOVERNMENTS IN THE FEDERAL SYSTEM

We have concentrated in this chapter on the roles the national and state governments play in shaping the federal system. Although the Constitution explicitly recognizes just national and state governments, the American federal system has spawned a multitude of local governments as well. In a recent count, the number exceeded eighty-two thousand!

The Kinds of Local Governments

Americans are citizens of both nation and state, but they also come under the jurisdiction of various local government units. These units include **municipal governments**, the governments of cities and towns. Municipalities, in turn, are located in (or may contain or share boundaries with) counties, which are administered by **county governments**. In addition, most Americans also live in a **school district**, which is responsible for administering local elementary and secondary educational programs. They also may be served by one or more **special districts**, government units created to perform particular functions, often when those functions are best performed across jurisdictional boundaries. Examples of special districts include the Port Authority of New York, the Chicago Sanitary District, and the Southeast Pennsylvania Transit Authority.

These local governments are created by state governments either in their constitutions or through legislation. This means their organization,

Hizzoner, the Mayor.

Her Honor, the Mayor.

A mayor is the elected chief executive and ceremonial officer of a city. In some modest-sized cities, mayors serve part-time. Many big-city mayors rise to national prominence, though no mayor has yet made the leap from city hall to the White House. These mayors are (clockwise, from top left) Henry Cisneros of San Antonio, Texas; Page Worth of Belfast, Maine; Kurt Schmoke of Baltimore, Maryland; and Vernon Squires of Wilmette, Illinois.



powers, responsibilities, and effectiveness vary considerably from state to state. About forty states provide their cities with various forms of **home rule**—the right to enact and enforce legislation in certain administrative areas. By allowing a measure of self-government, home rule gives cities greater freedom of action than they would otherwise have. In contrast, county governments, which are the main units of local government in rural areas, tend to have relatively little legislative power or none at all. Instead, county governments generally serve as administrative units, performing the specific duties assigned to them under state law.

The functions of national, state, city, and county governments and of school and special districts often overlap. In practice, it is now virtually impossible to distinguish among them by using Madison's criteria of great and aggregate interests and local and particular interests. Consider, for example, the case of the rural health officer, or "sanitarian":

The sanitarian is appointed by the state under merit standards established by the federal government. His base salary comes jointly from state and federal funds, the county provides him with an office and office amenities and pays a portion of his expenses, and the largest city in the county also contributes to his salary by virtue of his appointment as a city plumbing inspector. It is impossible from moment to moment to tell under which governmental hat the sanitarian operates. His work of inspecting the purity of food is carried out under federal standards; but he is enforcing state laws when inspecting commodities that have not been in interstate commerce; and somewhat perversely he also acts under state authority when inspecting milk coming into the county from producing areas across the state border. He is a federal official when impounding impure drugs shipped from a neighboring state; a federal-state officer when distributing typhoid immunization serum; a state officer when enforcing standards of industrial hygiene; a state-local officer when inspecting the city's water supply; and [to complete the circle] a local officer when insisting that the city butchers adopt more hygienic methods of handling their garbage. But he cannot and does not think of himself as acting in these separate capacities. All business in the county that concerns health and sanitation he considers his business.²⁰

If a health officer cannot manage to separate the national, state, city, and county functions he performs, how can the ordinary citizen be expected to make sense of this maze of governments? And does the ordinary citizen really benefit from this maze of governments?

So Many Governments: Advantages and Disadvantages

In theory at least, one benefit of breaking down and localizing government is that it brings government closer to the people, it gives them an opportunity to participate in the political process, to have a direct impact on policy. Localized government conjures up visions of informed citizens deciding their own political fate in small communities—the New England town meeting repeated across the nation. From this perspective, overlapping governments appear compatible with a majoritarian view of democracy.

The reality is somewhat different, however. Studies have shown that people are much more likely to vote in national elections than in local

elections. Voter turnout in local contests tends to be very low, even though the impact of individual votes is much greater. Furthermore, the fragmentation of powers, functions, and responsibilities among national, state, and local governments makes government as a whole seem very complicated and hence less comprehensible and accessible to ordinary people. In addition, citizens who are busy with the daily matter of making a living have only limited time to devote to public affairs, and involvement in politics can be very time consuming. All these factors tend to keep individual citizens out of politics and to make government more responsive to organized groups, which have the resources—time, money, and know-how—to influence policymaking. Instead of bringing government closer to the people and reinforcing majoritarian democracy, then, the system’s enormous complexity tends to encourage pluralism.

Another possible benefit of having many governments is that they enable the country to experiment with new policies on a small scale. New programs or solutions to problems can be tested in one city or state or in a few cities or states. Successful programs can then be adopted by other cities or states or by the nation as a whole. For this reason, states are sometimes called the “laboratories of democracy.” For example, when President Reagan asked for a constitutional amendment requiring a balanced national budget—that is, one in which expenditures cannot be greater than income—he had a precedent. Many states have a constitutional provision like this.

Finally, the large number of governments makes it possible for government to respond to the diversity of conditions that prevails in different parts of the country. States and cities differ enormously in population, size, economic resources, climate, and other characteristics—all the diverse elements that French political philosopher Baron de Montesquieu

■ **And Try Not to Breathe**
In 1983, Times Beach, Missouri, was disincorporated and abandoned because of contamination by waste containing dioxin, a highly toxic chemical. Many of the 2,400 residents filed unsuccessful lawsuits against the companies responsible for the improper waste disposal. Disastrous environmental health problems like this are too big to handle on the state or local level and result in calls for assistance from the national government.



FEATURE 4.2

Who Should Make the Rules? Federalism and Public Opinion

In this chapter, we’ve talked about how the division of responsibilities between national and state governments shifts in ways that usually reflect practical politics rather than constitutional theory. But where do American citizens stand on the question of the distribution of power? What areas do they believe require uniform national standards? A CBS/New York Times poll taken in May 1987 out questions like these to 1,254 people and found some deep divisions on the issues.

Only a few respondents (5 percent) believed that the states have too much power; most (47 percent) thought the balance between states and nation is about right; a sizable minority (39 percent) claimed that the national government has too much power.

When it came down to deciding whether national or state standards are better, here’s how opinion divided (respondents with no opinion are not shown):

Should there be one national policy set by the federal government or should the fifty states make their own rules . . .

	Federal	State
. . . in controlling pollution?	49%	46%
. . . in setting penalties for murder?	62	34
. . . on the issue of registration and voting?	64	31
. . . in selecting textbooks in public schools?	35	61
. . . in setting minimum wages?	51	45
. . . in establishing safety standards in factories?	65	31
. . . in setting highway speed limits?	42	56

Source: *New York Times*, 26 May 1987, p. 20.

(1689–1755) argued needed to be taken into account in formulating laws for a society. Smaller political units are better able to respond to particular local conditions and can generally do so quickly. On the other hand, smaller units may not be able to muster the economic resources to meet challenges.

Of course, the United States remains one nation no matter how many local governments there are. The question of how much diversity the nation should tolerate in the way different states treat their citizens is important. Also important is the question of whether the national government (and, indirectly, the citizens of other states) should be called on to foot the bill for the problems that diversity produces. As Feature 4.2 shows, public opinion is split on these issues.

Differences among states have led the national government to play a role in regional development. Throughout American history, the national government has used its funds to equalize disparities in wealth and development among states. The development of the Sunbelt (the southern and southwestern regions of the country) has been, and continues to be, helped considerably by national policies and programs. Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) electrification and western irrigation projects were funded by the national government; the South, in particular, was helped enormously by national funding formulas designed to aid poorer areas of the country; and California has benefited from national largesse in the form of huge defense contracts. Overall, the Sunbelt states have received more money from the government than they have paid in taxes.

CONTEMPORARY FEDERALISM AND THE DILEMMAS OF DEMOCRACY

When President Reagan came to the White House, conservatives were delighted. They believed his preference for layer cake federalism would mean the dismantling of the liberal welfare state and the end of the national government's efforts to promote social and political equality at the expense of freedom. They argued that different states had different problems and resources, and asserted that, by returning control to state governments, it would be possible to give more play to diversity. States would be free to experiment with alternatives for meeting their problems. States would compete with one another. And people would be free to choose the state government they preferred by simply "voting with their feet"—moving to another state.

In addition, conservative proponents of New Federalism argued that the national government was too remote, too tied to special interests, not responsive to the public at large. The national government overregulated and tried to promote too much uniformity. Moreover, they added, the size and complexity of the federal system led to waste and inefficiency. States, on the other hand, were closer to the people and better able to respond specifically to local needs. If state governments were revitalized, individuals might believe that they could have a greater impact on decision making. The quality of political participation would improve. Furthermore, conservatives believed that shifting power to the states would help them achieve other parts of the political agenda. States, they thought, would work harder to keep taxes down; they would not be willing to spend a lot of money on social welfare programs; and they would be less likely to pass stiff laws regulating businesses. Reagan's New Federalism would bring back the days of *laissez faire*, when states found it difficult to regulate businesses for fear that industries might move to less restrictive states. Rivalry between states could become a "competition in laxity."

What conservatives hoped for, liberals feared. They remembered that the states' rights model allowed political and social inequalities, that it supported racism. Blacks and city dwellers were often left virtually unrepresented by white state legislators who disproportionately served rural interests. Liberals believed the states were unwilling or unable to protect the rights or provide for the needs of their citizens, whether those citizens were consumers seeking protection from business interests, defendants requiring guarantees of due process of law, or poor people seeking a minimum standard of living.

To what extent were conservative hopes and liberal fears realized as federalism developed in the 1980s? And, how did the development of federalism during this period relate to the dilemmas of democracy?

Federalism and the Values of Freedom, Order, and Equality

Neither the conservatives' hopes nor the liberals' fears were fully realized under Reagan's New Federalism, nor did Reagan himself always embrace the states' rights position. His New Federalism was used mainly as a tool for cutting the national budget by offering less money to the

states. Contrary to the expectations of conservatives and liberals alike, however, states themselves proved willing to approve tax increases to pay for social services and education. In an era when Washington was less willing to enforce antitrust legislation, civil rights laws, or affirmative action plans, state governments were more likely to do so. At a time when a conservative national government put little emphasis on the value of equality, state governments did more to embrace it.

Conservatives had thought that the value of freedom would be enhanced if more matters were left to the states. Traditionally, state governments had been relatively small, lacking the wherewithal to limit large corporate interests, for example. But over the past two decades, state governments had changed. Their legislatures had become more professional. They met regularly, for longer periods of time. They maintained larger permanent staffs. Governors showed themselves willing to support major programs to enhance the skills of the work force, to promote research and development, and to subsidize new industries. State governments had become "big governments" themselves. They were better able to tackle problems, and they were not afraid to use their power to promote equality.

To the surprise of liberals, who had looked to the national government to protect individuals by setting reasonable minimum standards for product safety, welfare payments, and employee benefits, states were now willing to set higher standards than the national government. As states took a more active role in setting these standards, they highlighted another challenge for our democracy—the need to maintain order. Where claims of order were raised, the Reagan administration proved quick to back away from its position on states' rights. We saw this in the case of the minimum drinking age and again in the matter of training National Guard troops (see Feature 4.1). Often, for the Reagan administration, maintaining order meant safeguarding corporate interests. For example, in 1986, the administration proposed a new product liability law. It would pre-empt state statutes and reduce the awards plaintiffs could receive from lawsuits against manufacturers of products that harmed them.

In summary, the relationship among the federal system, political ideology, and the values of freedom, order, and equality is no longer as simple as it appeared two decades ago. Then, liberals could look to the national government and cooperative, marble cake federalism to help secure equality. Conservatives could wish for a return to small government, states' rights, and layer cake federalism. In the 1980s, conservatives gave lip service to the ideals of New Federalism but were often reluctant to give up the national power that helped them achieve their vision of order. After all, if they returned power to the states, they might well do more to promote equality than freedom. As one prominent conservative put it, "The Great Society may be over in Washington, but it has just begun in the states."²¹

Federalism and Pluralism

As we discussed in Chapter 2, the system of government in America today supports the pluralist model of democracy. Federalism is an important part of that system. How has it contributed to American plural-

ism? Do each of the competing views of federalism support pluralism?

Our federal system of government was designed to allay citizens' fears that they might be ruled by majorities of citizens who were residents of distant regions and with whom they did not necessarily agree or share interests. The institutional design, by recognizing the legitimacy of the states as political divisions, also recognized the importance of diversity. The existence and cultivation of diverse interests are hallmarks of pluralism.

Each of the two competing mythologies of federalism supports pluralism but in somewhat different ways. Dual federalism, which has evolved into New Federalism, wants to decentralize government, to shift power to the states. It recognizes the importance of local rather than national standards and applauds the diversity of those standards. This variety allows people, if not a voice in policymaking, the choice of policy under which to live. These factors tend to support pluralist democracy.

In contrast, cooperative federalism is perfectly willing to override local standards for a national standard in the interests of promoting equality. Yet this view of federalism, particularly in its picket fence version, also supports pluralist democracy. It is highly responsive to all manner of group pressures, including pressure at one level from groups unsuccessful at other levels. By blurring the lines of national and state responsibility, this kind of federalism encourages petitioners to try their luck at whichever level of government offers the best chance of success.

SUMMARY

The government framework outlined in the Constitution was the product of political compromise, an acknowledgment of the states' fear of a powerful central government. The division of powers sketched in the Constitution was supposed to turn over great and aggregate matters to the national government, leaving local and particular concerns to the states. Exactly what was great and aggregate and what was local and particular was not fully explained. As a result, two competing myths of federalism emerged. Dual, or layer cake, federalism wanted to retain power in the states and to keep the levels of government separate. Cooperative, or marble cake, federalism emphasized the power of the national government and saw national and state governments working together to solve national problems. In its own way, each view supported the pluralist model of democracy.

Over the years, the national government has used both its enumerated powers and implied powers to become involved in virtually every area of human activity. The tools of political change—the sticks and carrots the national government has used to expand its power—include direct legislation, judicial decisions, and financial incentives in the form of grants.

As its influence grew, so did the government itself. At the same time, intergovernmental relations became more complex. New Federalists, generally conservative, suggested cutting back the size of the national government, reducing federal spending, and turning programs over to the states as a solution to the problem of unwieldy government. Liberals, worried that New Federalists, in their haste to decentralize and cut back, would turn over important responsibilities to states that were unwilling or unable to assume them. Government, rather than being too responsive, would become unresponsive. But neither conservative hopes nor liberal fears were fully realized in the decade of the 1980s. The states proved both willing and able to tackle some major problems. More than this, they were willing to fund many programs that promoted equality.

The debate over federalism will continue in the 1990s, and it may still be couched in terms of the two competing mythologies—dual federalism and cooperative federalism. But, as in the past, the balance of power between the national and state governments will be settled by political means, not theory.

Key Terms

federalism	nullification
dual federalism	intergovernmental relations
states' rights	picket fence federalism
cooperative federalism	general revenue sharing
elastic clause	special revenue sharing
implied powers	municipal government
commerce clause	county government
grant-in-aid	school district
categorical grant	special district
formula grant	home rule
project grant	
block grant	

Selected Readings

Gittell, Marilyn, ed. *State Politics and the New Federalism*. New York: Longmans, 1986. A collection of works on intergovernmental relations that emphasizes the role of the states.

Nathan, Richard P., and Fred C. Doolittle. *Reagan and the States*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987. An overview and set of case studies of fiscal federalism as a part of Reagan's New Federalism.

O'Toole, Laurence J., ed. *American Intergovernmental Relations*. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1985. This general collection of readings includes classics on the subject as well as timely analyses of intergovernmental relations in the Reagan administration.

Reagan, Michael, and John Sanzone. *The New Federalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981. A classic analysis of fiscal federalism with heavy emphasis on grants.

Walker, David B. *Toward a Functioning Federalism*. Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop, 1981. This work analyzes the overloaded system of intergovernmental relations and offers alternatives to it.

Essay B

The Transformation of Political Art

Throughout our nation's history, political expressions—both positive and negative—have appeared in art. To convey a political message, artists frequently use an icon, or symbol. One of the first and most popular political icons was Liberty. She is by no means uniquely American—her origins lie in ancient Rome, and she has enjoyed great popularity in France. The fierceness of this *Miss Liberty*, created just before the Civil War, suggests that both she and the United States were still poised to defend their freedom.

George Washington may not have been our country's first icon, but he was the first human being to become an American political symbol. He represented military valor, presidential dignity, and paternal wisdom—the personal attributes of a hero. Washington was often paired with Liberty, as the instrument through which her ideals were achieved. In *Liberty and Washington*, she places a laurel wreath—a symbol of honor and glory—on a bust of the deceased president. Gazing toward the sky, she seems to contemplate his place in heaven.

In *Centennial Progress*, painted in 1875, Washington is one of many heroes surrounding Columbia, the female personification of the United States. Along with Thomas Jefferson, Washington occupies a prominent position beside the flag, well above the crowd. Presidents (including Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant) and statesmen (such as Benjamin Franklin and Frederick Douglass) gather around the pedestal on which Columbia holds a telegraph wire—a reminder of one of the most important inventions of the century.

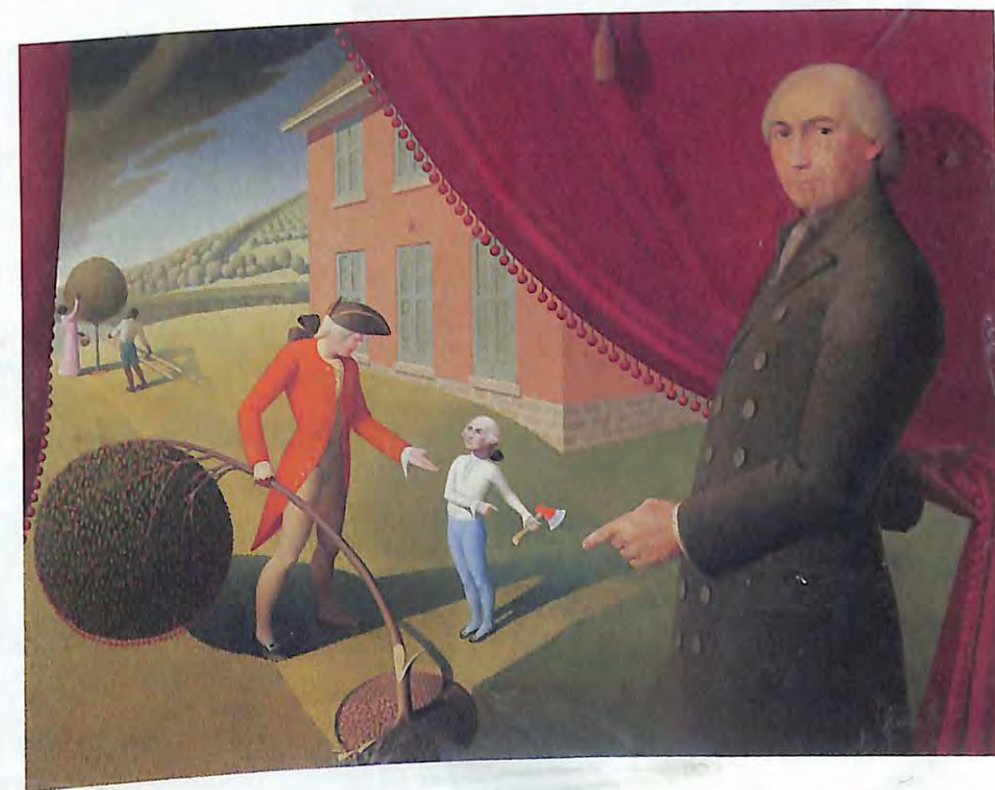
By the twentieth century, reverence for Washington still flourished, but at least part of the public had grown sophisticated enough to recognize the humor in Grant Wood's *Parson Weems' Fable*, which pokes fun at America's



affection for the story of young George and the cherry tree. Parson Weems, the creator of the cherry tree fable, draws aside a curtain to reveal the moment of confession. But the center of attention looks odd: Little George has the mature head made famous by Gilbert Stuart's portrait. It is as if Washington sprang to life



Left page: Miss Liberty. Artist unknown, 1850–1860. Courtesy of the Barenholz Collection. Photo by Schecter Lee, courtesy of the Museum of American Folk Art, New York City. This page, top left: Liberty and Washington. Artist unknown, c. 1800–1810. New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown. Top right: Centennial Progress, by Montgomery Tiers, 1875. Courtesy William Judson. Bottom: Parson Weems' Fable, by Grant Wood, 1939. Courtesy Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth.





fully grown, like a mythical god—a characterization suggesting the public's inability to think of him as an ordinary youth.

Not all public figures appearing in American art have been revered as unanimously as George Washington. In fact, some are more martyrs than heroes. Their presence alludes to a darker side of history and a long tradition of public dissent.

For many black Americans, the abolitionist John Brown was a hero. Southern white people generally regarded him as an assassin and possibly a madman. Northern feeling was more ambiguous, but even those who shared Brown's desire to free the slaves questioned the violence of his actions and speculated about his sanity.

Although John Brown is most famous for his 1859 armed raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia, Brown's hanging was at least as significant for the black artist Horace Pippin. Pippin's grandmother allegedly witnessed the execution and frequently described the event to him. In *John Brown Going to His Hanging*, white people gathered to watch Brown's arrival chat together nonchalantly. But the lone black slave—presumably the artist's grandmother—confronts the viewer with an accusing glare.

Sixty-eight years after John Brown's hanging, another execution shook the country. A court convicted two immigrant anarchists named Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti of murdering a guard and a paymaster during a Massachusetts robbery. Since there was insuffi-

cient evidence to prove their involvement in the crime, Sacco and Vanzetti's main offenses seem to have been their political convictions and their Italian heritage. The judge openly sided with the prosecution, and the defendants clearly failed to receive as fair a trial as they were constitutionally guaranteed. To those who looked to the United States as a land where freedom of belief is honored, Sacco and Vanzetti's execution was an outrage. Ben Shahn, one of several distressed artists, expressed his anger in a series of paintings called *The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti*.

Art is sometimes transformed into patriotic propaganda, particularly during times of war. Such was the case with *The Four Freedoms* series Norman Rockwell painted in 1943 (see Chapter 1, pages 12–13). The U.S. government printed and circulated posters of the paintings to remind Americans what they were fighting for. During the Vietnam era, however, art tended to protest rather than support the war. The poster created for the Committee to End the War reinterprets the familiar posters in which Uncle Sam points directly at the viewer and announces, "I want you" (see Chapter 19, page 697, for an example). Here, Uncle Sam is battered and bandaged—ironically recalling Revolutionary War patriots. This weary and disillusioned Uncle Sam has simply had enough.

One of the dominant political themes of the 1980s has been the threat of nuclear war. Contemporary literature, film, video, and drama have reflected this concern, but nowhere has it been more apparent than in the visual arts. Many artists have used frightening images of mushroom clouds or sentimental reminders of the beauty of life to depict this issue. But Mike Glier's painting *Barbara Calling III* is more mysterious and ultimately more disturbing. Behind the back of a jubilantly shouting protester, a menacing figure with blackened face and hands tosses money into the air. His presence might suggest death, the military establishment, or an unspecified evil force. Whatever the interpretation, the figure reminds viewers that, like a shadow, the threat of nuclear war is always with us, just behind our backs.



Top: "I Want Out." Steve Horn, photographer; Larry Dunst, art director. Poster for the Committee to End the War. Bottom: *Barbara Calling III*, by Mike Glier, 1983. Courtesy Barbara Gladstone Gallery. Photo by eeve-inkeri.

Top: Bartolomeo Vanzetti and Nicola Sacco, by Ben Shahn, 1931–1932. Tempera on paper over composition board, 10½ × 14½". Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. Bottom: *John Brown Going to His Hanging*, by Horace Pippin, 1942. Courtesy of The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Lambert Fund Purchase.



PART *III*

LINKING PEOPLE
WITH
GOVERNMENT



5

Public Opinion and Political Socialization

Public Opinion and the Models of Democracy

The Distribution of Public Opinion • Shape of the Distribution • Stability of the Distribution

Political Socialization

The Agents of Early Socialization • Continuing Socialization

Social Groups and Political Values

Education • Income • Region • The "Old" Ethnicity: European Origin • The "New" Ethnicity: Race • Religion

From Values to Ideology

The Degree Of Ideological Thinking in Public Opinion • The Quality of Ideological Thinking in Public Opinion • Ideological Types in the United States

The Process of Forming Political Opinions

Self-Interest • Political Information • Political Leadership • Opinion Schemas

Fridays are different in Saudi Arabia. After prayers, criminals are paraded in the streets, then punished publicly. Murderers are beheaded, adulterers are flogged, and thieves have their hands chopped off. The Saudi government wants its citizens to get the message: Crime will not be tolerated. Saudi Arabia, which claims the lowest crime rate in the world, is a country that greatly values order.

In contrast, the United States has one of the highest crime rates in the world. Its homicide rate, for example, is three to ten times that of most other Western countries. Although no one is proud of this record, our government would never consider beheading, flogging, or dismembering as a means of lowering the crime rate. First, the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution forbids "cruel and unusual punishment." Second, the public would not tolerate this kind of punishment.

However, the public definitely is not squeamish about the death penalty (capital punishment), at least for certain crimes. The Gallup organization has polled the nation on this issue for fifty years. Except in 1957 and 1966, a clear majority of respondents have consistently supported the death penalty for murder.¹ In fact, public support for capital punishment has increased dramatically since the late 1960s. In 1985, 75 percent of all respondents were in favor of the death penalty for murder, while only 17 percent opposed it. Substantial segments of the public also were in favor of the death penalty for espionage (48 percent), rape (45 percent), and airplane hijacking (45 percent).

Government has been defined as the legitimate use of force to control human behavior. Through most of American history, the execution of people who threaten the social order has been a legal use of government force. In colonial times, capital punishment was imposed, not just for murder, but for antisocial behavior—for denying the "true" God, cursing one's parents, adultery, witchcraft, or being a rebellious child.² In the late 1700s, some writers, editors, and clergy argued for abolishing the death sentence. The campaign intensified in the 1840s, and a few states responded by eliminating capital punishment. With the pressures of the Civil War and its aftermath, interest in the cause waned until 1890, when New York State adopted a new technique, electrocution, as the instrument of death. By 1917, twelve states had passed laws against capital punishment. But the outbreak of World War I fed the public's suspicion of foreigners and fear of radicals, leading to renewed support for the death penalty. Reacting to this shift in public opinion, four states restored capital punishment.

The security needs of World War II and postwar fears of Soviet communism fueled continued support for capital punishment. After the Red Scare subsided in the late 1950s, public opposition to the death penalty increased. In 1957, for the first time, polls showed a small majority opposing capital punishment. But public opinion was neither strong enough nor stable enough to force state legislatures to outlaw the death penalty. In keeping with the pluralist model of democracy, abolition efforts shifted from the legislative arena to the courts.

One of the major arguments the abolitionists used was that the death penalty is cruel and unusual punishment, and therefore unconstitutional.

The Death Chamber
This uncomfortable apparatus is the electric chair in a Louisiana state prison. It dramatizes the ultimate power that government has to control behavior. Capital crimes may draw capital punishment.



Certainly the public did not think capital punishment was either cruel or unusual in the 1780s. But two hundred years later, its opponents contended that execution by the state had become cruel and unusual by contemporary standards. Their argument had some effect on public opinion; in 1966, a bare majority of respondents opposed the death penalty for only the second time since the Gallup surveys began.

The states responded to this shift in public opinion by reducing the number of executions each year until, in 1968, they were stopped completely in anticipation of a Supreme Court decision. By then, however, public opinion had again reversed itself in favor of capital punishment. Still, in 1972, the Court ruled in a 5-to-4 vote that the death penalty as imposed by existing state laws was unconstitutional.³ Its decision was not well received in many states, and thirty-five state legislatures passed new laws to get around the Court's ruling. Public approval of the death penalty jumped almost 10 points and began climbing higher as the nation's homicide rate increased.

In 1976, the Supreme Court changed its position. It ruled that three of the new state laws—those that provided for consideration of the defendant and the offense before imposing the death sentence—were constitutional.⁴ And the Court rejected the argument that punishment by death itself violates the Constitution. In its ruling, the Court also noted that public opinion favored the death penalty. Now endorsed by the courts, as well as the public, the death penalty was again available to the states. Through the end of the 1970s, though, few states applied the penalty: Only three criminals were executed. Eventually, however, the states began to heed the clamor, executing about twenty criminals a year by the mid-1980s.

Does the death penalty deter people from committing murder? Two-thirds of the public think it does.⁵ What do people think is the most humane method of execution? Opinion polls tell us that most people favor lethal injection (62 percent) over electrocution (18 percent). The gas chamber has more support (9 percent) than the old-fashioned firing squad (3 percent). But hanging (1 percent) is generally unpopular, and no respondents regard beheading as humane.

The history of public thinking on the death penalty reveals several characteristics of public opinion:

1. *The public's attitudes toward a given government policy can vary over time, often dramatically.* Opinions about capital punishment tend to fluctuate with threats to the social order. The public is more likely to favor capital punishment in times of war and fear of foreign subversion and when crime rates are high.

2. *Public opinion places boundaries on allowable types of public policy.* Chopping off a hand is not acceptable to the public (and surely to courts interpreting the Constitution) as a punishment for theft in the United States, but electrocuting a murderer in private (not in public) is all right.

3. *Citizens are willing to register opinions on matters outside their expertise.* People clearly believe execution by lethal injection is more humane than electrocution, asphyxiation in the gas chamber, or hanging. How can the public know enough about execution to make these judgments?

4. *Governments tend to react to public opinion.* State laws for and against capital punishment have reflected swings in the public mood. Moreover, the Supreme Court's decision in 1972 against capital punishment came when public opinion on the death penalty was sharply divided; the Court's approval of capital punishment in 1976 coincided with a rise in public approval of the death penalty.

5. *The government sometimes does not do what the people want.* Although public opinion overwhelmingly favors the death penalty for murder, few states actually punish murderers with execution. The United States has averaged over twenty thousand homicides annually in the 1980s but has executed fewer than twenty murderers a year.

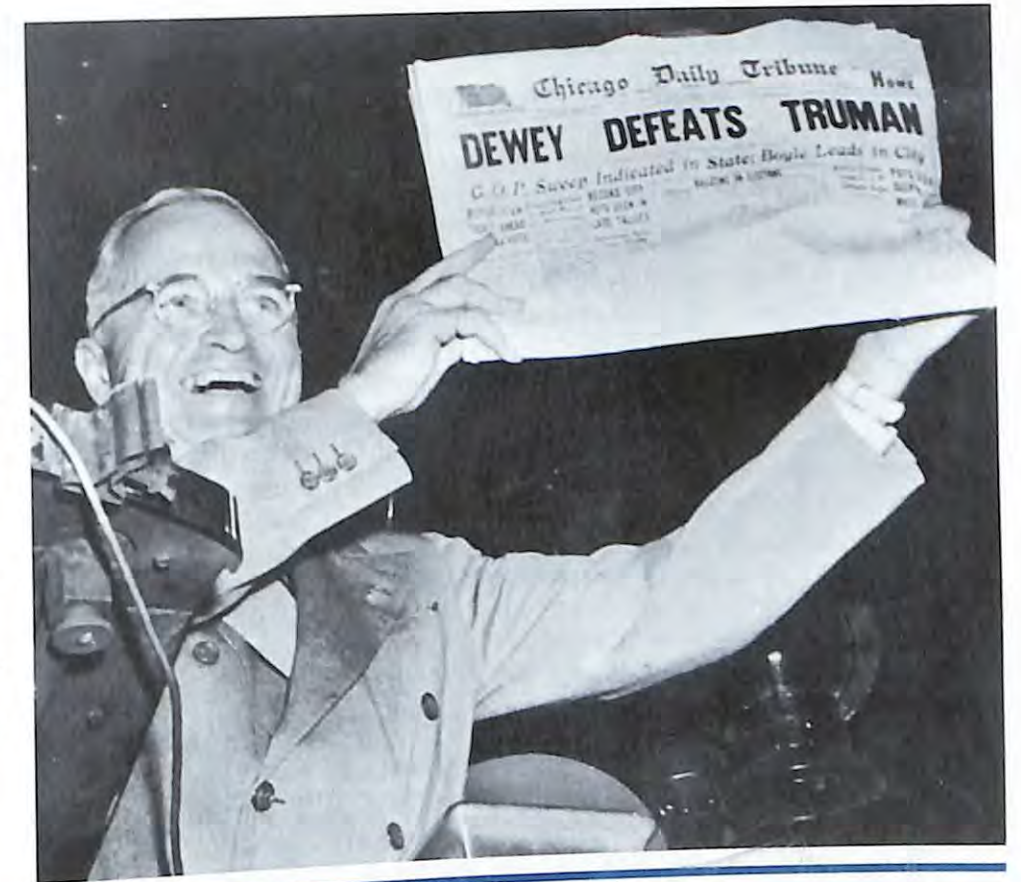
The last two conclusions bear on our discussion of the majoritarian and pluralist models of democracy in Chapter 2. Here we probe more deeply into the nature, shape, depth, and formation of public opinion in a democratic government. What is the place of public opinion in a democracy? How do people acquire their opinions? What are the major lines of division in public opinion? How do individuals' ideology and knowledge affect their opinions? What is the relationship between public opinion and ideological type?

PUBLIC OPINION AND THE MODELS OF DEMOCRACY

The majoritarian and pluralist models of democracy differ greatly in their assumptions about the role of public opinion in democratic government. According to the classic majoritarian model, the government should do

Stop the Presses! Oops, Too Late . . .

As the 1948 election drew near, few people gave President Harry Truman a chance to defeat his Republican opponent, Thomas E. Dewey. Polling was still new, and virtually all the early polls showed Dewey far ahead. Most organizations simply stopped polling weeks before the election. The Chicago Daily Tribune believed the polls and proclaimed Dewey's victory before the votes were counted. Here, the victorious Truman triumphantly displays the most embarrassing headline in American politics. Later it was revealed that the few polls taken closer to election day showed Truman catching up to Dewey, which demonstrates that polls estimate the vote only at the time they are taken.



what a majority of the public wants. In contrast, pluralists argue that the public as a whole seldom demonstrates clear consistent opinions on the day-to-day issues of government. At the same time, pluralists recognize that subgroups within the public do express opinions on specific matters—often and vigorously. The pluralist model requires that government institutions allow the free expression of opinions by these “minority publics.” Democracy is at work when the opinions of many different publics clash openly and fairly over government policy.

Thanks to opinion polling, we can better understand the conflict between these two institutional models of democracy. *Polling* involves interviewing a sample of citizens to estimate public opinion as a whole (see Politics in the Information Age 5.1). **Public opinion** is simply the collected attitudes of citizens on a given issue or question. We are interested in what citizens think about issues that are politically relevant, but this can mean almost any question. Adultery is usually not a political issue, but public opinion on marital infidelity becomes politically relevant when the issue touches a presidential candidate, as Gary Hart learned in the 1988 contest for the Democratic nomination for president. Opinion polling is such a common part of contemporary life that we often forget it is a modern invention, dating only from the 1930s (see Figure 5.1). In fact, survey methodology did not develop into a powerful research tool until the advent of computers in the 1950s.

Before polling became an accepted part of the American scene, politicians, journalists, and everyone else could argue about what “the peo-

POLITICS IN THE INFORMATION AGE 5.1

Sampling a Few, Predicting to Everyone

How can a pollster tell what the nation thinks by talking to only a few hundred people? The answer lies in the statistical theory of *sampling*. Briefly, the theory holds that a sample of individuals selected by chance from any population is "representative" of that population. This means that the traits of individuals in the sample—their attitudes, beliefs, sociological characteristics, and physical features—reflect the traits of the whole population. Sampling theory does not say that a sample exactly matches the population, only that it reflects the population within some predictable degree of accuracy.

Three factors determine the accuracy of a sample. The most important is the way the sample is selected. For maximum accuracy, the individuals in the sample must be chosen randomly. *Randomly* does not mean "at whim"; it means that every individual in the population has the same chance of being selected.

For a population as large and widespread as that of the United States, direct random sampling of individuals by name is practically impossible. Instead, pollsters first divide the country into geographic regions. Then they randomly choose areas and sample individuals who live within those areas. This departure from strict random sampling does decrease the accuracy of polls, but only by a relatively small amount. Today, most polls conducted by the mass media are done by telephone, with computers randomly dialing numbers within predetermined telephone areas. (Random dialing ensures that even people with unlisted numbers are called.)

The second factor that affects the accuracy of sampling is the size of the sample. The larger the sample, the more accurately it represents the population. For example, a sample of four hundred individuals predicts accurately to a population within 6 percentage points (plus or minus), 95 percent of the time. A sample of six hundred is accurate within 4 percentage points. (Surprisingly, when the population is very large compared with the sample—which is usually the case in opinion polling—the size of the population has essentially no effect on the sampling accuracy. So a sample of, say, six

hundred individuals selected within a city, a state, or even the nation reflects the traits of its population with equal accuracy, within 4 percentage points. Why this is so is better discussed in a course on statistics.)

The final factor that affects the accuracy of sampling is the amount of variation in the population. If there were no variation in a population, every sample would reflect the population's characteristics with perfect accuracy. But the greater the variation within the population, the greater the chance that one random sample will be different from another.

The Gallup Poll and most other national opinion polls usually survey about 1,500 individuals and are accurate within 3 percentage points, 95 percent of the time. As shown in Figure 5.1, the predictions of the Gallup Poll for thirteen presidential elections since 1936 have deviated from the voting results only an average of 2.1 percentage points. Even this small margin of error can mean an incorrect prediction in a close election. But for the purpose of estimating public opinion on political issues, a sampling error of 3 percentage points is acceptable.

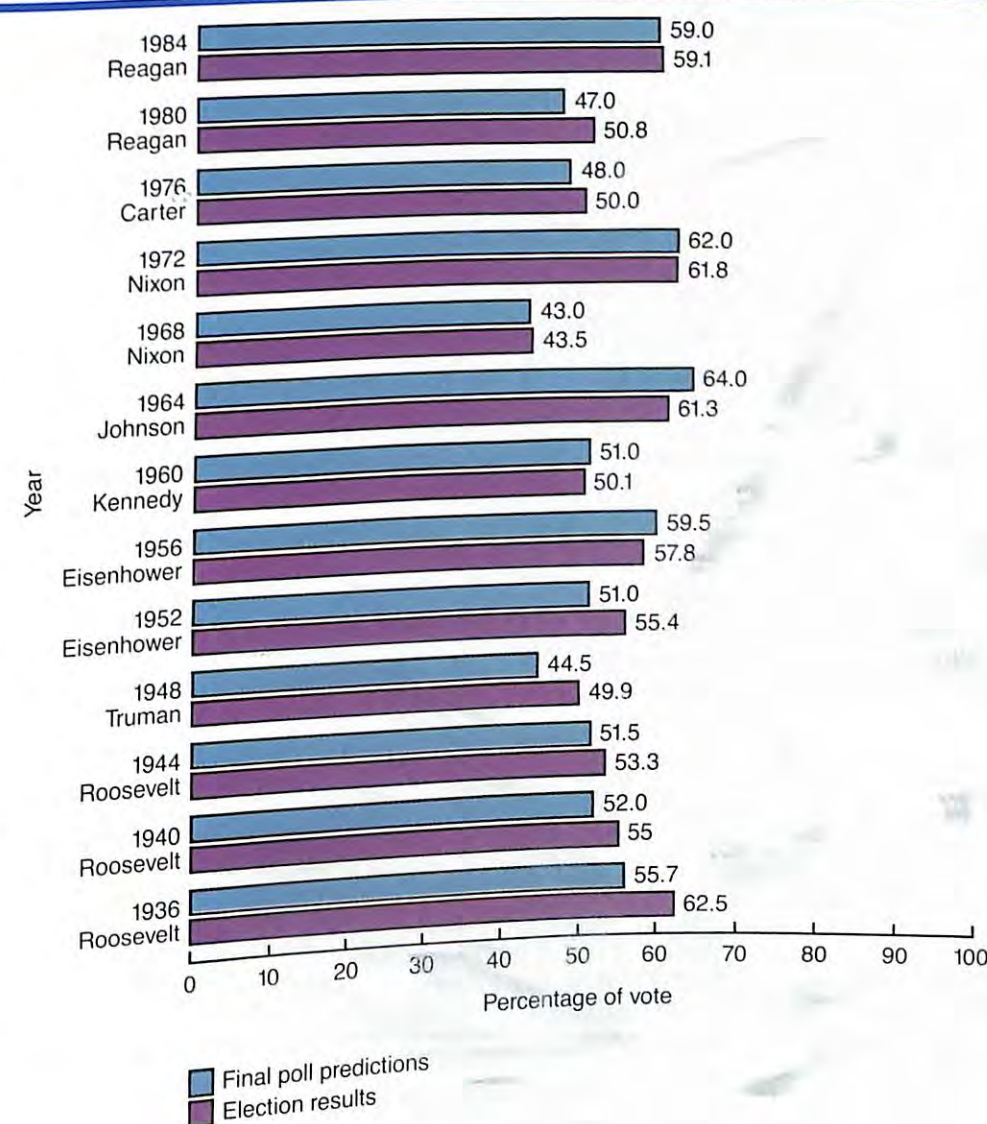
Poll results can be wrong because of problems that have nothing to do with sampling theory. In particular, confusing or misleading questions can bias the results. For example, in surveys conducted during the Korean War, questions that mentioned a communist invasion tended to increase support for the war by 15 to 20 percentage points over ones that did not mention communism.* Survey methods are also likely to get superficial responses from busy respondents who say anything, quickly, to get rid of a pesky interviewer. Recently, some newspaper columnists have even urged readers to lie to pollsters outside voting booths, to confound election-night television predictions. But despite its potential for abuse or distortion, modern polling has told us a great deal about public opinion in America.

* John E. Mueller, *War, Presidents and Public Opinion* (New York: Wiley, 1973), p. 44.

ple" wanted, but no one really knew. Observers of America before the 1930s had to guess at public opinion by analyzing newspaper stories, politicians' speeches, voting returns, and travelers' diaries. When no one really knows what the people want, it is impossible for government to be responsive to public opinion. As we discussed in Chapter 3, the founders wanted to build public opinion into our government structure by allowing the direct election of representatives to the House and apportioning representation there according to population. Attitudes and actions in the House of Representatives, the framers thought, would reflect public opinion, especially on the crucial issues of taxes and government spending.

In practice, bills passed by a majority of elected representatives do not necessarily reflect the opinions of a majority of citizens. This would not have bothered the framers because they never intended to create a full democracy, a government responsive to majority opinion. Although they wanted to provide for some input of public opinion, they had little faith in the ability of the masses to make public policy.

Figure 5.1
Gallup Poll Accuracy
One of the nation's oldest polls was started by George Gallup in the 1930s. The accuracy of the Gallup Poll in predicting presidential elections over nearly fifty years is charted below. Although not always on the mark, its predictions have been fairly close to election results. The poll was most notably wrong in 1948, when it predicted that Thomas Dewey, the Republican candidate, would defeat the Democratic incumbent, Harry Truman, underestimating Truman's vote by 5.4 percentage points. In the 1988 election, the Gallup Poll estimated that George Bush would obtain 56 percent of the vote, and he actually obtained 54 percent. (Source: Gallup Report, December 1984, p. 31.)



Sampling methods and opinion polling have altered the debate over the majoritarian and pluralist models of democracy. Now that we know how often government policy runs against majority opinion, it becomes harder to defend the U.S. government as democratic under the majoritarian model. Even at a time when Americans overwhelmingly favored the death penalty for murderers, the Supreme Court decided that existing state laws applying capital punishment were unconstitutional. Even after the Court approved new state laws as constitutional, relatively few murderers were actually executed. Consider, too, the case of prayer in public schools. The Supreme Court has ruled that no state or local government can require the reading of the Lord's Prayer or Bible verses in public schools. Yet surveys continually show that a clear majority of Americans (over 60 percent) do not agree with that ruling.⁶ Because government policy sometimes runs against settled majority opinion, the majoritarian model is easily attacked.

Each of the two models of democracy makes certain assumptions about public opinion. The majoritarian model assumes that a majority of people hold clear consistent opinions on government policy. The pluralist model insists that public opinion is often divided, and opinion polls certainly give credence to that claim. What are the bases of these divisions? What principles, if any, do people use to organize their beliefs and attitudes about politics? Exactly how do individuals form their political opinions? We look for answers to these questions in this chapter. In later chapters, we assess the effect of public opinion on government policies. The results should help you make up your own mind about the viability of the majoritarian and pluralist models in a functioning democracy.

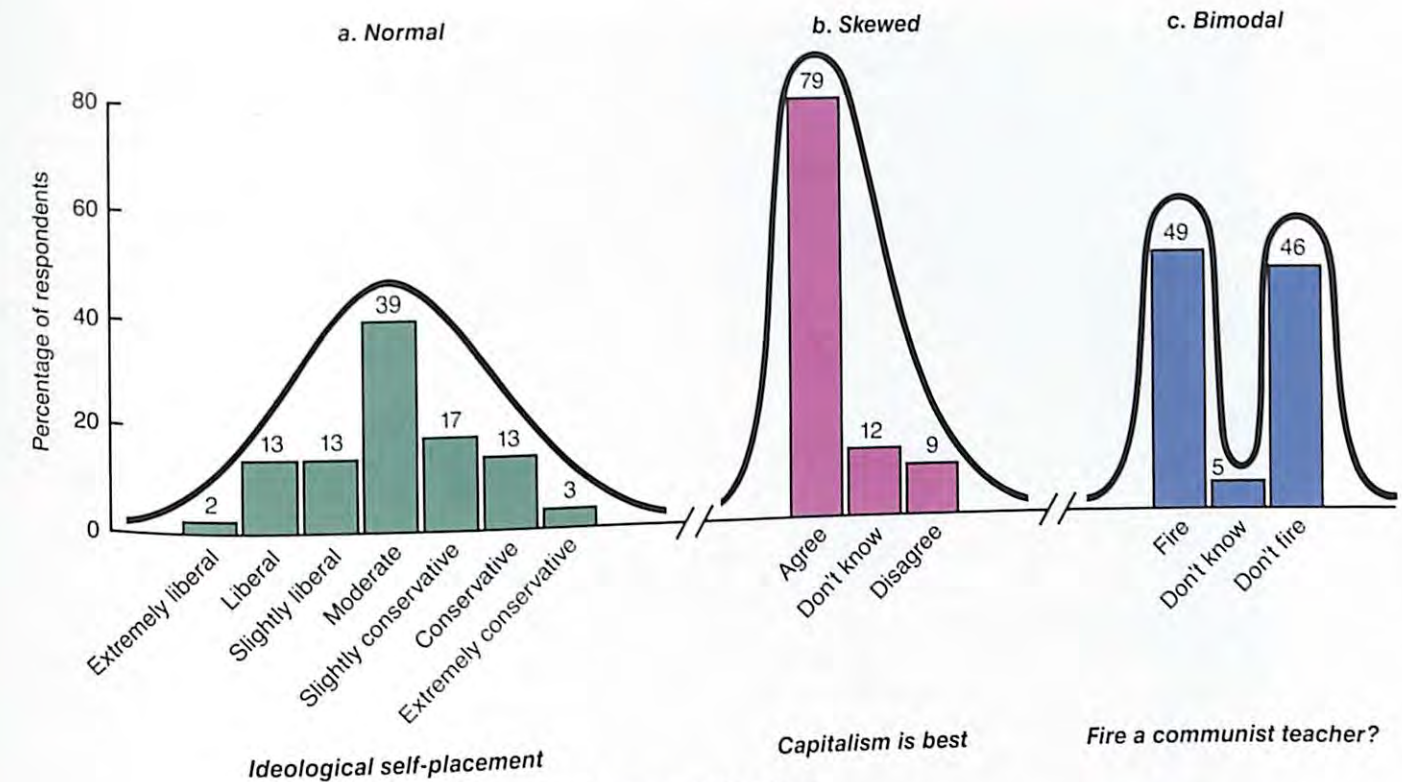
THE DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLIC OPINION

A government that tries to respond to public opinion soon learns that people seldom think alike. To understand, then to act on, the public's many attitudes and beliefs, governments must pay attention to the way public opinion distributes among the choices on an issue. In particular, government must analyze the *shape* and the *stability* of the distribution.

Shape of the Distribution

The results of public opinion polls are often displayed on charts like those in Figure 5.2. The response categories run along the baseline. The height of the columns indicates the percentage of those polled who gave each response. The *shape* of the opinion distribution is the pattern, or physical form, of all the responses when counted and plotted. The figure depicts three idealized patterns of distribution—normal, skewed, and bimodal—superimposed on three actual survey items.⁷

Figure 5.2a shows how respondents to a national survey in 1987 placed themselves along a liberal-conservative continuum. The most frequent response, called the *mode*, was "moderate." Progressively fewer people classified themselves in each category toward the liberal and conservative extremes. The shape of the graph resembles what statistical theory calls a **normal distribution**—a symmetrical bell-shaped distribu-



Three Distributions of Opinion

We've superimposed three hypothetical patterns of distribution—normal, skewed, and bimodal—on three actual distributions of responses to survey questions. Although the actual responses do not match the shapes exactly, they match closely enough so that we can describe the distribution of (a) ideological attitudes as approximately normal, (b) belief in capitalism as skewed, and (c) opinions on firing a communist teacher as bimodal. (Sources: (a) James Allen Davis and Tom W. Smith, *General Social Surveys, 1972–1987: Cumulative Codebook* [Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, 1987], p. 94. Sample size was 1,819. Only 6 percent of the sample chose "don't know" or didn't answer the question. (b) 1981 Survey by Civic Service, Inc., reported in *Public Opinion* 5 [October–November 1982]:21. (c) Davis and Smith, *General Social Surveys*, p. 117.)

Figure 5.2

tion around a single mode. Opinions that are *normally distributed* tend to support moderate government policies. At the same time, they allow government policies that range to either side of the center position, shifting from liberal to conservative and back again, as long as they do not stray too far from the moderate center.

Figure 5.2b plots the percentages of those who agreed or disagreed with the statement "The private business system in the United States works better than any other system yet devised for industrial countries."⁸ The shape of this graph is very different from the symmetrical distribution of ideological attitudes. In this graph, the mode (containing the vast majority who agree with the statement) lies off to one side, leaving a "tail" (the few who disagree) on the other. This kind of asymmetrical distribution is called a **skewed distribution**. The amount of skew depends on the ratio between the proportion of respondents in the mode of the distribution and those in the tail.

In a skewed distribution, the opinions of the majority cluster around a point on one side of the issue. A skewed distribution indicates less diversity of opinion than does a normal distribution. The skewed distribution in Figure 5.2b tells us that most Americans are happy with capitalism as an economic system. Obviously, then, a candidate would have little hope of winning an election by denouncing free enterprise. In fact, when consensus on an issue is this strong, those with minority opinions risk social ostracism and even persecution if they persist in voicing their opinions. If the public does not feel intensely about an issue, however, politicians can sometimes discount a skewed distribution of public opinion. This is what's happened with the death penalty. Although most people favor capital punishment, it is not a burning issue for them. This means politicians can discount public opinion on the issue without serious consequences.

Figure 5.2c plots the percentages of respondents who favored or opposed firing a college teacher who was an admitted communist. These responses fall into a **bimodal distribution**: Respondents chose two categories equally (or almost equally) as the most frequent responses. Americans divide almost evenly over allowing an admitted communist (an opponent of capitalism) to teach in a college. Virtually half the American population would fire the teacher; nearly half would allow the individual to continue teaching. Because they split the electorate in nearly equal parts, bimodal distributions of opinion carry the greatest potential for political conflict, especially if both sides feel strongly about the issue.

Stability of the Distribution

A **stable distribution** shows little change over time. Public opinion on important issues can change, but it is sometimes difficult to distinguish a true change in opinion from a difference in the way a question is worded. When different questions on the same issue produce similar distributions of opinion, the underlying attitudes are stable. When the same question (or virtually the same question) produces significantly different responses over time, the surveys are more likely to be signaling an actual shift in public opinion.

Consider Americans' attitudes toward capitalism. In the 1981 survey plotted in Figure 5.2b, 79 percent of the respondents chose capitalism over any alternative economic system. Forty years earlier, in 1941, respondents had been asked whether they "would be better off if the concern you worked for were taken over and operated by the federal government." The responses at that time were also heavily skewed: 81 percent said that they preferred "business management." The nation's support for capitalism is very stable; it has barely changed over four decades.⁹

People's placement of themselves on the liberal-conservative continuum is another distribution that has remained surprisingly stable from the 1960s to the 1980s (see Figure 5.3a). Even in 1964, when liberal Lyndon Johnson won a landslide victory over conservative Barry Goldwater in the presidential election, more voters described themselves as conservative than liberal. Indeed, this has been the public's ideological self-classification in every presidential election year since 1964.¹⁰ Despite

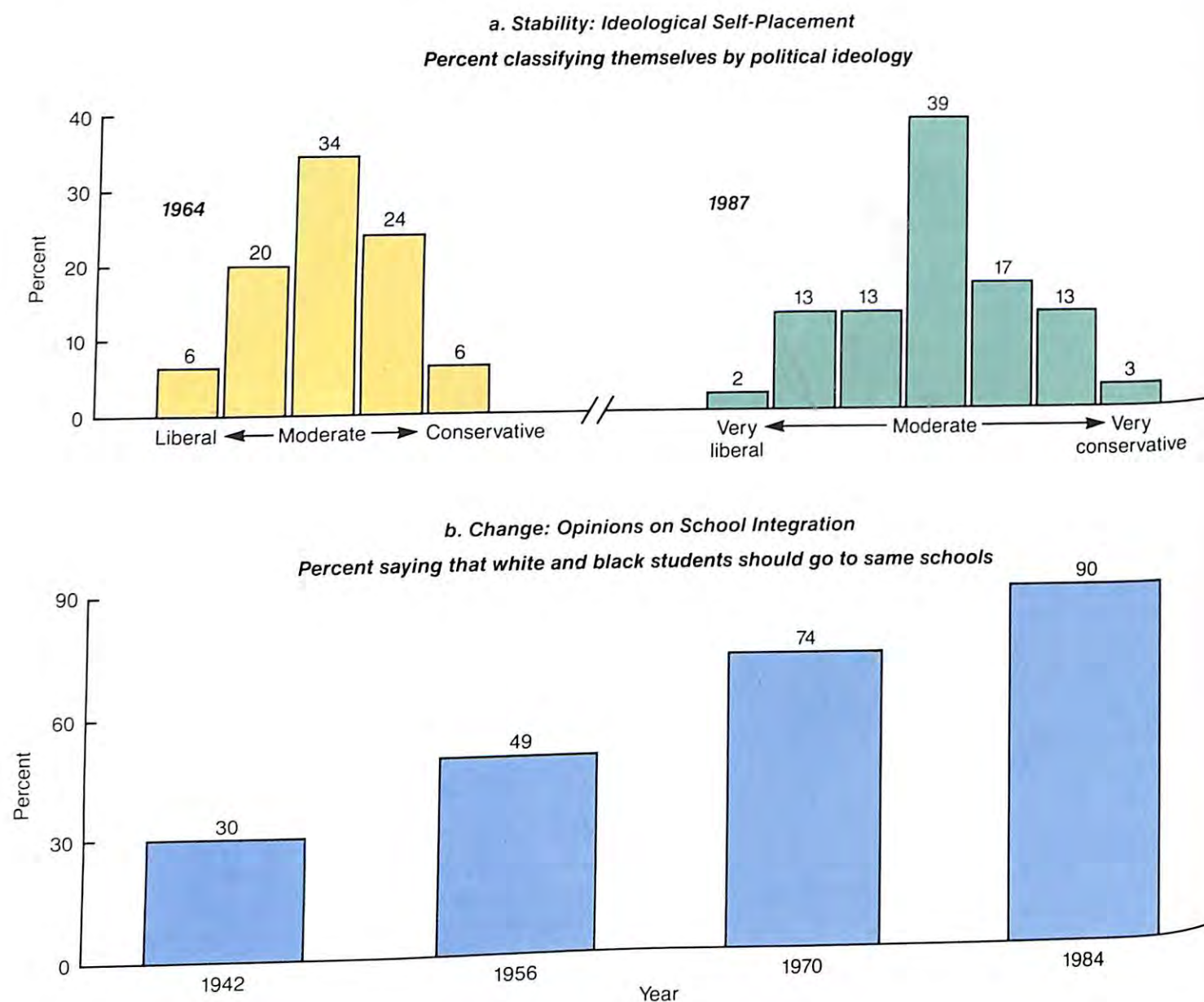
Taking the Public Pulse
Opinion polling has become commonplace in modern life. This employee of NBC News appears to be conducting an exit poll of someone who has just left the voting booth. Exit polls are used to obtain quick estimates of voting outcomes, allowing early projections of election winners. This respondent doesn't seem to like any of the available choices.



all the talk about the nation's becoming conservative in recent years, the fact is that most people did not describe themselves as liberal *at any time* during the last two decades. People did describe themselves as more conservative during that time (shifting about 5 percentage points toward the right), but most considered themselves conservative to begin with.

Public opinion in America is capable of massive change over time, however. Moreover, change can occur on issues that were once highly controversial. A good example of a dramatic change in American public opinion is race relations, specifically integrated schools. A national survey in 1942 asked whether "white and Negro students should go to the same schools or separate schools."¹¹ Only 30 percent of white respondents said that the students should attend schools together. When virtually the same question (substituting *black* for Negro) was asked in 1984, 90 percent of the white respondents endorsed integrated schools (see Figure 5.3b).

Scholars writing on this trend in racial attitudes have commented on "(1) its massive magnitude, moving from a solid pro-segregation majority to an overwhelming pro-integration consensus; (2) its long duration, continuing over four decades; and (3) its steady relentless pace."¹² But they note that white Americans have not become "color-blind." Despite their endorsement of integrated schools, only 23 percent of the whites surveyed in 1984 were in favor of busing to achieve racial balance. And whites were more willing to bus their children to a school with a few blacks than to one that was mostly black.¹³ So white opinion changed



Stability and Change in Public Opinion

Public opinion remains stable over time on some issues and changes dramatically on others. The charts in part (a) indicate great stability in respondents' ideological self-classifications in separate surveys in 1964 and 1987. Opinions at both times were approximately normally distributed around "moderate," the modal category. (The 1964 distribution is slightly more compact because the earlier survey had only five response categories.) Part (b) shows how much public opinion on school integration has changed over four decades, from a majority opposed to integration to nearly all in favor. (Sources: (a) Data for 1964 are from Lloyd A. Free and Hadley Cantril, *The Political Beliefs of Americans* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968], p. 41. Data for 1987 come from James Allen Davis and Tom W. Smith, *General Social Surveys, 1972-1987: Cumulative Codebook* [Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, 1987], p. 94. (b) Surveys conducted by the National Opinion Research Center; reported in and recalculated from Tom W. Smith and Paul B. Sheatsley, "American Attitudes Toward Race Relations," *Public Opinion* 7 [October-November 1984]:15.)

Figure 5.3

dramatically with regard to the *principle* of desegregated schools, but whites seemed divided on how that principle should be implemented. Trying to explain this contradiction and the way in which political opinions in general are formed, political scientists cite the process of political socialization, the influence of cultural factors, and the interplay of ideology and knowledge. In the next several sections, we examine how these elements combine to create and affect public opinion.

POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

Public opinion is grounded in political values. People acquire their values through **political socialization**, a complex process through which individuals become aware of politics, learn political facts, and form political values. Think for a moment about your political socialization. What is your earliest memory of a president? When did you first learn about political parties? If you identify with a party, how did you decide to do so? If you don't, why don't you? Who was the first liberal you ever met? The first conservative? How did you first learn about the hydrogen bomb? About the Soviet Union?

Obviously, the paths to political awareness, knowledge, and values differ among individuals, but most people are exposed to the same influences or *agents of socialization*, especially in childhood through young adulthood. These influences are family, school, community, and peers.

The Agents of Early Socialization

Like psychologists, scholars of political socialization place great emphasis on early learning. Both groups point to two operating principles that characterize early learning:¹⁴

- The *primacy principle*. What is learned first is learned best.
- The *structuring principle*. What is learned first structures later learning.

Because most people learn first from their family, the family tends to be a very important agent of early socialization. The extent of family influence—and of the influence of other socializing agents—depends on the extent of our *exposure, communication, and receptivity* to them.¹⁵

Family. In most cases, exposure, communication, and receptivity are highest in family-child relationships. From their families, children learn a wide range of values—social, moral, religious, economic, and political—that help shape their opinions. It is not surprising, then, that most people link their earliest memories of politics with their families. Moreover, when parents are interested in politics, they influence their children to become more politically interested and informed.¹⁶

One of the most politically important things that many children learn from their parents is party identification. Party identification is learned in much the same way as religion. Children (very young children, anyway) imitate their parents. When parents share the same religion,

One Nation . . .

Throughout America—as in every other country—young children are socialized into politics through the school system. The simple ceremony of raising the flag teaches students that they are part of a larger political system—the United States of America—no matter where they live. As Feature 5.1 points out, however, they may not always get the message straight in the beginning.



children almost always are raised in that faith. When parents are of different religions, children are more likely to follow one or the other than to adopt a third. Similarly, parental influence on party identification is greater when both parents strongly identify with the same party.¹⁷ Overall, about half of American voters identify with the political party of their parents.¹⁸

Two crucial differences between party identification and religion may explain why youngsters are socialized into a religion much more surely and strongly than into a political party. The first is that most parents care a great deal more about their religion than about their politics. So they are more deliberate about exposing their children to religion. The second is that religious institutions themselves recognize the value of socialization; they offer Sunday schools and other activities that are high on exposure, communication, and receptivity—reinforcing parental guidance. American political parties, on the other hand, sponsor few activities to win the hearts of little Democrats and young Republicans, which leaves children open to counterinfluences in the school and community.*

School. According to some researchers, schools have an influence on political learning that is equal to or greater than that of parents.¹⁹ Here, however, we have to distinguish between primary and secondary schools on the one hand and institutions of higher education on the other. Primary schools introduce children to authority figures outside the family—the teacher, the principal, the police officer. This is one way

* The Communist party of the Soviet Union, in contrast, actively promotes the party image through the Young Pioneers, a group resembling a combined Boy Scout and Girl Scout organization.

these schools prepare children to accept the social order. They also teach the nation's slogans and symbols—the Pledge of Allegiance, the national anthem, national heroes and holidays. And they stress the norms of group behavior and democratic decision making (respecting the opinions of others, voting for class officers). In the process, they are teaching youngsters about the value of political equality.

Children do not always understand the meaning of the patriotic rituals and behaviors they learn in primary school (see Feature 5.1). In fact, much of this early learning—in the United States and elsewhere—is more indoctrination than education. By the end of the eighth grade, however, children begin to distinguish between government leaders and institutions. They become more aware of collective institutions, of Congress and elections, than they were earlier, when they tended to focus on the president and other single figures of government authority (see Figure 5.4).²⁰ In sum, most children emerge from elementary school with a sense of nationalism and an idealized notion of American government.²¹

Secondary schools continue to build “good citizens.” Field trips to the state legislature or the city council impress students with the majesty and power of government institutions. Secondary schools also offer more explicit political content in their curricula, including courses in recent U.S. history, civics, and American government. Better teachers challenge students to think critically about American government and politics; others concentrate on teaching civic responsibilities. The end product is

FEATURE 5.1**The Goodyear Blimp over Washington**

Elementary schools provide the first contact with American government for many children. Sometimes, youngsters fail to get the message right away. How many of you pledged allegiance to an “invisible” rather than an “indivisible” nation? In the excerpt below, playwright Arthur Miller relates his own misunderstanding of the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROXBURY, Conn. I no longer remember how many years it took for me to realize I was making a mistake in the Pledge of Allegiance. With high passion, I stood beside my seat in my Harlem grammar school and repeated the Pledge to the Flag, which always drooped next to the teacher's desk. My feelings were doubtless warmed by my having two uncles who had been in the Great War, one in the Navy, the other as a mule driver in the Army who brought ammunition up to the front in France.

Dirigibles were much in the news in the early 20's, and the Navy, as far as I was able to make out, owned them. Thus, the patriotic con-

nection, which was helped along by the fact that nobody I had ever heard speaking English had ever used the word Indivisible. Or Divisible either, for that matter.

None of which inhibited me from rapping out the Pledge each and every morning: “. . . One Nation in a Dirigible, with Liberty and Justice for All.” I could actually see in my mind's eye hordes of faces looking down at Earth through the windows of the Navy's airships. The whole United States was up there, all for one and one for all—and the whole gang in that Dirigible. One day, maybe I could get to ride in it, too, for I was deeply patriotic, and the height of Americanism, as I then understood it, was to ride in a Dirigible.

Source: Arthur Miller, “School Prayer: A Political Dirigible,” *New York Times*, 12 March 1984. Copyright © 1984 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission.

Children's Images of Government

This graph shows how the political understanding of primary school students moves from people to institutions. Students in different grades were given a series of pictures and were asked to pick the two that best depicted our government. In the second and third grades, most chose pictures of Presidents Washington and Kennedy. By the eighth grade, Congress and voting were selected much more frequently than the presidents. (Source: David Easton and Jack Dennis, *Children in the Political System* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969]. Copyright © 1969. Reprinted with permission of David Easton and Jack Dennis, and the University of Chicago Press.)

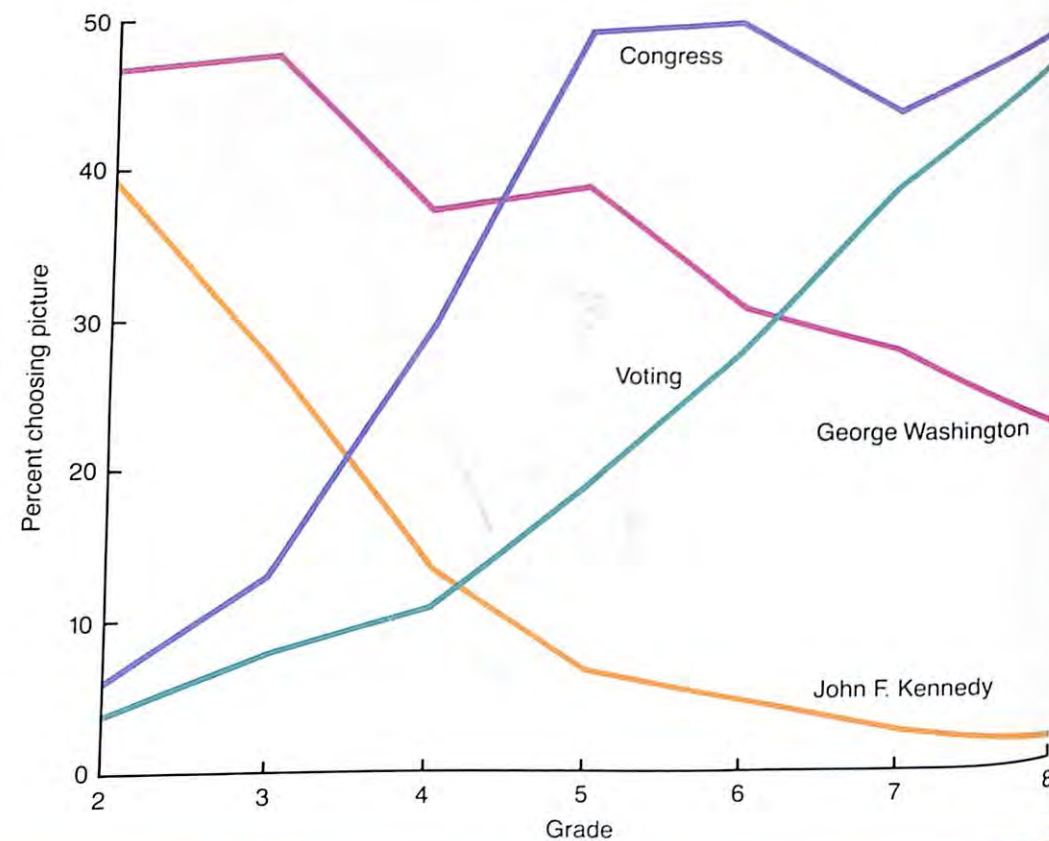


Figure 5.4

a greater awareness of the political process and the people involved in that process (see Figure 5.5).

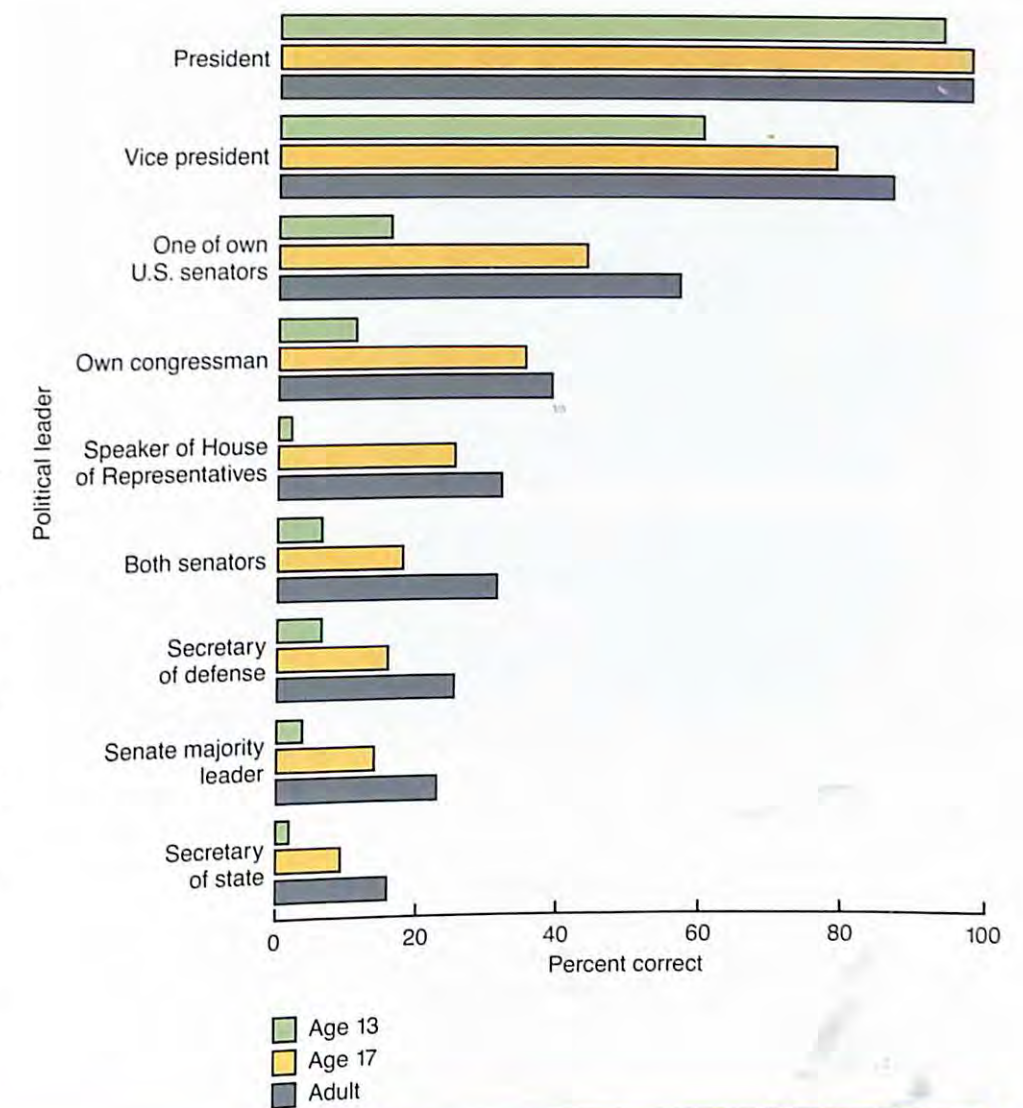
Despite teachers' efforts to build children's trust in the political process, outside events can erode that trust when children grow up. Surveys of adults showed substantial drops in trust in the national government during the Watergate affair (1972–1974) and when American embassy personnel were held hostage in Iran in 1980. But recent survey data show that Americans trust their government as much as or more than do citizens of some other Western nations. Moreover, the same study revealed that Americans' pride in their country was considerably greater than that of the other respondents.²²

Political learning at the college level can be very like that in high school or very different. The degree of difference is apt to increase if professors (or the texts they use) encourage their students to question authority. Questioning dominant political values does not necessarily mean rejecting them. For example, this text encourages you to recognize that freedom and equality—two idealized values in our culture—often conflict. It also invites you to think of democracy in terms of competing institutional models, one of which challenges the idealized notion of democracy. These alternative perspectives are meant to teach you about American political values, not to subvert those values. College courses that are intended to stimulate critical thinking have the potential to introduce to or develop in some students political ideas that are radically different from those they bring to class. And this is something most high school courses do not do.

Knowledge of Political Leaders, by Age Groups

Do people actually learn anything about politics during high school? They seem to, according to a study that asked children at ages 13 and 17 and young adults to write down the last names of people who held the public offices listed below. (Respondents were not penalized for spelling errors.) The percentage of correct responses increased for each age group, but the greatest increases occurred during the high school years, between ages thirteen and seventeen. (Source: Fred I. Greenstein, "What the President Means to Americans," in *Choosing the President*, ed. James D. Barber [Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974], p. 174.)

Figure 5.5



Community and peers. Your community and your peers are different but generally overlapping groups. Your *community* is the people of all ages with whom you come in contact because they live or work near you. Your *peers* are friends, classmates, and coworkers. Usually, they are your age and live within your community.

The makeup of the community has a lot to do with how political opinions are formed. *Homogeneous communities*—those with members similar in ethnicity, race, religion, or occupational status—can exert strong pressures on both children and adults to conform to the dominant attitude. For example, if all your neighbors talk up the candidates of one party and criticize the candidates of the other, it makes it difficult to voice or even hold a dissenting opinion.²³ Communities of one ethnic group or religion may also hold negative attitudes about members of other groups. Although community socialization is usually reinforced in the schools, schools sometimes teach ideas (one example is sex education) that run counter to community values.

Peer groups are sometimes used by children and adults as a defense against community pressures. Adolescent peer groups are particularly useful against parental pressures. In adolescence, children rely on their peers to defend their dress and lifestyle, not their politics. At the college level, however, peer group influence on politics can grow substantially, often fed by new learning that clashes with parental beliefs. A classic study of female students at Bennington College found that many became substantially more liberal than their affluent conservative parents. A follow-up study twenty-five years later showed that most retained their liberal attitudes, in part because their spouses and friends (peers) supported their views.²⁴

Continuing Socialization

Political socialization continues throughout life. As parental and school influences wane, peer groups (neighbors, coworkers, club members) assume a greater importance in promoting political awareness and in developing political opinions. Because adults usually learn about political events from the mass media—newspapers, magazines, television, and radio—the media themselves emerge as socialization agents. The role of television is especially important: A majority of adults rely on television for most of their information about politics.²⁵ (The mass media are so important in the political socialization of both children and adults that we devote a whole chapter—Chapter 6—to a discussion of their political role.)

Regardless of how people learn about politics, as they grow older, they gain perspective on government. They are apt to measure new candidates (and new ideas) against the old ones they remember. Their values also change, reflecting their own self-interest. As voters age, for example, they begin to see more merit in government spending for social security than they did when they were younger. Finally, political learning comes simply through exposure and familiarity. One example is the simple act of voting, which people do with increasing regularity as they grow older.

SOCIAL GROUPS AND POLITICAL VALUES

No two people are influenced by precisely the same socialization agents in precisely the same way. Each individual experiences a unique process of political socialization and forms a unique set of political values. Still, people with similar backgrounds do share learning experiences; this means they tend to develop similar political opinions. In this section, we examine the ties between people's social backgrounds and their political values. In the process, we look at two questions that appeared in a survey taken in 1987:²⁶

1. Would you allow an admitted communist to teach in a college?
2. Do you think that the government should reduce income differences between rich and poor?

To Have and Have Not

Everyone feels uneasy at the sight of poverty in the presence of wealth. The question is, what should be done about poverty? Should the government step in to reduce income differences between the rich and the poor, perhaps by taxing the wealthy at higher rates and supplementing the income of the poor? Or should the government take no more from the wealthy than it does from the middle class, or even from the lower class?

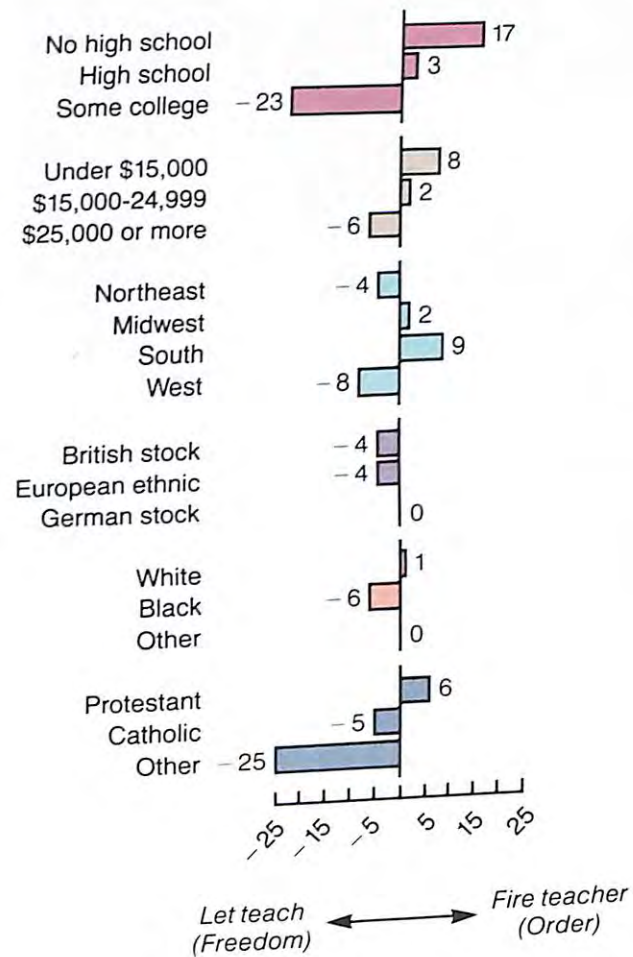


Other questions might not produce identical results but would probably show the same general tendencies.

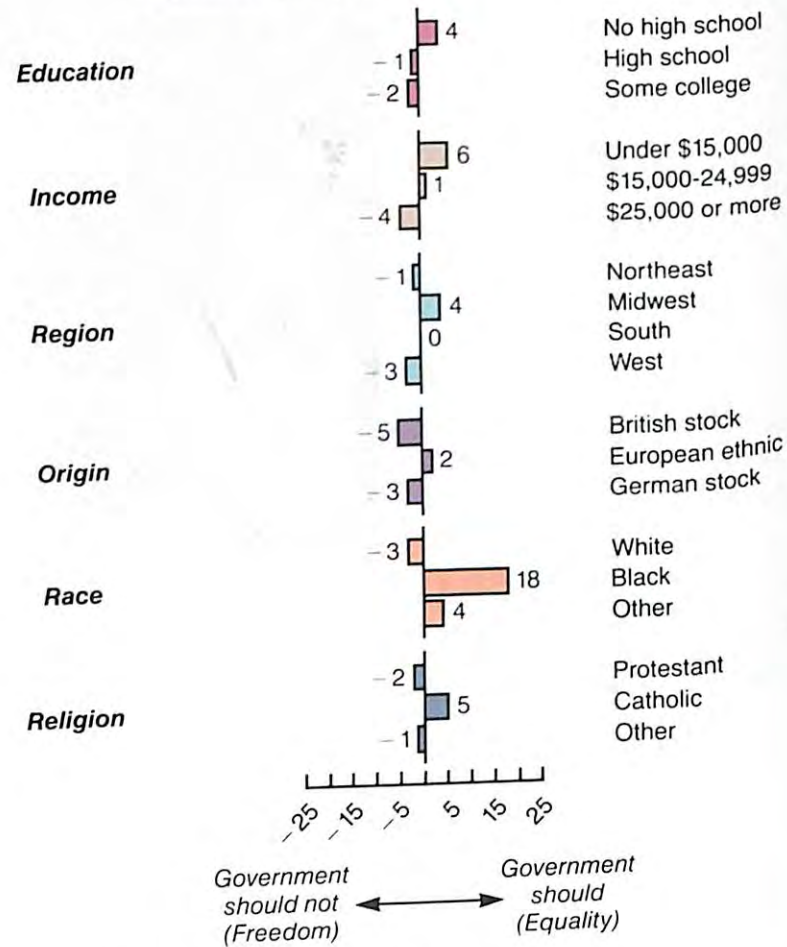
We introduced the first question, about allowing a communist to teach, in Figure 5.2. This question is politically relevant because of the original dilemma of government, the conflict between freedom and order. Those who answered "no" to the question were willing to deny freedom of speech to a teacher who threatens the existing economic and political order. They apparently valued order over individual freedom. The second question, about the government reducing income differences, deals with the modern dilemma of government, the conflict between freedom and equality. Those who answered "yes" think that government should promote economic equality, even if that means taxing the rich more heavily (reducing their freedom to use their money as they want). These respondents apparently valued equality over freedom.

Overall, the responses to each of these questions were divided approximately equally. For the entire national sample, slightly more than half the respondents (52 percent) were in favor of firing a communist teacher. And almost half (46 percent) of all respondents thought the government should reduce income differences. However, sharp differences in attitudes on both issues emerged when respondents were grouped by socioeconomic factors—education, income, region, origin, race, and religion. These differences are shown in Figure 5.6 as positive and negative deviations in percentage points from the national averages on the two questions. (To learn what the national average is on income distribution in other countries, see Compared With What? 5.1.) Bars that extend to the right identify groups that are more likely than most Amer-

a. I should like to ask you some questions about a man who admits he is a communist. Suppose he is teaching in a college? Should he be fired or not?



b. Should the government in Washington reduce income differences between the rich and the poor, perhaps by raising taxes of wealthy families or by giving income assistance to the poor?

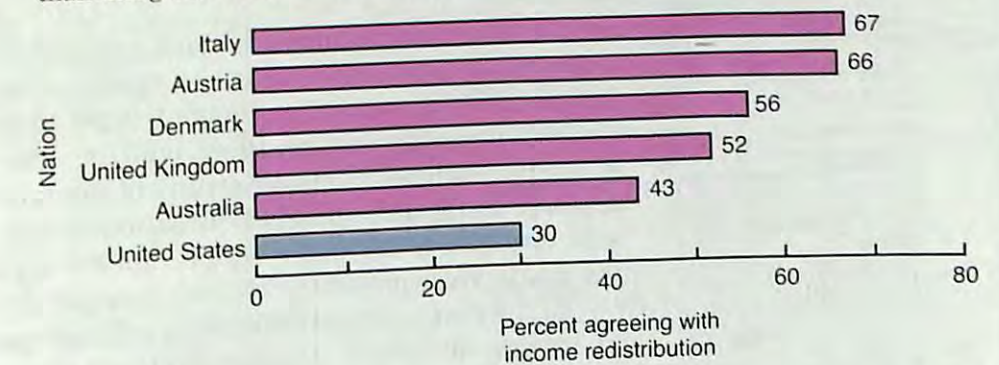


Group Deviations from National Opinion on Two Questions
Two questions—one on the dilemma of freedom versus order and the other on the dilemma of freedom versus equality—were asked of a national sample in 1987. Public opinion for the nation as a whole was equally divided on each question. The two graphs above show how respondents in several social groups deviated from overall public opinion. The longer the bars next to each group, the more its respondents deviated from the 50-50 split of public opinion. Bars that extend to the left show opinions that deviate toward freedom. Bars that extend to the right show deviations away from freedom, toward order (part a) or equality (part b). (Source: National Opinion Research Center, 1987 General Survey.)

COMPARED WITH WHAT? 5.1

Opinions on Income Redistribution

Compared with citizens in other Western nations, Americans are much less likely to support government programs that redistribute wealth. Respondents interviewed in 1985 in six nations were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement "It is the responsibility of the government to reduce the difference in income between people with high incomes and those with low incomes." In every country but the United States, more respondents agreed than disagreed with the statement.



Source: International Social Survey Program, 1985 Role of Government Survey Codebook (ZA 1490) [Federal Republic of Germany: Zentralarchiv, Köln University], pp. 45-46.

This result is clearly shown in Figure 5.6a, where those with more education are more willing to let an admitted communist teach. (That is, respondents with no high school education would tend to fire the teacher, while those with some college education would tend to choose freedom.) When confronted with issues that involve a choice between personal freedom and social order, college-educated respondents tend to choose freedom.

With regard to the role of government in reducing income inequality, Figure 5.6b shows that more education produces opinions that favor freedom, this time over equality. The higher their level of education, the less respondents supported the redistribution of income. You may think that better-educated people should be humanitarian, that they should support government programs to help the poor. However, educated people tend to be wealthier people, who would be more heavily taxed to help the poor. Thus in this case at least, the effect of education on public opinion is overridden by the effect of income.

Income

In many countries, differences in social class—based on social background and occupational status—divide people in their politics.²⁷ In the United States, we have avoided the uglier aspects of class conflict, but here wealth sometimes substitutes for class. As shown in Figure 5.6,

icans to sacrifice freedom for a given value of government, either equality or order. Below we examine these opinion patterns more closely for each socioeconomic group.

Education

Education increases citizens' awareness and understanding of political issues. Higher education also underscores the value of free speech in a democratic society, increasing our tolerance for those who dissent.

Figure 5.6

wealth is consistently related to opinions that limit the government's role in promoting order and equality. Those with higher incomes are more likely to allow a communist to teach and more likely to oppose the redistribution of income. We find that wealth and education, then, have a similar impact on opinion here: In both cases, the groups with more education and higher income opt for freedom. But education has the stronger effect on opinions about order, and income has the stronger effect on opinions about equality.²⁸

Region

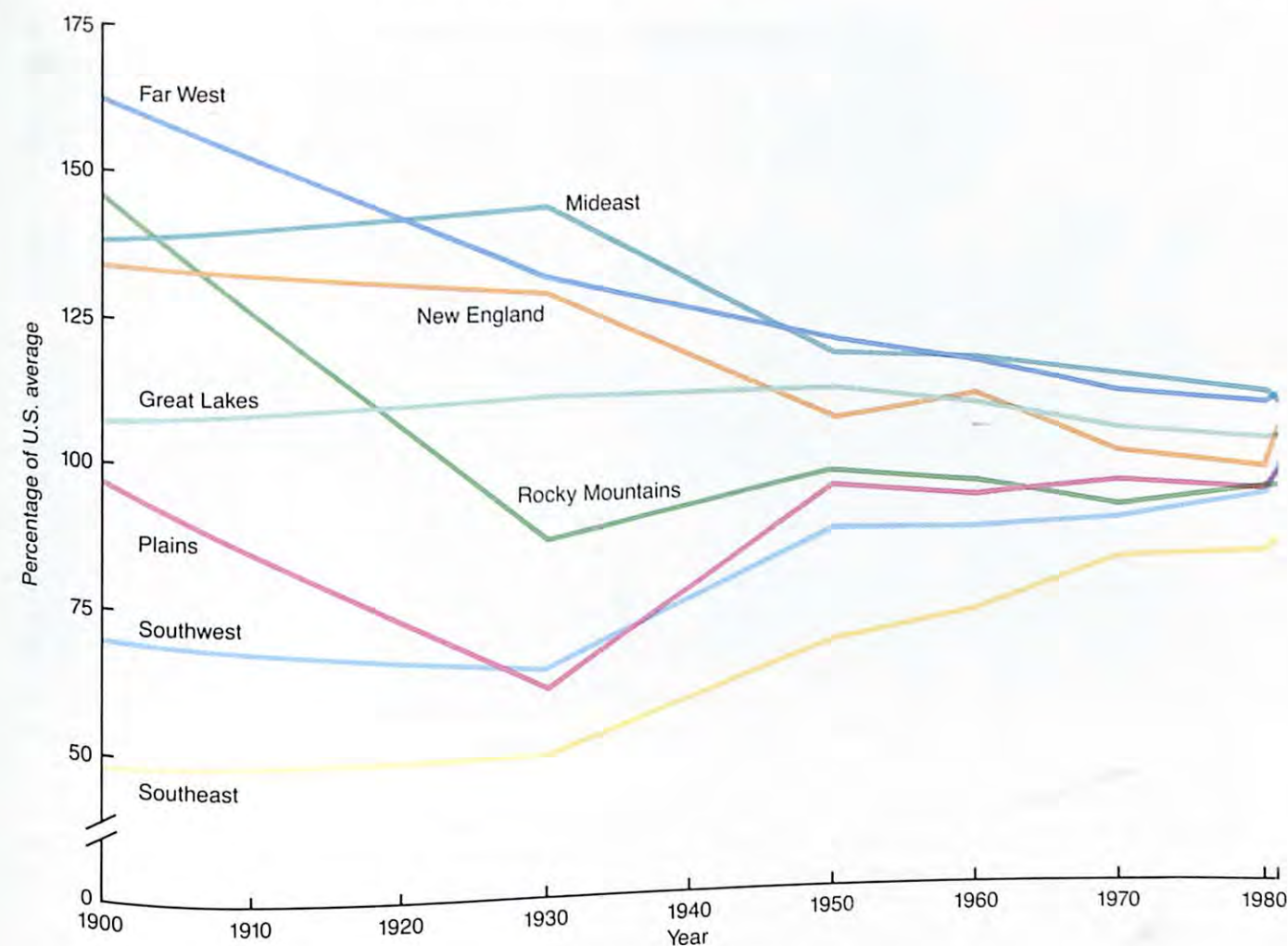
Early in our country's history, regional differences were politically important—important enough to spark a civil war between the North and South. For nearly a hundred years after the Civil War, regional differences continued to affect politics. The moneyed Northeast was thought to control the purse strings of capitalism. The Midwest was long regarded as the stronghold of "isolationism" in foreign affairs. The South was virtually a one-party region, almost completely Democratic. And the rustic West pioneered its own mixture of progressive politics.

In the past, cultural differences among regions were fed by differences in wealth. In recent decades, however, the movement of people and wealth away from the Northeast and Midwest to the Sunbelt states in the South and Southwest has equalized the per capita income of the regions (see Figure 5.7). One product of this equalization is that the "Solid South" is no longer solid for the Democratic party. In fact, the South led the nation in voting for Richard Nixon, the Republican candidate for president, in 1972, and was again strong for Ronald Reagan in 1984.

There are differences in public opinion among the four major regions of the United States, but not much. Figure 5.6 shows that people in the West are somewhat more likely to oppose government efforts to equalize income than are people in the Midwest. Regional differences are greater on the question of social order, particularly between the West, where respondents are more likely to support freedom of speech, and the South, where they are more likely to stop a communist from teaching. Despite these differences, regional effects on public opinion toward these issues are weaker than the effects of most other socioeconomic factors.

The "Old" Ethnicity: European Origin

At the turn of the century, the major ethnic groups in America were immigrants from Ireland, Italy, Germany, Poland, and other European countries, who came to the United States in waves during the late 1800s and early 1900s. These immigrants entered a nation that had been founded by British settlers over a hundred years earlier. They found themselves in a strange land, usually without money and unable to speak the language. Moreover, their religious backgrounds—mainly Catholic and Jewish—differed from the predominant Protestantism of the earlier settlers. Local politicians saw these newcomers, who were concentrated in urban areas in the Northeast and Midwest, as a new source of votes and soon mobilized them into politics. Holding jobs of lower status, these urban ethnics became part of the great coalition of Democratic



Per Capita Income Across Regions, 1900-1981

At the beginning of the century, vast differences in wealth could be found among the nation's regions. The wealthiest people were located in the Northeast and on the West Coast; the poorest were in the Southeast. Over time, regional differences in income have narrowed dramatically. The graph below shows per capita income as a percentage of the national average for eight different regions from 1900 to 1981. As per capita incomes have converged, the regions have lost a basis for political differences. (Source: Public Opinion 6, February-March 1983:22. Reprinted with permission of American Enterprise Institute.)

Figure 5.7

voters that President Franklin Roosevelt forged in the 1930s. And for years after, studies of public opinion and voting behavior found consistent differences between their political preferences and those of the native Anglo-Saxons.²⁹

More recent studies of public opinion show these differences are disappearing. Figure 5.6 analyzes public opinion for three groups of white ethnics, who accounted for about half of the sample interviewed. Respondents who claimed English, Scottish, or Welsh ancestry ("British stock") and German, Austrian, or Swiss ancestry ("German stock") each comprise about 15 percent of the sample. "European ethnics" (primarily Catholics and Jews from Ireland, Italy, and Eastern Europe) comprise

Greek Blarney

Michael Dukakis, the son of Greek immigrants, courts the Irish vote in Boston. Many young people today do not realize that early Irish immigrants stood at the bottom of the social ladder in American cities. Usually manual laborers, they often worked at the dirtiest and most dangerous jobs, and often lived in ghettos. Like so many other European ethnic groups, the Irish used their voting strength to win political power. Dukakis is happy to be Irish on St. Patrick's Day.



about 20 percent. The differences in opinions among these groups are not large. However, Americans of British stock—mostly “WASPs” (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants)—are more opposed to government action to equalize incomes than are European ethnics, but both groups are more likely to allow a communist to teach in college than are Americans in general. European ethnics have been assimilated into America's melting pot; they are no longer very different from other white Americans in language, education, or occupation.³⁰ But if this “old” ethnicity—European origin—is disappearing, a “new” ethnicity—race—is taking its place.

The “New” Ethnicity: Race

For many years after the Civil War, the issue of race in American politics was defined as “how the South should treat the Negro.” The debate between North and South over this issue became a conflict of civil rights and states' rights—a conflict in which blacks were primarily objects, not participants. But with the rise of black consciousness and the grassroots civil rights demonstrations led by Dr. Martin Luther King and others in the late 1950s and 1960s, blacks emerged as a political force. Through a series of civil rights laws backed by President Johnson and northern Democrats in Congress, blacks secured genuine voting rights in the South and exercised those rights more vigorously in the North. Although they made up only about 12 percent of the total population, blacks comprised sizable voting blocs in southern states and in urban areas in northern states. Like the European ethnics before them, American blacks were being courted for their votes; suddenly their opinions were politically important.

Black Amigo

In his 1984 presidential campaign, the Reverend Jesse Jackson sought to build a “rainbow coalition” consisting of whites, blacks, Asians, and Hispanics. Although he broadened his campaign impressively in 1988, Jackson again actively sought support within communities of minority members. Here he appeals to a Hispanic community.



Blacks presently constitute the largest racial minority in American politics but not the only significant one. Another 5 percent of the population are Asians, American Indians (native Americans), and other non-whites. People of Spanish origin—Hispanics—are also commonly but inaccurately regarded as a racial group. According to the 1980 census, Hispanics make up about 6 percent of the nation's population; but they comprise up to 19 percent of the population in California, 21 percent in Texas, and 37 percent in New Mexico.³¹ Although they are politically strong in some communities, Hispanics have lagged behind blacks in mobilizing across the nation. But they too are being wooed by white candidates and are beginning to run more of their own candidates.

Blacks and members of other racial minorities display similar political attitudes. The reasons are twofold.³² First, racial minorities (perhaps excepting second-generation Asians) tend to have low **socioeconomic status** (a combination of education, occupational status, and income). Second, all have been targets of racial prejudice and discrimination. Figure 5.6b clearly shows the effects of race on the freedom-equality issue. Blacks and other minority members (mostly Hispanics) strongly favor government action to equalize incomes, choosing equality over freedom. Blacks also choose freedom over order when the issue is firing a communist teacher.

Religion

Since the last major wave of European immigration in the 1930s and 1940s, the religious makeup of the United States has remained fairly stable. Fully 65 percent of those surveyed in 1987 were Protestant, about

25 percent identified themselves as Catholic, less than 2 percent were Jewish, 2 percent claimed other religions, and 7 percent chose "none."³³ For many years, analysts had found strong and consistent differences in the opinions of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. Protestants were more conservative than Catholics, and Catholics tended to be more conservative than Jews.

Some differences remained in 1987, especially on the government's role in the question of freedom versus order (the communist teacher). Protestants, who constitute the religious majority in America, tend toward order; Catholics tend toward freedom; and the other religious groupings strongly favor freedom.

FROM VALUES TO IDEOLOGY

So far we have studied differences in groups' opinions on two survey questions. Although responses to these questions reflect value choices between freedom and order and between freedom and equality, we have not yet interpreted group opinions in the context of *political ideology* (the set of values and beliefs people hold about the purpose and scope of government). Political scientists generally agree that ideology enters into public opinion on specific issues; there is much less consensus on the extent to which people think in ideological terms.³⁴ They also agree that the public's ideological thinking cannot be categorized adequately in conventional liberal-conservative terms.

The Degree of Ideological Thinking in Public Opinion

In an early but important study, respondents were asked about the parties and candidates in the 1956 election.³⁵ Only about 12 percent of the sample volunteered responses that contained ideological terms (such as *liberal*, *conservative*, and *capitalism*). Most of the respondents (42 percent) evaluated the parties and candidates in terms of "benefits to groups" (farmers, workers, or businesspeople, for example). Others (24 percent) spoke more generally about "the nature of the times" (for example, inflation, unemployment, and the threat of war). Finally, a good portion of the sample (22 percent) displayed no classifiable issue content in their responses. Other studies have found that the vast majority of the electorate are confused by ideological terms. Consider this response from a resident of the San Francisco Bay Area in 1972 to the question "What do the terms *liberal* and *conservative* mean to you?"

Oh conservative. Liberal and conservative. Liberal and conservative. I haven't given it much thought. I wouldn't know. I don't know what those would mean! Liberal . . . liberal . . . liberal. And conservative. Well, if a person is liberal with their money they squander their money? Does it fall in that same category? If you're conservative you don't squander so much, you save a little, huh?³⁶

Subsequent research has shown somewhat greater ideological awareness within the electorate.³⁷ The proportion of ideologues—those cred-

ited with using ideological terms in their responses—jumped to 27 percent during the 1964 presidential contest between Lyndon Johnson, a Democrat and ardent liberal, and Barry Goldwater, a Republican and arch conservative. Later studies found that the proportion of ideologues in samples of voters remained above 20 percent in subsequent presidential elections.³⁸ The tendency to respond to questions by using ideological terms is strongly related to education, which helps people understand political issues and relate them to one another. Personal experiences in the socialization process can also lead people to think ideologically. For example, children raised in strong union households may be taught to distrust private enterprise and to value collective action through the government.

True ideologues hold a consistent set of values and beliefs about the purpose and scope of government, and they tend to evaluate candidates in ideological terms.³⁹ There are people who respond to questions in ways that *seem* ideological but aren't, because the people do not understand the underlying principles. For example, most respondents dutifully comply when they are asked to place themselves somewhere on a liberal-conservative continuum. The result, as shown in Figure 5.2, is an approximately normal distribution centering on "moderate," the modal category. But many people settle on "moderate" when they do not clearly understand the alternatives because it's a safe choice. In fact, "moderate" was chosen by 41 percent of those without a college education but by only 26 percent of those with a college education. An earlier study in 1984 gave respondents another choice: the statement "I haven't thought much about it"—which allowed them to avoid placing themselves on the liberal-conservative continuum. In this study, 26 percent of the respondents admitted that they had not thought much about liberalism or conservatism.⁴⁰ The extent of ideological thinking in America, then, is considerably less than it might seem from responses to questions that ask people to describe themselves as liberals or conservatives.

The Quality of Ideological Thinking in Public Opinion

It is also not clear what people's ideological self-placement means in the 1980s. Originally, the liberal-conservative continuum represented a single dimension: attitudes toward the scope of government activity. Liberals were in favor of more government action to provide public goods, and conservatives were in favor of less. This simple distinction is not as useful today. Many people who call themselves "liberals" no longer favor government activism in general, and many self-styled "conservatives" no longer oppose it in principle.

In Chapter 1, we proposed an alternative ideological classification based on the relationships among the values of freedom, order, and equality. We described liberals as people who believe that government should promote equality, even if some freedom is lost in the process, but who oppose surrendering freedom to government-imposed order. Conservatives do not oppose equality in and of itself, but put a higher value on freedom than equality when the two conflict. Yet conservatives are not above restricting freedom when threatened with the loss of order. So both

groups value freedom, but one is more willing to trade freedom for equality, and the other is more inclined to trade freedom for order.

If you have trouble thinking about these tradeoffs on a single dimension, you are perfectly normal. The liberal-conservative continuum presented to survey respondents takes a two-dimensional concept and squeezes it into a one-dimensional format.⁴¹ As a result, many people have difficulty deciding whether they are liberal or conservative, and others confidently choose the same point on the continuum for entirely different reasons. People describe themselves as *liberal* or *conservative* because of the symbolic value of the terms as much as for what they know about ideology.⁴²

Studies of the public's ideological thinking find that two themes run through people's minds when they are asked to describe liberals and conservatives. One associates liberals with change and conservatives with traditional values. This theme corresponds to the distinction between liberals and conservatives on the exercise of freedom and the maintenance of order.⁴³

The other theme has to do with equality. The conflict between freedom and equality was at the heart of President Roosevelt's New Deal economic policies (social security, minimum wage legislation, farm price supports) in the 1930s. These policies expanded the interventionist role of the national government. And government intervention in the economy served to distinguish liberals from conservatives for decades afterward.⁴⁴ Attitudes toward government interventionism still underlie contemporary opinions of domestic economic policies.⁴⁵ Liberals support intervention to promote their ideas of economic equality; conservatives favor less government intervention and more individual freedom in economic activities.

Ideological Types in the United States

Our ideological typology in Chapter 1 incorporates these two themes (see Figure 1.2). It classifies people as *liberals* if they favor freedom over order and equality over freedom. *Conservatives* favor the reverse set of values. *Libertarians* favor freedom over both equality and order—the opposite of *populists*. We can classify respondents according to their ideological *tendencies*, cross-tabulating their answers to the two questions about order and equality. As shown in Figure 5.8, people's responses to the questions about firing a communist teacher and redistributing income show virtually no correlation, which clearly indicates that people do not decide about government activity according to a one-dimensional ideological standard.* Figure 5.8 can also be used to classify the sample according to the two dimensions in our ideological typology. There is substantial room for error in using only two issues to classify people in an ideological framework. Still, if the typology is worthwhile, the results should be meaningful, and they are.

The respondents in the 1987 sample depicted in Figure 5.6 divide almost evenly in their ideological tendencies among the four categories

* For the statistically minded, the Pearson product-moment correlation for the fourfold table is minus .01.

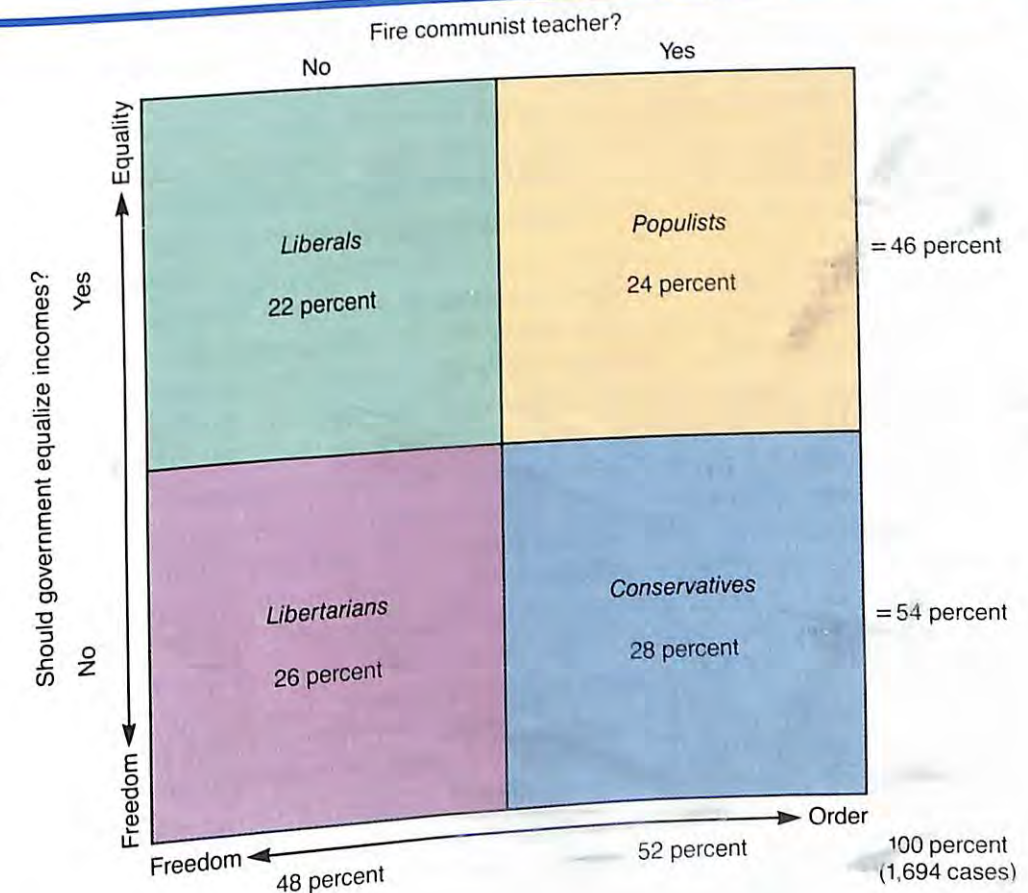
of the typology. Those who responded with conservative and libertarian tendencies to both questions were only slightly more prevalent than those who gave populist and liberal responses.⁴⁶ Although liberals are the smallest group, they still account for almost one-quarter of the public. These results are similar to findings for earlier years by other researchers who conducted more exhaustive analyses involving more survey questions. Using the same basic typology, these scholars classified substantial portions of their respondents in each ideological category in 1980.⁴⁷

Respondents who readily locate themselves on a single dimension running from liberal to conservative later often contradict their self-placement when answering questions that trade off freedom for either order or equality.⁴⁸ Obviously, most Americans' opinions do not fit a one-dimensional liberal-conservative continuum. A two-dimensional typology—like the one in Figure 5.8—allows us to analyze responses more meaningfully.⁴⁹ Most Americans do not express opinions that are consistently liberal or conservative. In fact, most Americans hold combinations of opinions about the scope of government action that are either conservative or libertarian. However, there are important differences in ideological tendencies among socioeconomic groups.

Populists are prominent among minorities and others with little education and low income, groups that tend to look favorably on the benefits of government in general. *Libertarians* are concentrated among

Figure 5.8
Respondents Classified by Ideological Tendencies

Choices between freedom and order and between freedom and equality were represented by two survey questions that asked respondents whether a communist should teach in college and whether the government should equalize income differences. People's responses to the questions showed no correlation, demonstrating that these value choices cannot be explained by a simple liberal-conservative continuum. Instead, their responses conform to four different ideological types.



respondents with more education, with higher income, from British stock, who live in the West. These groups tend to be suspicious of government interference in their lives. *Conservatives* are found mainly in the South, and *liberals* are concentrated in the Northeast.

This more refined analysis of political ideology explains why even some Americans who pay close attention to politics find it difficult to locate themselves on the liberal-conservative continuum. Their problem is that they are liberal on some issues and conservative on others. Forced to choose along just one dimension, they choose the middle category, "moderate." However, our analysis also indicates that many respondents who classify themselves as liberals and conservatives do conform to our typology. There is value, then, in the liberal-conservative distinction, as long as we understand its limitations.

THE PROCESS OF FORMING POLITICAL OPINIONS

So far we have learned that people acquire their values through the socialization process and that different social groups develop different sets of political values. We also have learned that some people, but only a minority, think about politics ideologically, holding a consistent set of political attitudes and beliefs. However, we have not really discussed how people form opinions on any particular issue. In particular, how do those who are not ideologues—in other words, most citizens—form political opinions? We consider four factors—self-interest, political information, political leadership, and opinion schemas—that play a part in the process.

Self-Interest

The **self-interest principle** states that people choose what benefits them personally. This principle plays an obvious role in the way opinions are formed on government economic policies. Taxpayers tend to prefer low taxes to high taxes; farmers tend to favor candidates who promise them more support than those who promise them less. The self-interest principle also operates, but less clearly, for some government policies outside of economics. Members of minority groups tend to see more personal advantage in government policies that promote social equality than do members of majority groups; teenage males are more likely to oppose compulsory military service than are older people of either sex. Group leaders often "cue" group members, telling them what they should be for or against.⁵⁰

For many government policies, however, the self-interest principle plays little or no role, because the policies directly affect relatively few citizens. Outlawing prostitution is one example; legalized abortion is another. When such moral issues are involved in government policy, people form opinions based on their underlying values.

When moral issues are not in question and when they do not benefit directly from a policy, many people have trouble relating to the policy and forming an opinion. This tends to be true of the whole subject of

foreign policy, which few people interpret in terms of personal benefits. Here, many people have no opinion, or their opinions are not firmly held and are apt to change quite easily, given almost any new information.

Political Information

In the United States today, education is compulsory (usually to age sixteen) and the literacy rate is relatively high. The country boasts an unparalleled network of colleges and universities entered by one-third of all high school graduates. American citizens can obtain information from a variety of daily and weekly news publications. They can keep abreast of national and international affairs through nightly television news, which brings live coverage of world events via satellite from virtually anywhere in the world. Yet the average American displays an astonishing lack of political knowledge.

In a 1978 survey, for example, only about half the electorate knew that states are represented by two senators; only 30 percent knew that the term for a U.S. representative is two years; and less than one-quarter knew which two nations (the United States and the Soviet Union) were involved in the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) at the time it was being negotiated.⁵¹ Citizens' knowledge of politics just after an election is no more impressive. After the 1986 election, for example, only 22 percent of a national sample could correctly identify even one of their candidates for the House of Representatives, and only 38 percent correctly named either of their candidates for the Senate.⁵²

But Americans do not let political ignorance stop them from expressing their opinions. They readily offer opinions on issues ranging from capital punishment to nuclear power to the government's handling of the economy. One consequence of opinions based on little information is that they can change easily when new information becomes available. The result is a high degree of instability in public opinion poll results, depending on the way questions are worded and current events that bear on the issue.

Researchers use the term **political sophistication** to refer to the extent and shape of a person's knowledge about public affairs.⁵³ One study of political sophistication counted the number of specific political issues, actors, and events that 143 respondents brought up in hour-long interviews on political alienation. The average number of political references was 27. The highest number was 94, and the lowest was one—just a single reference to a political object in an hour-long interview on politics! What did people talk about during all that time? The researcher said that they talked about themselves: "Asked whether they are satisfied about the way things have been going in this country, they responded only about their job, family, friends, and other aspects of their own life."⁵⁴

The same author classified the American public into three broad groups of political sophistication. The least sophisticated (about 20 percent of the electorate) pay little attention to public affairs and seldom participate in politics. Most adults (about 75 percent) are only moderately sophisticated. "They half-attentively monitor the flow of political news, but they run for the most part on a psychological automatic pilot." Only a small portion of the electorate (about 5 percent) is politically sophis-

ticated, sharing the knowledge and conceptualization of professional politicians, journalists, and political analysts. As expected, education is strongly related to political sophistication, but so is participation in groups and parents' interest in politics. The author likens the development of political sophistication to a "spiral process . . . a gradual process in which interest breeds knowledge, which, in turn, breeds further interest and knowledge over time."⁵⁵ Political events and the actions of political leaders can contribute to that spiraling process.

We should note one correlation that researchers have not found. There is not any meaningful relationship between political sophistication and self-placement on the liberal-conservative scale. That is, people with equal knowledge about public affairs and with similar levels of conceptualization are as likely to think of themselves as liberals as conservatives.⁵⁶ Equal levels of political understanding, then, may produce very different political views as a result of individuals' unique patterns of political socialization.

Political Leadership

Public opinion on specific issues is often shaped—and sometimes even created—by political leaders, journalists, and policy experts. Because of their office and the media attention it receives, presidents are uniquely positioned to shape popular attitudes. A good example is public opinion on the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), the space-based weapons system often called "Star Wars." On March 23, 1983, President Reagan surprised the nation by announcing plans for a multibillion-dollar program to build a network of space satellites that could shoot down incoming enemy missiles using a new nuclear x-ray laser. SDI proved to be a highly controversial weapons system. The scientific community was deeply divided over whether it would be effective—or could even be built. The diplomatic community was divided over whether it would increase or reduce the chances of a world war. The economic community was divided over whether the nation could afford the vast expenditures SDI would require.

Nevertheless, 67 percent of the American people interviewed in the first month after the president announced the program thought the United States should try to develop the weapons system. Only 25 percent opposed the plan from the beginning, and a scant 8 percent had no opinion.⁵⁷ By August 1984, public support had slipped to 54 percent, and those with no opinion had increased to 12 percent. By July 1985, public support had dropped to 43 percent, and the number with no opinion had grown to 22 percent.⁵⁸

Clearly, the initial show of public support for the president's SDI proposal was made without much understanding of its costs and consequences. Over time, other opinion shapers (technical experts and journalists) offered their own analyses of SDI. Taken together, experts and especially television news commentators can affect public opinion even more than popular presidents.⁵⁹ As more information became available about the program over the next two years, it not only encountered more opposition, but, ironically, more people had no opinion about it—reflecting the opposing arguments expressed by opinion shapers. Of those who

had an opinion, Republican voters favored the space-based system more than did Democratic voters. Many who supported SDI undoubtedly based their opinions on their positive views of President Reagan; and many opposed it because of their negative attitude toward the president. Others formed their opinions according to their faith in technology, their views of the Soviet threat, or other beliefs they held at the time.

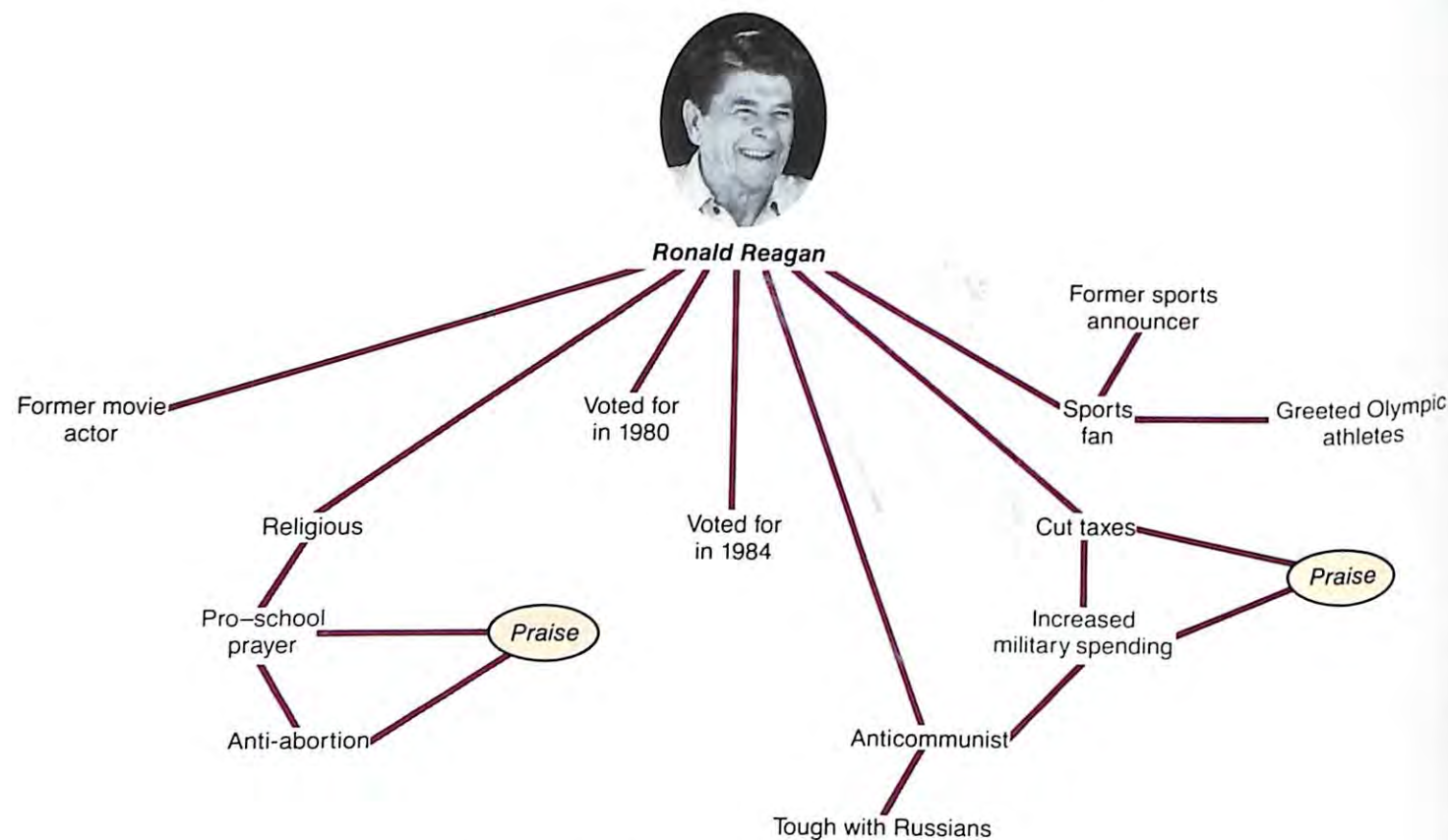
Opinion Schemas

We have learned that only a minority of the population, about one person in five, can be classified as ideologues. These people regularly think about politics in ideological terms and come to new political issues with a set of political beliefs and values that helps them form opinions on these issues. But even people who do not approach politics with full-blown ideologies interpret political issues in terms of some pre-existing mental structure.

Psychologists refer to the packet of pre-existing beliefs that people apply to specific issues as an **opinion schema**—a network of organized knowledge and beliefs that guides the processing of information on a particular subject.⁶⁰ Figure 5.9 shows an opinion schema about Ronald Reagan that might be held by a conservative. It is only a partial schema, but it suggests the wide range of attitudes and beliefs that affect thinking about political leaders and their policies. Our opinion schemas change as we acquire new information and act (form opinions) on it. A conservative acting on the opinion schema in Figure 5.9 probably would support Reagan's SDI weapon system; that support, in turn, would be incorporated into a revised schema.

The schema concept gives us a sharper tool for analyzing public opinion than the blunter concept of ideology. Opinion schemas can pertain to any political figure and to any subject—race, economics, or farming, for example. One study found an opinion schema that structured attitudes toward specific issues in foreign policy (defense spending, nuclear arms, military involvement, international trade) under three broader values (militarism, anticommunism, isolationism), which in turn were subsumed under two core values (morality of warfare, ethnocentrism).⁶¹ Liberal-conservative self-placement showed little relationship to the same foreign policy attitudes.

Still, the more encompassing concept of ideology is hard to escape. Researchers have found that people tend to organize their personal schemas within a hierarchy of opinion that parallels broader ideological categories. A liberal's opinion schema about Reagan may not differ from a conservative's in the facts it contains, but it differs considerably in its evaluation of those facts.⁶² In the liberal's schema, for example, anger might replace the conservative's praise for Reagan's stance against abortion. The main value of schemas for understanding how opinions are formed is that they remind us that opinion questions trigger many different images, connections, and values in the mind of each respondent. Given the complexity of factors in individual opinion schemas, it is surprising that researchers find as many strong correlations as they do among individuals' social backgrounds, general values, and specific opinions.



Hypothetical Opinion Schema About Ronald Reagan

People express opinions on issues, persons, or events according to pre-existing attitudes and beliefs that they associate with the question being asked. Psychologists sometimes refer to this network of attitudes and beliefs, and their relationships as an opinion schema. Below is a hypothetical opinion schema that might be associated with Ronald Reagan in the mind of a conservative who voted for Reagan in the 1980 and 1984 presidential elections. (Source: From "A Primer of Information-Processing Theory for the Political Scientist," by Reid Hastie, 1986, in Richard R. Lau and David O. Sears, eds. *Political Cognition*, p. 32. Copyright 1986 by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Reprinted by permission.)

Figure 5.9

SUMMARY

Public opinion does not rule in America. On most issues, it merely sets general boundaries for government policy. Americans would not tolerate flogging criminals as a punishment for crime, but most believe death is a legitimate penalty for murder. The shape of the distribution of opinion (normal, skewed, or bimodal) indicates how sharply the public is divided. Bimodal distributions harbor the greatest potential for political conflict. The stability of a distribution over time indicates how settled people are in their opinions. Because most Americans' ideological opinions are normally distributed around the "moderate" category and have been so for decades, government policies can vary from left to right over time without provoking severe political conflict.

People form their values through the process of political socialization. The most important socialization agents in childhood and young adulthood are family, school, community, and peers. Members of the same social group tend to experience similar socialization processes and thus to adopt similar values. People in different social groups, who hold different values, often express vastly different opinions. Differences in education, race, and religion tend to produce sharper divisions of opinion today on questions of order and equality than do differences in income, region, and ethnicity.

Although most people do not think about politics in ideological terms, when asked to do so by pollsters, they readily classify themselves along a liberal-conservative continuum. Many respondents—especially those without a college education—choose the mid-

dle category, "moderate," the safe choice. Others classify themselves as liberals or conservatives for vague or contradictory reasons. Our two-dimensional framework for analyzing ideology according to the values of order and equality produces four ideological types: liberals, conservatives, libertarians, and populists. Classified according to our typology, libertarians and populists have trouble placing themselves on a liberal-conservative continuum; our liberals and conservatives do not.

Responses to the survey questions we used to establish our ideological typology divide the American electorate almost equally into four ideological tendencies. A slight plurality reveals conservative tendencies, wanting government to impose order but not equality. An almost equal percentage is inclined toward libertarianism, opposing government action for either order or equality. Populism, which favors more government action to promote both order and equality, is in third place by a small margin. The liberal response pattern, which favors equality but not order, is least common but still sizable at 22 percent.

In addition to ideological orientation, many other factors enter the process of forming political opinions. When individuals stand to benefit or suffer from proposed government policies, they usually base their opinions on self-interest. When citizens lack information on which to base their opinions, they usually respond anyway, which leads to substantial fluctuations in poll results, depending on how questions are worded and intervening events. In the absence of information, respondents are particularly susceptible to cues of support or opposition from political leaders. The various factors that impinge on the process of forming political opinions can be mapped out within an opinion schema, a network of beliefs and attitudes about a particular topic. The schema imagery helps us visualize the complex process of forming opinions. But the process is not completely idiosyncratic: People tend to organize their schemas according to broader ideological thinking.

Which model of democracy, the majoritarian or the pluralist, is correct in its assumptions about public opinion? Sometimes the public shows clear and settled opinions on government policy, conforming to the majoritarian model. However, often public opinion is firmly grounded, not in knowledge, but in ideological bias. Moreover, powerful groups often divide on what they want government to do. This lack of consensus leaves politicians with a great deal of lat-

itude in enacting specific policies, a finding that conforms to the pluralist model. Of course, politicians' actions are under close scrutiny by journalists reporting in the mass media. We turn to the impact of this scrutiny and the mass media on politics in Chapter 6.

Key Terms

public opinion
normal distribution
skewed distribution
bimodal distribution
stable distribution
political socialization

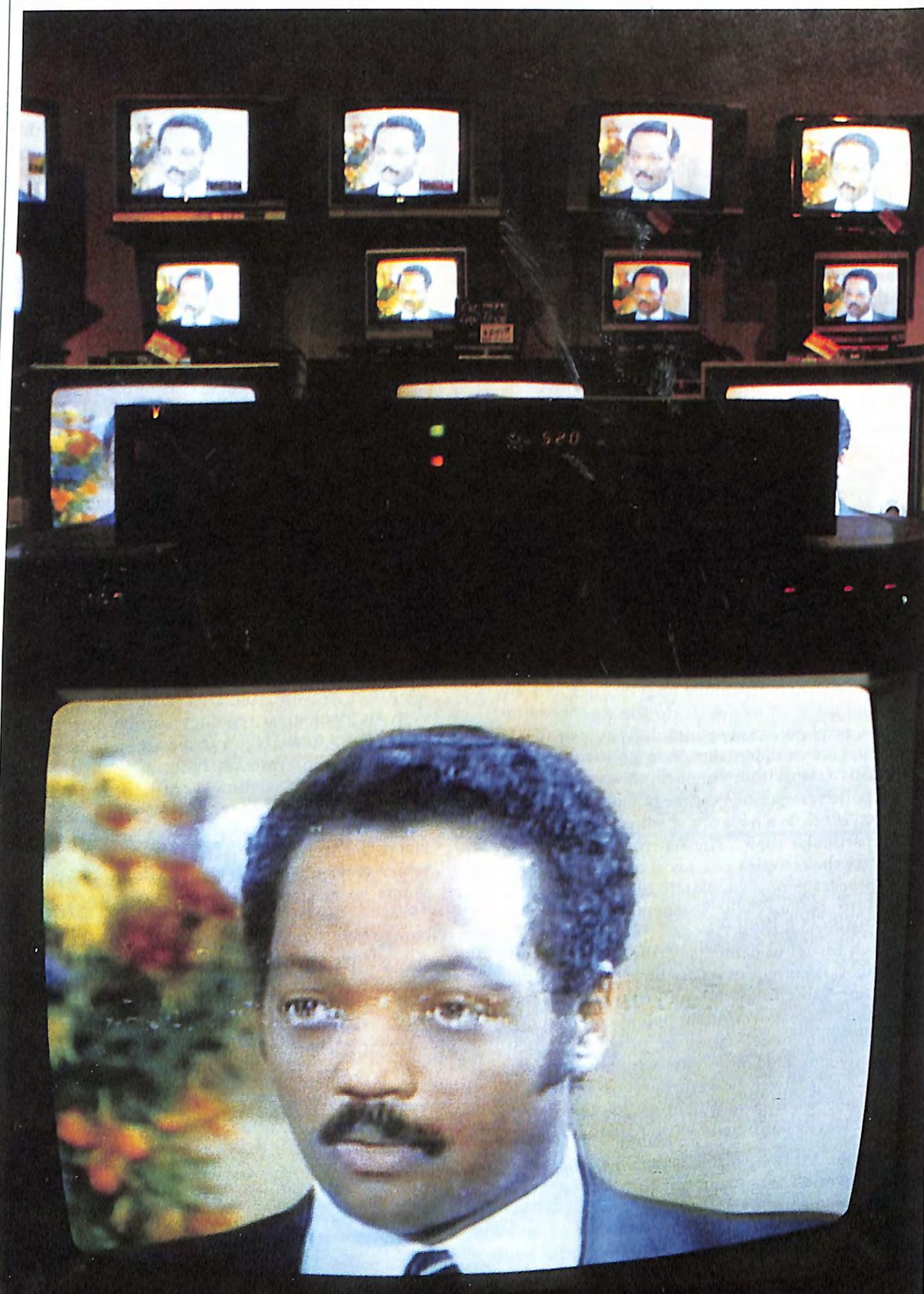
"old" ethnicity
"new" ethnicity
socioeconomic status
self-interest principle
political sophistication
opinion schema

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6

The Mass Media



People, Government, and Communications

The Development of the Mass Media in the United States

Newspapers • Magazines • Radio • Television

Private Ownership of the Media

The Consequences of Private Ownership • The Concentration of Private Ownership

Government Regulation of the Media

Technical Regulations • Structural Regulations • Regulation of Content

Reporting the News

Covering Politics • Presenting the News • Is Reporting Biased?

The Political Effects of the Media

Where the Public Gets Its News • What People Remember and Know • Influencing Public Opinion • Setting the Political Agenda • Socialization

Evaluating the Media in Government

Contributions to Democracy • Effects on Freedom, Order, and Equality

Some say that Gary Hart was a victim of the media. On May 3, 1987, Hart was the leading candidate seeking the 1988 Democratic nomination for president. Five days later, he announced his withdrawal from the race, saying that press harassment over his personal life had made it impossible for him to conduct his campaign. In less than a week, a presidential frontrunner had become a campaign dropout.

Some say that Hart had only himself to blame. Rumors of Hart's infidelities cropped up in 1984, when he challenged Walter Mondale for his party's presidential nomination. Early in 1987, Hart complained that he was again being victimized by rumors about his "womanizing." In March, he told a reporter for the *New York Times*, "If anyone wants to put a tail on me, go ahead. They'd be very bored."¹ Later that same day, however, Hart sailed from Miami for an overnight trip to Bimini Island with a male friend and two attractive young women, one of whom was Donna Rice.

Hart's cruise on the yacht *Monkey Business* escaped media attention until reporters from the *Miami Herald* staked out his home in Washington, D.C., on the first Friday and Saturday evenings in May. On May 3, the late Sunday edition of the *Herald* printed a front-page story, under the headline "Miami woman is linked to Hart." The article said that Hart and Rice were seen entering his house alone late Friday evening and did not emerge until Saturday evening. Ironically, Hart's earlier challenge "to put a tail on me" was published in a separate story in the *New York Times* on the same day.

Hart spent the first days of the following week disputing the *Herald's* account of the weekend, but the media would not let go. At a press conference in New Hampshire on Wednesday, a reporter asked him point-blank whether he had ever committed adultery. Hart replied, "I don't have to answer that question."² After a reporter for the *Washington Post* called campaign officials about a story that linked Hart to another woman in Washington, the candidate scheduled a Friday news conference.

Hart read a statement that blamed the media for destroying his efforts to communicate with voters and raise campaign funds. With references to reporters hiding in bushes, photographers peeking in windows, and helicopters hovering overhead, Hart drew an analogy between the media as hunters and candidates as the hunted. Attacking the unrelenting media coverage of candidates' private lives, he said he understood "why some of the best people in this country choose not to run for high office."³

Many journalists also criticized the media's invasion of Hart's private life, particularly the *Miami Herald's* stakeout of his house. According to Anthony Lewis of the *New York Times*, history shows that "the correlation between Puritan sexual behavior and wise political leadership is zero." He urged the press to think about its role: "Does it want to push political stories to the extreme of sensationalism? Or does it have some limiting sense of respect for the democratic process?"⁴

Other journalists defended the media's actions, including the stakeout. David Broder, syndicated columnist for the *Washington Post*, de-

Hart Examination

Gary Hart was the front-runner for the 1988 Democratic presidential nomination until the *Miami Herald* published an account of his relationship with a young model who was not his wife. From then on, the media pressed him on the infidelity issue. It was at this New Hampshire press conference that Hart was asked whether he had ever committed adultery. Realizing the issue would dominate the media's coverage of his campaign, Hart withdrew two days later.



nied that the issue was adultery. "What was at issue was Hart's truthfulness, his self-discipline, his sense of responsibility to other people—his willingness to face hard choices and realities."⁵ In brief, the media justified their investigation of Hart's private life by invoking the need to assess a candidate's character. But because virtually everything a person does or believes can be linked to character, does the "character issue" license the media to investigate all aspects of a politician's life.

Freedom of the press is necessary in a democratic government, but the media cause problems as well as solve them. What is the nature of the mass media in America? Do the media display a liberal or conservative bias in reporting the news? Do they promote or frustrate democratic ideals? Does freedom of the press conflict with the values of order or equality? In this chapter, we describe the origin and growth of the media, assess their objectivity, and examine their impact on politics.

PEOPLE, GOVERNMENT, AND COMMUNICATIONS

"We never talk anymore" is a common lament among people who are living together but not getting along very well. In politics, too, citizens and their government need to communicate in order to get along well. **Communication** is the process of transmitting information from one individual or group to another. **Mass communication** is the process by which individuals or groups transmit information to large, heterogeneous, and widely dispersed audiences. The term **mass media** refers to



THE CANDIDATE

the technical devices employed in mass communication. The mass media are commonly divided into two types:

1. **Print media** communicate information through the publication of written words and pictures. Prime examples of print media are daily newspapers and popular magazines. Because books seldom have very large circulations relative to the population, they are not typically classified as a mass medium.

2. **Broadcast media** communicate information electronically through sounds or sights. Prime examples of broadcast media are radio and television. Although the telephone also transmits sounds, it is usually used for more targeted communications and so is not typically included within the mass media.

In the United States, the mass media are in business to make money, which they make mainly by selling advertising through their major function, entertainment. We are more interested in the five specific functions the mass media serve for the political system: *reporting the news, interpreting the news, influencing citizens' opinions, setting the agenda* for government action, and *socializing* citizens about politics.

Our special focus is on the role of the mass media in promoting communication from a government to its citizens *and* from citizens to their government. In totalitarian governments, information flows more freely in one direction (from government to people) than in the other. In democratic governments, information must flow freely in both directions; a democratic government can be responsive to public opinion only if its citizens can make their opinions known. Moreover, the electorate can hold government officials accountable for their actions only if voters know what their government has done, is doing, and plans to do. Because the mass media provide the major channels for this two-way flow of information, they have the dual capability of reflecting and shaping our political views.

Mass media are not the only means of communication between citizens and government. As we discussed in Chapter 5, various agents of socialization (especially schools) function as "linkage mechanisms" that promote such communication. In the next three chapters, we discuss other major mechanisms for communication: voting, political parties, and interest groups. Certain linkage mechanisms communicate better in one direction than in the other. Primary and secondary schools, for example, commonly instruct young citizens about government rules and symbols, whereas voting usually sends messages from citizens to government. Parties and interest groups foster communications in both directions. The mass media, however, are the only linkage mechanisms that *specialize* in communication.

Although this chapter concentrates on political uses of the four most prominent mass media—newspapers, magazines, radio, and television—you should understand that political content can also be transmitted through other mass media, such as recordings and motion pictures. Rock acts like Peter Gabriel and U2 often express political ideas in their music.

And motion pictures often convey particularly intense political messages. In the 1976 film *All the President's Men*, Dustin Hoffman and Robert Redford played Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, the two *Washington Post* reporters who doggedly exposed the Watergate scandal in a series of articles that led to President Richard Nixon's 1974 resignation. This motion picture dramatized a seamy side of political life that contrasted sharply with an idealized view of the presidency. In 1985, *Rambo: First Blood, Part Two* starred Sylvester Stallone as a superhero who returns to Vietnam ("This time, to win!") to rescue Americans missing in action. *Rambo* implied that soldiering can be glorious and suggested that military force can be an effective way of solving difficult international problems. In contrast, the 1987 Academy Award for Best Picture went to *Platoon*, which portrayed war as a confusing, terrifying hell.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MASS MEDIA IN THE UNITED STATES

Although the record and film industries sometimes convey political messages, they are primarily entertainment industries. Our focus is on mass media in the news industry—on print and broadcast journalism. The development of the news media in the United States has been shaped by the growth of the country, technological inventions, and political attitudes toward the scope of government—as well as the need to entertain.

Newspapers

When the revolutionary war broke out in 1775, thirty-seven newspapers (all weeklies) were being published in the colonies.⁶ Most of them favored the colonists' side against the British, and they played an important part in promoting the Revolution. However, these weekly papers cannot be regarded as instruments of mass communication. Their cir-

culations were small (usually a thousand copies or so), and they were expensive. Type had to be set by hand, the presses printed quite slowly, transportation was costly, and there were few advertisers to defray the costs of publication. Still, politicians of the day quickly saw the value of the press and started papers that expressed their own views. During George Washington's administration, for example, the Federalists published the *Gazette of the U.S.*; the Anti-Federalists published the *National Gazette*.

The first newspapers were therefore political organs, financed by parties and advocating party causes. Newspapers did not move toward independent ownership and large circulations until the 1830s, with the publication of two successful dailies (the *New York Sun* and the *New York Herald*) that sold for just a penny. Various inventions spurred the growth of the news industry. The telegraph (invented in 1837) eventually replaced the use of carrier pigeons for transmitting news and allowed the simultaneous publication of news stories by papers across the country. The rotary press (1847) soon enabled publishers to print much more quickly and cheaply.

According to the 1880 census, 971 daily newspapers and 8,633 weekly newspapers and periodicals were then published in the United States. Most larger cities had a number of newspapers—New York had 29 papers, Philadelphia 24, San Francisco 21, and Chicago 18. Competition for readers grew fierce among the big-city dailies. Toward the latter part of the nineteenth century, imaginative publishers sought to win readers by entertaining them with photographs, comic strips, sports sections, advice to the lovelorn, and stories of sex and crime. The sensational reporting of that period came to be called **yellow journalism**—after the “Yellow Kid,” a comic-strip character featured in the *New York World*, published by Joseph Pulitzer (the same man who established the Pulitzer prizes for distinguished journalism).⁷ Contests calculated to sell papers were also popular with publishers. Some promotional schemes had lasting political consequences. Pulitzer raised funds to put the Statue of Liberty on its pedestal after Congress turned down a request for \$100,000. Each person who donated to the cause had his or her name printed in the *New York World's* list of donors. And William Randolph Hearst, publisher of the rival *New York Journal*, helped get the nation into a war with Spain. When the U.S. battleship *Maine* blew up mysteriously in Havana harbor on February 15, 1898, Hearst proclaimed it the work of enemy agents, charging his readers to “Remember the Maine!”

By the 1950s, intense competition among big-city dailies had nearly disappeared. New York, which had 29 papers in 1880, had only 3 by 1969. This pattern was repeated in every large city; most were left with 1 to 3 major papers. As a result of the rise of new cities that accompanied the general population growth, however, the number of daily newspapers published (and the papers' combined circulation) has remained about the same for more than thirty years. In 1950, a total of 1,772 daily papers had a circulation of 53.8 million; in 1986, a total of 1,657 papers had a circulation of 62.5 million.⁸

The daily paper with the largest circulation in 1987 (about 2 million copies) is the *Wall Street Journal*, which appeals to a national audience

The Origin of Yellow Journalism

The term yellow journalism means sleazy, sensational reporting. It derives from the “Yellow Kid,” a popular cartoon character in the *New York World*, one of the first newspapers to use color for cartoons and comic strips in the late 1800s. The *World* also boosted its circulation by emphasizing entertainment over straight news and by crusading for political causes, some of which were manufactured. Hence, the name.



because of its extensive coverage of business news and its close analysis of political news. The *New York Times*, which many journalists consider the best newspaper in the country, sells about a million copies, placing it fifth in national circulation. Even in New York, the *Times* sells fewer copies than a sensational tabloid, the *New York Daily News*. Neither the *Times* nor the *Wall Street Journal* carries any comic strips, which no doubt limits their mass appeal. They also print more political news and news analyses than most readers want to confront (see Feature 6.1).

Magazines

Magazines differ from newspapers primarily in the nature of their coverage, the frequency of their publication, and the quality of their production. In contrast to the broad coverage of daily papers, many magazines focus on narrow topics such as sports. Even news-oriented magazines cover the news in a more specialized manner than newspapers. Magazines and newspapers differ not only in content, but also in form. Newspapers are printed on inexpensive paper; they are expected to be discarded within a day or two. The more durable stock of magazines allows them to be read over several days or weeks.

This increased durability means that magazines are often used as forums for opinion, not strictly for news. However, magazines dealing with public affairs have had relatively small circulations and select read-

FEATURE 6.1

Front Pages of Four Major Daily Newspapers

A rose is a rose, but a newspaper is not necessarily a newspaper. Some papers, like the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*, pride themselves on providing thorough coverage of the news (the *Times*'s motto is "All the News That's Fit to Print") and in-depth analyses of major national and international events. Neither paper may feature (or even cover) the local fires or street crimes headlined in other papers, which cater to more popular tastes for violence and human interest stories.

Often we can see differences among papers simply by looking at their front pages. Papers that are oriented to popular entertainment have punchy graphics to catch the eye of readers who do not

intend to spend a good part of the day studying the news. Compare the front pages of the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times* with those of *USA Today* and the *New York Daily News*—all published on March 9, 1988, the day after the presidential primaries and caucuses held in twenty states on "Super Tuesday." Although all four papers mentioned the election results on their front pages, their treatment was very different. Both the *Times* and *USA Today* headlined the story, but the *Journal*'s lead was under its "What's News" box. And the *Daily News* chose to run a photo of a 101-year-old woman emerging from the polling booth alongside a screaming headline of a local cop story.



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erships, making them questionable as mass media. The earliest public affairs magazines, such as *Nation*, *McClure's*, and *Harper's*, were published in the mid-1800s. These magazines were often politically influential—especially in framing arguments against slavery and later in publishing exposés of political corruption and business exploitation, by such writers as Lincoln Steffens and Ida Tarbell. These writers, derisively called **muckrakers** (a term derived from a special rake used to collect manure), practiced an early form of investigative reporting that involved detailing basic unsavory facts about government and business. Because their writings were lengthy critiques of the existing political and economic order, muckrakers found a more hospitable outlet in magazines of opinion than in newspapers with large circulations. Yet magazines that have limited readerships can wield political power. They may influence leaders who follow news in specific areas—**attentive policy elites**—

and thus influence mass opinion indirectly through a **two-step flow of communication**. In this process, which conforms ideally to the pluralist model of democracy, magazines inform a few policy elites (for instance, union or industry leaders) about relevant developments or political thought; these leaders in turn inform their more numerous followers, mobilizing them to apply pressure on government.

Three weekly news magazines—*Time* (founded in 1923), *Newsweek* (1933), and *U.S. News & World Report* (1933)—have enjoyed large circulations (2 million to 4 million copies in 1987). The audiences of these magazines are not as large as the 17 million readers of *TV Guide*, the 16 million readers of *Reader's Digest*, or even the 4.6 million readers of *National Enquirer*.⁹ Nevertheless, these prominent weekly news magazines not only qualify as mass media, they often substitute for widely read national newspapers.

Radio

Regularly scheduled and continuous radio broadcasting began in 1920 on stations KDKA in Pittsburgh and WWJ in Detroit. Both stations claim to be the first commercial station, and both did broadcast returns of the 1920 election of President Warren G. Harding. However, there were only 5,000 radio receivers in the United States, and those were operated mainly by technical experts. Five years later, there were more than 2.5 million receivers, mostly in American homes. By 1940 more than 860 stations served nearly 30 million American homes.¹⁰ The number of radio stations mushroomed to more than 3,000 in 1950.¹¹

The first radio network, the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), was formed in 1926. The Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) was created in 1927, followed by the American Broadcasting System (ABC) and the Mutual Broadcasting System. By linking thousands of local stations, the four major networks transformed radio into a national medium. Millions of Americans were able to hear President Franklin D. Roosevelt deliver his first "fireside chat" in 1933, soon after his inauguration. However, the first coast-to-coast broadcast did not occur until 1937, when listeners were shocked by an eyewitness report of the explosion of the dirigible *Hindenburg* in New Jersey.

Because the public could sense reporters' personalities over radio in a way they could not in print, broadcast journalists quickly became national celebrities. Edward R. Murrow, one of the most famous radio news personalities, broadcast news of the merger of Germany and Austria by shortwave from Vienna in 1938 and later gave stirring reports of German air raids on London during World War II.

Listening to the President on Radio

Before television, friends often gathered around a radio to hear the president make an important address. In 1941, American soldiers, friends, and visiting relatives gathered in the Army YMCA on Governors Island in New York to hear President Franklin Roosevelt's warning of approaching war. Of course, the message had a special meaning for this group. Still, see how intently they are listening to what the president is saying. Maybe we should consider using radio instead of television for critically important speeches.



Television

Experiments with television began in France in the early 1900s. By 1937 seventeen experimental television stations were operating in the United States. In 1939 President Roosevelt appeared on television at the New York World's Fair. By 1940 twenty-three television stations were operating on a more regular basis, and—repeating the feat of radio twenty years earlier—two stations broadcast the returns of a presidential election, Roosevelt's 1940 re-election.¹²

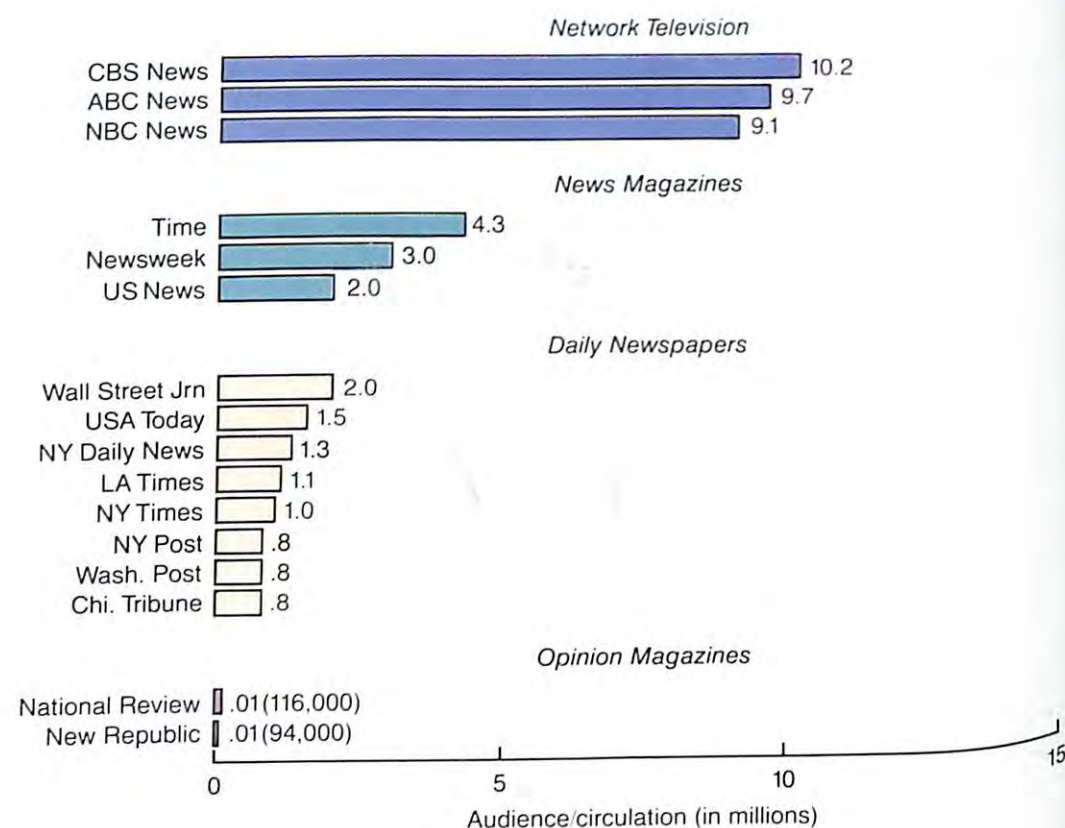
The onset of World War II paralyzed the development of television technology, but following the war growth in the medium exploded. When peace returned in 1945, only eight television stations were broadcasting. By 1950 ninety-eight stations were covering the major population centers of the country, but only 9 percent of American households had television receivers.

The first commercial color broadcast came in 1951, as did the first coast-to-coast broadcast—President Harry Truman's address to delegates at the Japanese Peace Treaty Conference in San Francisco. The same year, Democratic Senator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee called for public television coverage of his committee's investigation into organized crime. For weeks, people with television sets invited their neighbors to watch underworld crime figures answering questions before the camera. And Kefauver became one of the first politicians to benefit from television coverage. Previously unknown and representing a small state, he nevertheless entered the 1952 Democratic presidential primaries and won many of them. His performance in the primaries led to his nomination as the Democrats' vice presidential candidate in 1956.

Watching the President on Television

Television revolutionized presidential politics by allowing millions of voters to look closely at the candidates' faces and to judge their personalities in the process. This close-up of John Kennedy during a debate with Richard Nixon in the 1960 campaign showed Kennedy to good advantage. Close-ups of Nixon, on the other hand, made him look as though he needed a shave. Because Kennedy won one of the closest elections in history, it's possible that Kennedy's good looks on television made the difference.





Audiences of Selected Media Sources

Television, newspapers, and magazines differ sharply in their appeal to mass audiences as news sources. The difference shows clearly when we compare the figures for the average number of homes that are tuned nightly to one of the three major network news programs with the figures for the circulation of the three top news magazines, the eight top newspapers, and the two largest opinion magazines. Clearly, television news enters many more homes than does news from the other media. All three news magazines (which are published only weekly) have more readers than any daily newspaper, and opinion magazines reach only a small fraction of the usual television news audiences. (Sources: Average television news audiences for September 1987 through April 1988 are from Nielsen Media Research; newspaper and magazine circulations are from Standard Periodical Directory, 1988.)

Figure 6.1

The number of television stations increased to over five hundred in 1960, and 87 percent of households had television receivers. By 1988 the United States had more than one thousand commercial and three hundred educational television stations, and virtually every household (98 percent) had receivers. Now, television claims by far the largest audiences of the mass media (see Figure 6.1.) From television's beginning, most stations were linked into networks founded by three of the four major radio networks. (Only the Mutual Broadcasting System did not make the transition into television.) At present, about 70 percent of commercial television stations are affiliated with NBC, CBS, or ABC. Many of the early "anchormen" on network news programs (among them, Walter Cronkite) came to the medium with years of experience as radio broadcast journalists. Now that the news audience could actually

see the broadcasters as well as hear them, news personalities became even greater celebrities. When he retired from anchoring the "CBS Evening News" in 1981, Walter Cronkite was one of the most trusted and influential people in America.

Just as the appearance of the newscaster became important for television viewers, so did the appearance of the news itself. Television's great advantage over radio—that it *showed* people and events—both contributed to the impact of television news coverage and to some extent determined the news that television chose to cover. Television was particularly partial to events that had *film value* (visual impact). Organized protests and fires, for examples, "show well" on television, so television tends to cover them. Violent conflict of any kind, especially unfolding dramas that involve weapons, rate especially high in visual impact; such violence and uncertainty accounted for television's all-consuming coverage of the TWA plane hijacking in Beirut in 1985. However, television is not alone among the mass media in focusing on news that appeals to its audience's emotions. The 1890s newspapers that engaged in yellow journalism also played on emotions. In fact, private ownership of the media ensures that news is selected for its audience appeal.

PRIVATE OWNERSHIP OF THE MEDIA

In the United States, private ownership of the media is an accepted, largely unquestioned fact. Indeed, government ownership of the media strikes most Americans as an unwarranted violation of liberty. Such ownership, in fact, can interfere with the "marketplace of ideas" and result in one-way communication, from government to citizens. When the government controls the news flow, the people have little chance to learn what the government is doing or to pressure it to behave differently. In the Soviet Union, for example, the major newspaper, *Pravda* (which means "truth"), is operated by the Communist party. A second daily paper, *Izvestia* (which means "news"), is operated by the government itself. Before Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost*, or "openness," the Russians joked about their papers: "In *Truth* there is no news, and in *News* there is no truth." Recently, however, the authorities have allowed more news coverage, particularly of local crimes, but even of the war in Afghanistan.¹³

The Consequences of Private Ownership

The print media (both newspapers and magazines) are privately owned in the Western democratic countries, but the broadcast media usually are not. In most countries, both radio and television are run by the government, often as monopolies. However, except for "public television" (and "public radio," which is less well-known), the electronic media are privately owned in the United States. Private ownership of both print and broadcast media gives the news industry in America more political freedom than any other in the world, but it also makes the

This Is Your Captain Speaking

The pilot of the TWA plane hijacked in 1985 speaks with television reporters on the runway of Beirut's airport. One of the hijackers is holding a pistol to his head. ABC television news broadcast this brief interview, which helped to dramatize international terrorism. In the end, the hijackers got what they wanted: the release of hundreds of Shi'ite prisoners held by Israel.



media more dependent on advertising revenues to cover their costs and make a profit. Because advertising rates are tied to the size of the audience, the news operations of mass media in America must appeal to the audiences they serve.

You might think that a story's political significance, educational value, or broad social importance determines whether it is covered in the media. The sad truth is that most potential news stories are not judged by such grand criteria. The primary criterion of a story's **newsworthiness** is usually its audience appeal, as judged by its *high impact* on readers or listeners; its *sensationalist* aspect (as exemplified by violence, conflict, disaster, or scandal); its treatment of *familiar* people or life situations; its *close-to-home* character; and its *timeliness*.¹⁴

Reliance on audience appeal has led the news industry to calculate its audience very carefully. The print media can easily determine the size of their circulations through sales figures, but the broadcast media must estimate their audiences through various sampling techniques. Because both print and broadcast media might be tempted to inflate their estimated audiences (to tell advertisers that they reach more people than they actually do), a separate industry has developed to rate audience size impartially. The rating reports have resulted in a "ratings game," in which the media try to increase ratings by adjusting the delivery or content of their news. Some local television stations favor "happy talk" on their news broadcasts—witty on-the-air exchanges among announ-

cers, reporters, sportscasters, and meteorologists. Other stations use the "eyewitness" approach, showing a preponderance of film with human interest, humorous, or violent content. Many stations combine the two, often pleasing viewers, but perhaps not informing them properly.

The news function of the mass media in the United States cannot be separated from the main function of the privately owned media: entertainment. Entertainment increases audiences, which increases advertising revenues. Of the four hours or so that the average American spends watching television every day, only about ninety minutes are devoted to news or documentaries; the remainder goes to entertainment, movies, or sports.¹⁵ More than 60 million newspapers circulate daily among the population, but more than 60 percent of their content is devoted to advertising.¹⁶ Only a portion of the remaining newspaper space is devoted to news of any sort, and only a fraction of that news—excluding stories about fires, robberies, murder trials, and the like—can be classified as "political."

The Concentration of Private Ownership

Media owners can make more money by increasing their audiences, either by enlarging existing audiences or by acquiring additional publications or stations. In fact, there is a decided trend toward concentrated ownership of the media, enhancing the possibility that a few major owners could control the news flow to promote their own political interests—much as political parties influenced the content of early newspapers. Although the number of daily newspapers has remained approximately the same over the last thirty-five years, the number of *independent* newspapers has declined as more papers have been acquired by newspaper chains (two or more newspapers in different cities under the same ownership). Most of the more than 150 newspaper chains are small, owning fewer than ten papers.¹⁷ Some, however, are very large. The Gannett chain, for example, owns eighty-seven newspapers throughout the United States—including *USA Today*, the newspaper with the second largest circulation in the nation. Only about four hundred dailies are still independent, and many of these papers are too small and unprofitable to invite acquisition.

At first glance, ownership concentration in the television industry does not seem to be a problem. Although there are only three major networks, the networks usually do not own their affiliates. About half of all the communities in the United States are served by ten or more stations.¹⁸ This figure suggests that the electronic media offer enough diversity of views to balance ownership concentration. Like newspapers, however, television stations in different cities are sometimes owned by the same group. In 1987, for example, the Capacities/ABC group owned eight television stations—in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Houston, Fresno, and Raleigh-Durham—serving 24 percent of the television market. A group of seven stations owned by NBC/GE covered 22 percent of the market, and four CBS stations covered 19 percent.¹⁹

Ownership concentration can also occur across the media. Sometimes the same corporation owns a television station, a radio station, and a newspaper in the same area. For example, the Chicago Tribune Company owns the *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago's largest daily newspaper); the *New York Daily News* (the nation's third largest paper); six television stations in major cities (including WGN in Chicago, WPIX in New York, and KTLA in Los Angeles), serving 19 percent of the market; and several radio stations across the country.

Some people fear the concentration of media under a single owner, and government has addressed those fears by regulating media ownership, as well as other aspects of media operation.

GOVERNMENT REGULATION OF THE MEDIA

Although most of the mass media in the United States are privately owned, they do not operate completely free of government regulation. The broadcast media, however, operate under more regulations than the print media, due initially to technical concerns in broadcasting. In general, government regulation of the mass media falls into three categories: technical regulations, structural regulations, and regulation of content.²⁰

Technical Regulations

The broadcast media confront certain technical limitations not faced by the print media. The number of airwaves available for broadcasting radio and television signals is limited. In the early days of radio, stations that operated on similar frequencies in the same area often jammed each other's signals, and neither could broadcast clearly. At the broadcasters' insistence, Congress passed the Federal Radio Act (1927), which declared that the public owned the airwaves and that private broadcasters could use them only by obtaining a license from the Federal Radio Commission. So, government regulation of broadcasting was not forced on the industry by socialist politicians; it was requested by capitalist owners to impose order on the use of the airwaves (thereby restricting others' freedom to enter broadcasting).

The Federal Communications Act (1934) updated the Federal Radio Act and formed the basis for current regulation of the broadcasting industry. The 1934 act replaced the five-person radio commission with the **Federal Communications Commission (FCC)**, consisting of seven members (no more than four of them from the same political party) chosen by the president for terms of seven years. Because the commissioners serve overlapping terms—beginning and ending in different years—and can be removed from office only through impeachment and conviction, the FCC is considered an *independent regulatory commission*: It is insulated from political control by either the president or Congress. (We discuss independent regulatory commissions in Chapter 12.) Today, the FCC is charged with regulating interstate and foreign communication by radio, television, telephone, telegraph, cable, and satellite.

The government's regulatory powers in technical areas go beyond granting licenses. For example, the FCC determined the standard for color television in 1950 by choosing a CBS-developed transmission system over a competing one by RCA. Moreover, in the early 1960s, Congress required all television sets manufactured for sale in interstate commerce to receive both VHF (very high frequency) channels 2 through 13 and UHF (ultra high frequency) channels 14 through 83. Both regulations again helped the broadcast industry by ensuring that television sets being sold would receive the signals being transmitted.

Structural Regulations

The FCC also regulates the structure of the electronic media—the organization of broadcasting companies and their interrelationships. As radio began broadcasting to millions of citizens, the FCC became concerned about the concentration of too much power in the hands of single owners. Believing that the National Broadcasting Company—which operated both a “red” and a “blue” network—had grown too big, the FCC ordered NBC to sell its blue network in 1943, leading to the creation of the American Broadcasting Company. Also during the 1940s, the FCC adopted its “duopoly rule,” which prohibits any company from owning more than one AM, one FM, or one television station in a single community.²¹

In the early 1950s, the FCC adopted its 7-7-7 rule, which limited to seven the number of AM, FM, and television stations a single company could own. This ceiling was set when there were fewer than two hundred television stations and fewer than three thousand radio stations. But by 1984 the number of commercial television stations had grown to nearly nine hundred, and the number of radio stations had nearly tripled, to over eight thousand. A majority of commissioners appointed by President Ronald Reagan thus opted to relax FCC regulations by expanding the ownership rule to a 12-12-12 rule, which favored several large media groups—such as Gannett. Looking ahead to 1990, the FCC anticipates an end to all ownership restrictions.²² If that occurs, the FCC will have abandoned a principle that it once enforced vigorously—limiting media control.

Regulation of Content

The First Amendment to the Constitution prohibits Congress from abridging the freedom of the press. Over time, the press has come to mean *all* the mass media. As might be expected, the press—particularly the print media—has interpreted “freedom of the press” in the broadest possible way, citing the Constitution for its right to print or broadcast any news it wants to print or broadcast. Over the past two hundred years, the courts have decided numerous cases that define how far freedom of the press extends under the law. The most important of these cases, which are often quite complex, are discussed in Chapter 17. Usually the courts have struck down government attempts to restrain the press from

publishing or broadcasting the information, events, or opinions that it finds newsworthy. One notable exception concerns strategic information during wartime; the courts have supported censorship in the publishing or broadcasting of such information as the sailing schedules of troop ships or the movements of troops in battle. Otherwise, the courts have recognized a strong constitutional case against press censorship. This stand has given the United States some of the freest, most vigorous news media in the world.

Because the broadcast media are licensed to use the public airwaves, they are subject to some regulation of the content of their news coverage that is not applied to the print media. The basis for the FCC's regulation of content lies in its charge to ensure that radio (and, later, television) stations would "serve the public interest, convenience, and necessity." For over fifty years, broadcasters operated under three constraints rooted in the 1934 Federal Communications Act. Two are still in effect; one, as we will see, has been revoked. In its **equal opportunities rule**, the FCC provided that, if a broadcast station gives or sells time to a candidate for any public office, it must make an equal amount of time under the same conditions available to all other candidates for that office. The **fairness doctrine** obligated broadcasters to discuss public issues and to provide fair coverage to each side of those issues. Finally, the **reasonable access rule** required that stations make their facilities available for the expression of conflicting views or issues from all responsible elements in the community.

These regulations seem unobjectionable to most people, but they have been at the heart of a controversy about the deregulation of the broadcast media. Note that *none* of these regulations is imposed on the print media, which has no responsibility to give equal treatment to political candidates, to give fair coverage to all sides of an issue, or to express conflicting views from all responsible elements of the community. In fact, one aspect of a free press is its ability to champion causes that it favors (such as erecting the Statue of Liberty or starting a war with Spain) without having to argue the case for the other side. The broadcast media have traditionally been treated differently, because they were licensed by the FCC to operate as semimonopolies.²³ With the rise of one-newspaper cities and towns, however, there is now more competition among television stations than among newspapers in virtually every market area. Critics who advocate dropping the equal opportunities, fairness, and reasonable access regulations argue that the broadcast media should be just as free as the print media to decide which candidates they endorse and which issues they support.

Under Reagan, the FCC itself moved toward this view of unfettered freedom for broadcasters. In 1987, the FCC repealed the fairness doctrine on the grounds that it chilled freedom of speech. In doing so, the FCC encountered opposition from Democrats in Congress who vowed to restore the doctrine by making it a law. If the Democrats fail in their attempt, the content and coverage of television news might become more like that of newspapers—more partisan stands, more backing of particular viewpoints. If so, the effect on public opinion might be substantial,

given the importance of television as a source of news for most Americans.

REPORTING THE NEWS

"News," for most journalists, is an important event that has happened within the past twenty-four hours. A presidential news conference or an explosion in the Capitol qualifies as news. And a national political convention certainly qualifies as news, although it may not justify the thousands of media representatives who covered the 1988 party conventions. Who decides what is important? The media, of course. In this section, we discuss how the media cover political affairs, what they choose to report (which then becomes "news"), and whether the media are biased in their reporting.

Covering Politics

All the major news media seek to cover political events through firsthand reports from journalists on the scene. For example, the *New York Times* alone has about thirty-five reporters in Washington, D.C. Because so many significant political events occur in the nation's capital, Washington has by far the largest press corps—about thirty-five hundred reporters—of any city in the United States.

About one-third of these correspondents are assigned to cover the White House. Since 1902, when President Theodore Roosevelt provided a special room in the White House for reporters, the press has had special access to the presidency. In fact, reporters enjoyed informal personal relationships with the president as late as the Truman administration. Today, the media's relationship with the president is mediated primarily through the Office of the Press Secretary.

White House correspondents cover the presidency largely by hanging around the press room, waiting for news to materialize. Information for their stories routinely comes in one of three forms, each carefully crafted by the White House in an attempt to control the news output.²⁴

The most frequent form is the *news release*—a prepared text distributed to reporters in the hope that it will be used verbatim. A *news briefing*, traditionally held each day, enables reporters to question the press secretary about news releases. A *news conference* involves questioning high-level officials in the executive branch—including the president on occasion. News conferences appear to be freewheeling, but precise answers to anticipated questions tend to be carefully rehearsed.

Occasionally, news conferences are given *on background*, meaning that the information can be quoted but the source must not be identified specifically. A vague reference—"a senior official says"—is all right. (When he was secretary of state, Henry Kissinger himself was often the "senior official" reporting on foreign policy developments.) Information disclosed *off the record* cannot even be printed. Journalists who violate these well-known rules risk losing their welcome at the White House.

Most reporters in the Washington press corps are accredited to sit in the House and Senate press galleries, but only about four hundred cover Congress exclusively.²⁵ Most of the news about Congress comes from innumerable press releases issued by its 535 members and from an unending supply of congressional reports. A journalist, then, can report on Congress without inhabiting its press galleries.

Not so long ago, individual congressional committees allowed radio and television coverage of their proceedings only on special occasions—as Senator Kefauver did during his committee's investigation of organized crime, and as the Senate select committee did during the Watergate investigation. Congress banned microphones and cameras from its chambers until 1979, when the House permitted live coverage. Even then, the leadership controlled the shots being televised. Nevertheless, televised broadcasts of the House were surprisingly successful, thanks to C-SPAN (the Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network), which is linked to more than fifteen hundred cable systems across the country and has a cultlike following among hundreds of thousands of regular viewers. To share in the television exposure, a majority of senators voted to begin television coverage of their chamber in 1986. However, daily coverage of Congress has a limited audience, compared, for example, with the many millions who viewed the televised Iran-Contra hearings conducted by a House and Senate select committee in 1987.

In addition to these recognized news channels, selected reporters occasionally benefit from *leaks* of information released by officials who are guaranteed anonymity. Officials may leak news to interfere with others' political plans or to float ideas ("trial balloons") past the public and other political leaders to gauge their reactions. At times, one carefully placed leak can turn into a gusher of media coverage through the practice of *pack journalism*—the tendency of journalists to adopt similar viewpoints toward the news simply because they hang around together, exchanging information and defining the day's news. Often a story hounded by the pack does not offer enough substance to sustain pursuit, and the chase is abandoned as quickly as it was begun.

Presenting the News

Media executives, news editors, and prominent reporters function as **gatekeepers** in directing the news flow: They decide which events to report and how to handle the elements in those stories. Only a few individuals—no more than twenty-five on the average newspaper or news weekly and fifty on each of the major television networks—qualify as gatekeepers, defining the news for public consumption.²⁶ They are usually very selective in choosing what goes through the gate.

It is impossible for the media to communicate *everything* about public affairs. There is neither space in newspapers or magazines nor time on television or radio to do so. Time limitations impose especially severe constraints on television news broadcasting. Each half-hour network news program devotes only about twenty minutes to the news (the rest of the time is taken up by commercials). The average story lasts

about one minute, and few stories run longer than two minutes. The typical script for an entire television news broadcast would fill less than two columns of one page of the *New York Times*.²⁷

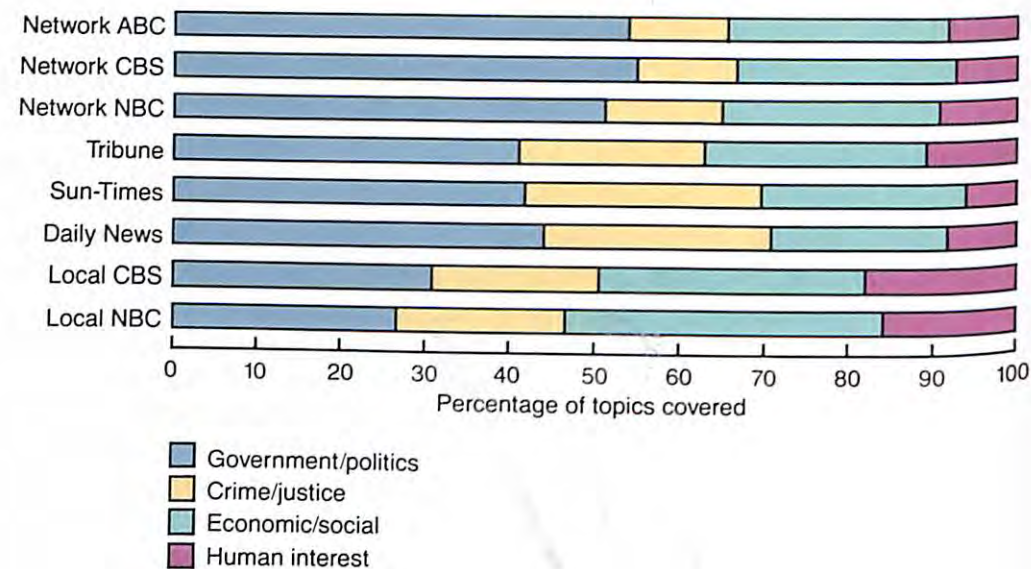
A parade of unconnected one-minute news stories, flashing across the television screen every night, would boggle the eyes and minds of the viewers. To make the news understandable and to hold viewers' attention, television editors and producers group stories together by theme. The stories themselves concentrate on individuals, because individuals have personalities; political institutions do not. The presidency is an exception; that institution is conveniently embodied by an individual, the president. When television covers Congress, however, it tries to personify the institution by focusing on prominent quotable leaders, such as the speaker of the House or the Senate majority leader. Such personification for the purpose of gaining audience acceptability tends to distort the character of an institution. It also encourages **horse race journalism**, in which election coverage becomes a matter of "who's ahead?" One analysis of the news coverage of the 1988 presidential primary campaigns found that only about 20 percent of the air time devoted to the campaigns dealt with national issues; the rest went to the horse race—"who's ahead in the polls, who's raising the most money, who's got TV ads and who's getting endorsed."²⁸ Consequently, elections are presented as contests between individuals rather than as confrontations between parties and platforms.

Campaigning for office is a type of political news that lends itself to media coverage, especially if the candidates create a **media event**—a situation that is too "newsworthy" to pass up. In 1978, during a successful bid for the Florida governorship, Bob Graham drew continual press coverage for one hundred days by working on one hundred different blue-collar jobs.

One study of news content in city newspapers, local television, and network television found that the network news contained a higher percentage of items about government and politics (stories about the presidency, Congress, domestic policy, or foreign affairs, for instance) than the city's daily newspapers and substantially more than the local television news (see Figure 6.2).²⁹ In comparison with the other media, newspapers emphasized stories about crime and justice (articles on individual felonies or trials). Local television news programs dealt more with economic and social issues (including issues involving business, labor, the environment, transportation, education, or religion). Remember, however, that this study calculated only the *relative* coverage of news in the media. Although the network news reports a higher percentage of news about government and politics, its coverage of each story tends to last less than two minutes; daily papers usually discuss the same story in greater depth.

Is Reporting Biased?

News professes to reflect reality, yet critics of modern journalism contend that this reality is colored by the way it is filtered through the



Frequency of News Topics in Different Sources

Where you get your news to some extent determines the news you get. This conclusion emerges from a count of the news topics in eight sources—three network evening news programs, three major Chicago daily newspapers, and two local news broadcasts—for nine months in 1976. All three television networks reported proportionately more news about government and politics than did the newspapers, which in turn reported proportionately more than the local television news did. Stories about economic and social matters (business, labor, environment, transportation, education, and religion) were most popular on local television, along with human interest features. The newspapers tended to report more about crime and justice. (Source: Doris A. Graber, *Mass Media and American Politics*, 2d ed. [Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1984], pp. 83–84.)

Figure 6.2

ideological biases of the owners and editors (the gatekeepers) and of the reporters themselves.

The argument that news is politically biased has two sides. On one hand, news reporters are criticized for tilting their stories in a liberal direction, promoting social equality and undercutting social order. On the other hand, wealthy and conservative media owners are suspected of preserving inequalities and reinforcing the existing order by serving a relentless round of entertainment that numbs the public's capacity for critical analysis.

Although the picture is far from clear, available evidence seems to confirm the charge of liberal bias among reporters in the major news media. A study of the voting behavior of 240 reporters and broadcasters employed by such media giants as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News & World Report*, CBS, NBC, and ABC supports that idea. In presidential elections from 1964 through 1976, these media journalists voted for the Democratic candidate more than 80 percent of the time.³⁰ Moreover, a 1985 *Los Angeles Times* survey of 2,703 news and editorial staffers on 621 papers found that 55 percent of the journalists described themselves as liberal, compared with 23 percent of the general public.³¹

A study of the media coverage of the campaigns for the 1988 presidential nomination in both parties concluded that Democratic candidates got better treatment than Republican candidates on the television news networks. From January 4 through April 15, all three networks aired a higher proportion of negative news about Republican candidates than Democratic candidates.³² Of course, the judgment of whether news is negative or positive is inherently subjective. A film clip showing Vice President George Bush answering questions about his role in the Iran-Contra affair would certainly be negative, counting as "bad press." But a story about a neutral topic could also be bad press if the reporter put a negative "spin" on it. For example, Representative Richard Gephardt of Missouri campaigned for the 1988 Democratic presidential nomination in part by attacking the Washington political establishment. When they reported his speeches, journalists sometimes put a negative spin on their stories by noting that Gephardt was a leader of the Democratic party in the House and thus part of that establishment.

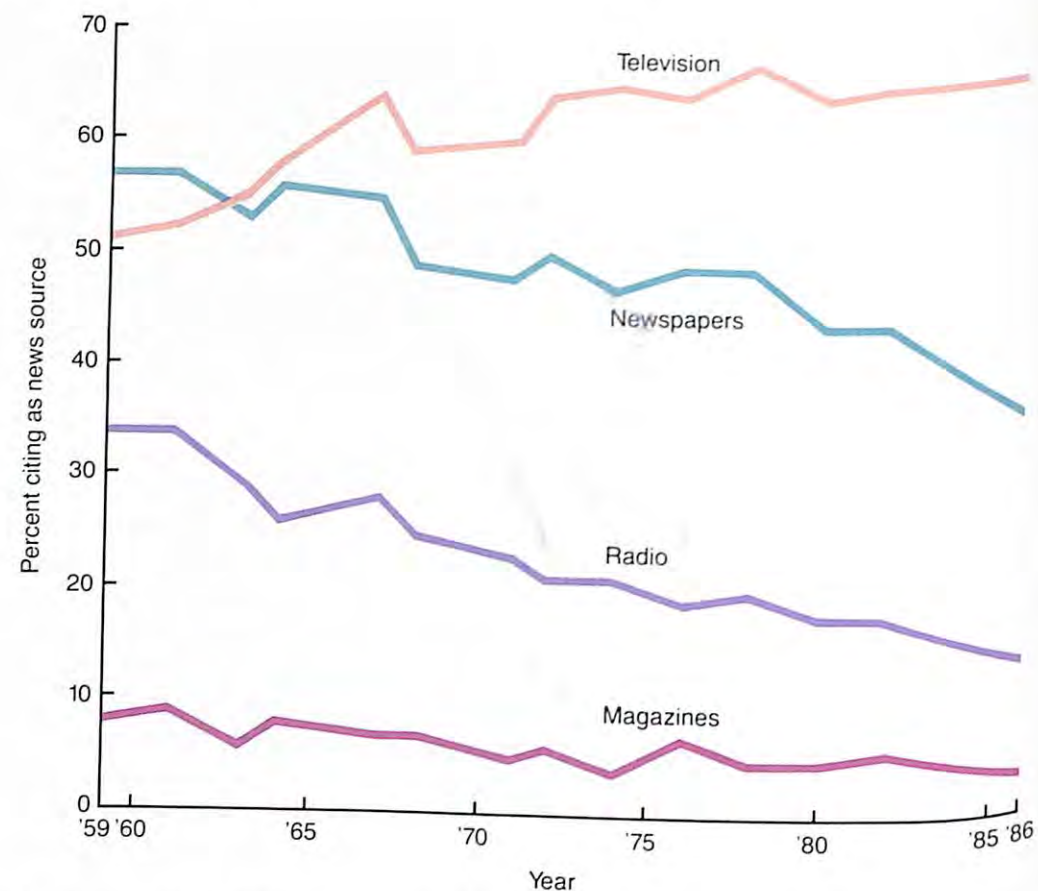
Although most journalists in the 1985 *Los Angeles Times* survey classified themselves as liberal, more of them described the newspapers for which they worked as conservative (pro-Reagan and pro-business) than liberal (42 percent to 28 percent). To some extent, working journalists are at odds with their own editors, who tend to be more conservative. The editors, in their function as gatekeepers, tend to tone down the liberal biases of their reporters.³³

If media owners and their editors are indeed conservative supporters of the status quo, we would expect them to support officeholders over challengers in elections. However, the campaign news that emerges from both print and broadcast media tends in the other direction. One researcher who found evidence of liberal bias in the 1984 presidential campaign had also studied the 1980 campaign, when Reagan was the challenger and Jimmy Carter the incumbent president.³⁴ In that campaign, the media covered Carter more negatively than his conservative challenger. Taking both election years into consideration, the researcher concluded that there is virtually no *continuing* ideological or partisan bias on the evening television news. Instead, what was seen as ideological or partisan bias in 1980 and 1984 was actually a bias against *incumbents* and *frontrunners*.³⁵

According to this reasoning, if journalists have any pronounced bias, it is against politicians. When an incumbent runs for re-election, journalists may feel a special responsibility to counteract his or her advantage by putting the opposite partisan spin on the news.³⁶ Thus, whether the media coverage of campaigns is seen as pro-Democratic (and therefore liberal) or pro-Republican (and therefore conservative) depends on which party is in office at the time.

THE POLITICAL EFFECTS OF THE MEDIA

Virtually all citizens must rely on the mass media for their political news. Although television news programs claim far larger audiences than news magazines and newspapers, many people may watch television



Changes in the Public's Sources of News

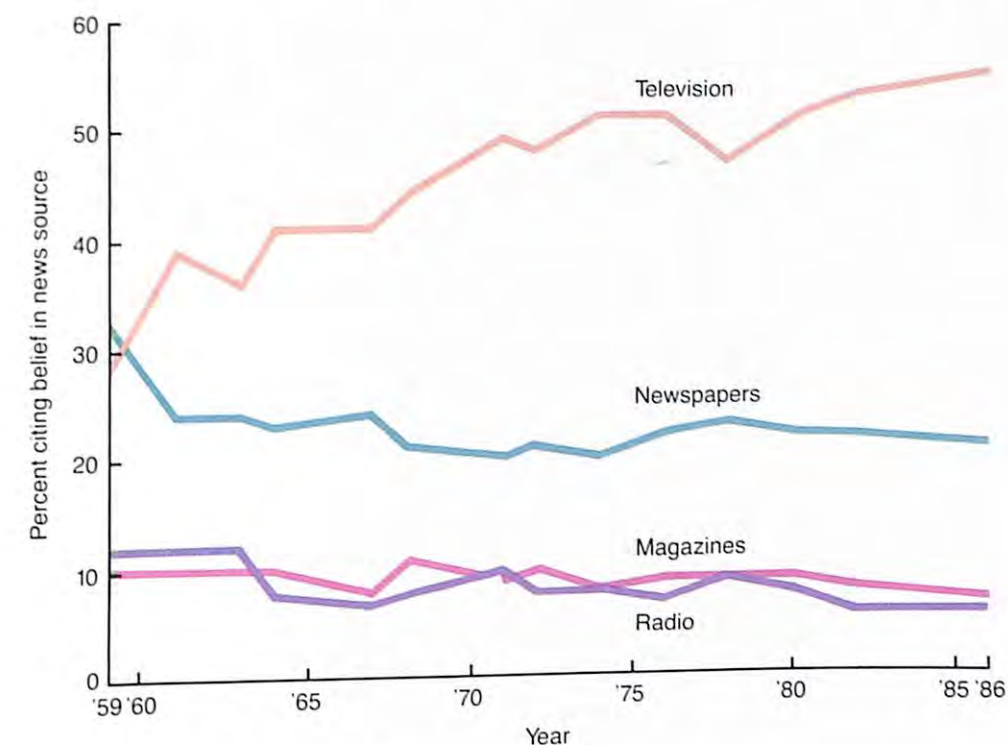
For more than a quarter of a century, the Roper Organization has put this question to a national sample: "I'd like to ask you where you usually get most of your news about what's going on in the world today—from the newspapers or radio or television or magazines or talking to people or where?" Until the early 1960s, newspapers were cited as the main source of news for people in the Roper sample. Then television replaced newspapers, and the gap between the two has grown rather steadily. Radio has declined dramatically as a source of news, but magazines have retained most of their audience over time. (Sources: Roper Organization, *Trends in Attitudes Toward Television and Other Media: A Twenty-Four Year Review*. Television Information Office Publication, 1983, p. 5; Roper Organization, *America's Watching: Public Attitudes Toward Television*. Television Information Office Publication, 1987, p. 20. The percentages do not total 100 because people were allowed to cite more than one news source.)

Figure 6.3

news programs for their entertainment value without learning much about politics. In this section, we examine where citizens acquire their political knowledge, look at what people learn from the media, and probe the media's effects on public opinions, the political agenda, and political socialization.

Where the Public Gets Its News

Until the early 1960s, most people reported getting more of their news from newspapers than from any other source. As shown in Figure



Credibility of the News Media

In the same survey that asked people about their sources of news, the Roper Organization asked, "If you got conflicting or different reports of the same news story from radio, television, the magazines and the newspapers, which of the four versions would you be most inclined to believe?" Here, the gap between television and newspapers is even greater—and it, too, has been growing. By the 1980s, more people saw television as the most credible news source than all the other media combined. (Sources: Roper Organization, *Trends in Attitudes Toward Television and Other Media: A Twenty-Four Year Review*. Television Information Office Publication, 1983, p. 6; Roper Organization, *America's Watching: Public Attitudes Toward Television*. Television Information Office Publication, 1987, p. 20.)

Figure 6.4

6.3, television nudged out newspapers as the public's major source of news in the early 1960s. By the 1980s, about two-thirds of the public cited television as their news source, compared with less than one-half who named newspapers and less than one-fifth who relied on radio. Not only is television the public's most important source of news, but television news is also rated as more trustworthy than newspaper news—by a margin of more than 2 to 1 (see Figure 6.4).

Some people prefer television to newspapers as a source of news simply because they cannot read very well. According to a recent literacy test conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, 13 percent of adults living in the United States are illiterate in English.³⁷ Although some people who failed the census test were immigrants, 9 percent of those who spoke English as their native language failed as well. Others who are literate in English may not be interested enough to plow through printed matter, when they can simply tune in a good-looking reporter on television and see filmed news reports. It is not surprising, then, that people with

different levels of education employ different media as news sources. For example, in 1984 more people with a grade-school education reported watching the network television news every day than did people with a college degree (52 percent to 46 percent). More college-educated respondents reported reading a daily newspaper (52 percent to 34 percent) and a weekly news magazine (38 percent to 6 percent).³⁸

What People Remember and Know

About 50 percent of the American population reports watching the network news daily, and another 20 percent say that they watch the network news three or four times a week. Even those who are not faithful watchers of television news hear political news on the radio or read it in newspapers and news magazines. In short, an overwhelming majority of the American public is exposed to news through at least one of the mass media. Nevertheless, most people appear to learn very little about politics from the news that bombards them for hours every day. When a national survey asked, "Over the last twelve months [1983–1984], which news event would you say you remember the most?" over 40 percent of the sample answered "nothing" or recalled nonpolitical events.³⁹ For those who recalled *some* political news, Israel's long siege and bombing of Beirut in the summer of 1984 emerged as the most memorable event (cited by 14 percent). Many people did not even have a clear idea of what was political and what was not: "Murders and murderers totally outdistanced foreign wars or foreign anything. For example, homicidal maniacs, as a class, proved seven times as memorable as the brutal war between Iran and Iraq."⁴⁰

The public did little better in recalling domestic political news, even when prompted. Although the survey was conducted at the height of the 1984 presidential primary campaign, over 60 percent of the respondents gave incorrect answers to a question that asked whether "during the Reagan years the inflation rate has gotten worse, levelled off, or gotten better?" (It had gotten better. Didn't the respondents remember *anything* specific from all those hours of television viewing? Yes, without prompting, 44 percent could identify the commercial slogan that Walter Mondale had used to criticize Gary Hart—"Where's the beef?"⁴¹

The authors drew several conclusions from their study: that the public knows *less* about politics than journalists or politicians think; that, for many people, news is not politics; and that slogans can penetrate public indifference about political affairs, when hard news cannot.⁴²

How can it be that so many people are so ignorant of political affairs when they are exposed to so much news in the media? Perhaps the answer is in the medium of television, which most people cite as their major news source. Several studies have found that increased exposure to television news has a numbing effect on a person's capacity to discriminate among news messages. A comparison between viewers' and readers' abilities to explain the reasons for their Senate voting choices in 1974 found that reading more newspapers produced more reasons for voting choices but watching more television news did not.⁴³ In fact, the

researchers found evidence that watching television actually tended to *inhibit* knowledge about politics. A later study of subjects' abilities to distinguish between the campaign issues of presidential candidates Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter in 1976 found that regular television viewers saw no more difference between the candidates than those who neither watched nor read the news on a regular basis.⁴⁴ For people with similar levels of education, heavy television watching had a suppressing effect on the ability to see differences between the candidates.

Why should this be? We know that television tends to squeeze public policy issues into one-minute or, at most, two-minute fragments, which makes it difficult to explain candidates' positions. Television also tends to cast abstract issues in personal terms to enhance the visual image that the medium conveys. Thus, viewers may become more adept at visually identifying the candidates and knowing their personal habits than at knowing their positions on issues. Finally, the television networks, which are licensed by the government, are concerned about being fair and equal in their coverage of the candidates, which may result in equalizing candidates' positions as well. Newspapers, which are not licensed by the government, enjoy more latitude in choosing which candidates they cover and how they cover them. Whatever the explanation, the technological wonders of television seem to have contributed little to citizens' knowledge of public affairs. Indeed, electronic journalism may work against the citizen knowledge that democratic government requires.

There is also evidence that suggests those people who rely on television's coverage of politics are more confused and cynical than those who do not.⁴⁵ This problem may be even more acute where foreign affairs are concerned, since most of the public has relatively little interest in foreign affairs, but the networks tend to "overreport" them.⁴⁶ The public witnesses conflict, criticism, and controversy in countries they know little about. Not knowing what to think or whom to believe, the public responds "by becoming more cynical, more negative, and more critical of leadership and institutions."⁴⁷

Influencing Public Opinion

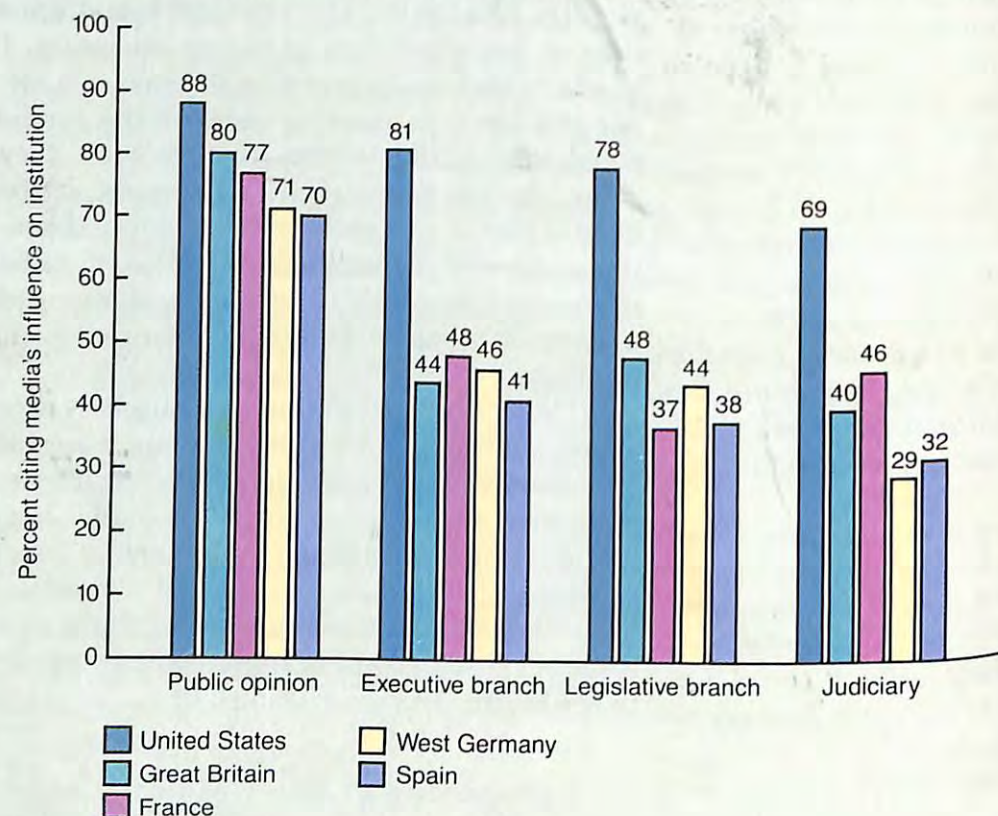
Americans overwhelmingly believe that the media exert a strong influence on their political institutions, and almost nine out of ten Americans believe that the media strongly influence public opinion (see Compared With What? 6.1). However, it is not easy to determine the extent of media influence on public opinion. Because very few of us learn about political events except as they are reported through the media, it is arguable that the media create public opinion simply by reporting events. Few people knew about Gary Hart's liaison with Donna Rice until the *Miami Herald* reported it. We know that relentless questioning by the press drove Hart from the race, but did the press actually turn public opinion against Hart?

A survey taken after the exposé showed that a majority of those interviewed thought it was not "the press's business" to tell the public

COMPARED WITH WHAT? 6.1

Opinions on the Media

Americans are more likely to perceive the media as politically powerful than are citizens in four other Western democracies. This finding comes from sample surveys taken in Great Britain, France, West Germany, Spain, and the United States during the spring of 1987. Respondents in each country were asked, "Would you say that the influence exerted by the media on [name of institution] is very large, somewhat large, or not large at all?" The combined percentages of "very large" and "somewhat large" responses form the bars of the accompanying graph. Although most citizens in each country perceive the media as having a large influence on public opinion, only Americans think the media also influence the major branches of government.



Source: Laurence Parisot, "Attitudes About the Media: A Five-Country Comparison," *Public Opinion* 10 (January–February, 1988):60. Reprinted by permission.

that a candidate had been unfaithful to his wife. Although a substantial minority (40 percent) disagreed, the survey also showed that Hart's support from likely Democratic primary voters only slipped a little, from 38 percent before the exposé to 32 percent immediately afterward.⁴⁸ Moreover, when Hart re-entered the race in December 1987, he quickly recaptured the frontrunner's position and led with 23 percent of Democratic preferences through January.⁴⁹ Although Hart's campaign sputtered in Iowa and ended in March with virtually no support in the polls, the

media initially had a greater impact on Hart the candidate than on public opinion of his candidacy. (See also Figure 11.7, page 431.)

Broader studies of opinion change have found systematic, and in some cases dramatic, effects of television news. One study repeatedly polled the public on eighty issues in foreign and domestic affairs. In nearly half these items, public opinion changed over time by about 6 percentage points. The researchers compared these changes with policy positions taken by ten different sources of information: commentators on television network news, the president, members of the president's party, members of the opposition party, and members of interest groups, for instance. The study found the news commentators to have the most dramatic effect—a single commentary could be linked to more than 4 percentage points of opinion change.⁵⁰ As examples, the researchers cited Howard K. Smith's support of Nixon's Vietnam policies in 1969, John Chancellor's stand on the importance of fighting unemployment rather than inflation in 1976, and various 1981 commentaries that argued Reagan's tax cuts would benefit the wealthy.⁵¹

Setting the Political Agenda

Despite the media's potential for influencing public opinion, most scholars believe that the media's greatest impact on politics is found in its power to set the agenda. An *agenda* is a list of things to do or consider; a **political agenda** is a list of issues that need government attention.

The Shot Seen 'Round the World

Millions of Americans watching the network news one night during the Vietnam War witnessed a South Vietnamese army officer (our ally) executing a captured Vietcong prisoner. This striking photo of the same incident appears to capture the moment of impact. Television showed the public the truly ugly aspects of war and helped mobilize sentiment for withdrawal.



Those who set the political agenda are those who define what issues should be discussed and debated by government decision makers. Like the tree that falls in the forest without anyone hearing it, an issue that does not get on the political agenda will not have anyone in government working on its behalf.

The mass media in the United States have traditionally played an important role in defining the political agenda. As we have seen, newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst helped put war with Spain on the political agenda in 1898. The muckrakers' magazine articles helped put political and business reforms on the political agenda in the early 1900s. Radio helped put opposition to the Nazis' rise to power on the political agenda in the late 1930s. Television, which reaches daily into virtually every home, has an even greater potential for setting the political agenda. A careful study designed to isolate and examine television's effects on public opinion concluded, "By attending to some problems and ignoring others, television news shapes the American public's political priorities."⁵² Furthermore, "the more removed the viewer is from the world of public affairs, the stronger the agenda-setting power of television news."⁵³

Today's newspapers also heighten the public's concern about particular social issues. Crime is a good example. Certain types of crime—particularly murder—are especially attractive to the media, which therefore tend to distort the incidence of crime by their reporting. A study of

newspaper coverage of crime in nine cities found more attention given to violent crimes (murder, rape, and assault) than was justified by official police statistics. In addition, the study found that newspapers in recent years have given increased attention to political crimes—such as assassinations or kidnappings—and to violent crimes committed outside the metropolitan areas served by the papers. The author concluded that, although newspapers helped put "combating crime" on the political agenda, they also distorted the extent and even the nature of the problem, confusing local policymakers about what should, or could, be done.⁵⁴

At the national level, the major news media help set the political agenda by what they choose to report. One study of Washington reporters identified eleven organizations that comprise the "inner ring" of influence in Washington: the three major television network news organizations (NBC, CBS, and ABC); the two leading news wire services (Associated Press and United Press International); three newspapers with national influence (the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal*); and three major news weeklies (*Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*).⁵⁵ Top government leaders closely follow the news reported in these sources, and the president receives a digest of the news in these and other sources. Cable News Network is also very popular with government officials (see Politics in the Information Age 6.1). Much of what these news media report works its way into the political agenda at one level or another.

POLITICS IN THE INFORMATION AGE 6.1

Continuous News

The nightly news broadcasts of the three major networks summarize the day's important stories. In contrast, Cable News Network reports the news throughout the day and night—often as it breaks—to homes wired for cable television. CNN anchorpersons like Bernard Shaw are becoming increasingly familiar faces to viewers across the country. Who else watches CNN? Why, newsmakers, of course.

In some offices at the Pentagon, the State Department and the White House, a television set is tuned to Cable News Network most of the time. . . .

Although it has not toppled the big three networks, CNN, once the poor relation among Washington's television operations, has carved out a niche among the capital's news and politics aficionados. It is a source of up-to-the-minute information for Government officials, lobbyists and business people and a kind of wire

service with sound and pictures for journalists. . . .

CNN's ratings are hard to compare with the broadcast news programs since CNN is on all the time. James Boyle, spokesman for the National Cable Television Association, said that as of July [1987], 41.1 million of the 88.6 million American households with television sets had access to CNN through subscription to local cable services. . . .

In Washington, the audience is more restricted, since the city does not have cable service. Capital Connection, a service of George Mason University, provides CNN, along with C-SPAN, the Congressional Cable television service, to about 1,000 subscribers, many of whom are lobbying groups and political action committees that generally tune to C-SPAN for Government events and Congressional hearings. Michael R. Kelley, the university's direc-



Bernard Shaw

tor of telecommunications, estimated that the signal reaches 10,000 television sets in Washington. . . .

In the Pentagon's National Military Command Center, CNN is on one of the television sets in a room that also contains wire service printers. State Department officials with television sets in their offices say they also often watch CNN.

Liz Murphy, an assistant White House press secretary, said she monitors all the networks but turns to CNN for live coverage. "It's like a visual wire," she said. "You can hear stuff on CNN even before we have time to go down and get a wire story."

Source: Andrew Rosenthal, "Watching Cable News Network Grow," *New York Times*, 16 December 1987, p. 12. Copyright 1987 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission.

Socialization

We discussed the major agents of political socialization in Chapter 5, but, for reasons of emphasis and space, we did not include the mass media among them. The mass media act as very important agents of political socialization. Young people who rarely follow the news by choice nevertheless acquire political values through the entertainment function of the broadcast media. Years ago, children learned from radio programs; now they learn from television. What children learned then, however, was very different from what they are learning now. In the "golden days of radio," youngsters listening to the popular radio drama "The Shadow" heard repeatedly that "crime does not pay . . . the *Shadow* knows!" Action programs—such as "The FBI in Peace and War" and "Gangbusters!"—taught children that the major law enforcement agencies inevitably caught criminals and put them behind bars. In program after program—"Dragnet," "Junior G-Men," "Crime Fighters"—the message never varied: Criminals are bad; the police are good; criminals get caught; and criminals are severely punished for their crimes.

Needless to say, television today does not portray the criminal justice system in the same way—even in police dramas. Consider the hit prime-time show "Miami Vice," starring Don Johnson and Philip Michael Thomas as Detectives Crockett and Tubbs. According to one researcher, who analyzed many episodes, the program communicated these themes about law enforcement:

The federal government is evil—the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) or the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) often intervenes for shadowy reasons to protect killers and drug pushers tracked down by Crockett and Tubbs.

The criminal justice system is suspect—the criminals caught by Crockett and Tubbs are usually released by judges soon after they are arrested (so justice is better served if the crooks are blown away instead).⁵⁶

In general, "Miami Vice" portrayed a cynical view of humanity outside the station house. Only material goods—a black Ferrari Daytona, a sleek sailboat, a powerful speedboat, an elegant Armani suit—can be trusted.

These themes are not unique to "Miami Vice," and another theme—violence—is common to all contemporary television police dramas. "Dempsey and Makepeace" and "Cagney and Lacey" depict violence more vividly than any sound effects man on "Gangbusters!" could. Although no one knows for sure, the effect of these messages—distrust of federal law enforcement, disrespect for the criminal justice system, cynicism and materialism, and functional violence—on impressionable youngsters may be severe. Whatever the effects, it would be difficult to argue that television's entertainment programs help prepare law-abiding citizens.

The media play other contradictory roles in the socialization process. On one hand, the media promote popular support for government by joining in the celebration of national holidays, heroes' birthdays, political anniversaries, and civic accomplishments. The flashy coverage of the hundredth anniversary of the Statue of Liberty exemplifies the media's promotion of national pride. On the other hand, the media erode public

An Eye to the Sky

Television satellite dishes not only allow Americans to receive news from the corners of the world, they also ease the isolation of rural areas. Before satellite dishes were available, people who lived too far from ground-based transmitters or were too remote for cable companies could not receive television signals. For good or ill, people can now receive television broadcasts virtually anywhere in the United States, a situation that promotes uniform socialization experiences across the nation.



confidence by publicizing citizens' grievances, airing investigative reports of agency malfeasance, and giving front-page and prime-time coverage to political critics, protestors, and even terrorists and assassins. Some critics contend that the media give too much coverage to government's opponents, especially to those who engage in unconventional opposition. However, strikes, sit-ins, violent confrontations, and hijackings draw large audiences and thus are very newsworthy by the mass media's standards.

EVALUATING THE MEDIA IN GOVERNMENT

We have described the major political roles of the mass media. What contributions do the media make to democratic government? What effects do they have on freedom, order, and equality?

Contributions to Democracy

As noted earlier, the communication flow in a democracy must move in two directions: from government to citizens and from citizens to government. In fact, because the media are privately owned, political communication in the United States seldom goes directly from government to citizens without passing *through* the media. This is an important point because, as we have seen, news reporters tend to be highly critical of politicians; they instinctively search for inaccuracies in fact and weaknesses in argument. Some observers have characterized the news media and the government as adversaries—each mistrusting the other, locked in competition for popular favor. To the extent that this is true, the media serve both the majoritarian and the pluralist models of democracy well by improving the quality of information transmitted to people about their government.

The mass media transmit information from citizens to government by reporting citizens' reactions to political events and government actions. The press has traditionally reflected public opinion (and often created it) by defining the news and suggesting courses of government action. But the media's role in reflecting public opinion has become much more refined in the information age. Before the widespread use of sample surveys, collections of newspaper stories from across the country were analyzed to assess public opinion on political affairs. After commercial polls (such as the Gallup and Roper polls) were established in the 1930s, newspapers began to report more reliable readings of public opinion. By the 1960s, the media (both national and local) began to conduct their own surveys. In the 1970s, survey research groups became formal divisions of some news organizations. Occasionally, print and electronic media joined forces to conduct major national surveys.

The media now have the tools to do a better job of reporting mass opinion than ever before, and they are using those tools extensively. The well-respected *New York Times*/CBS News Poll conducts surveys that are aired first on the "CBS Evening News," then analyzed at length in the *Times*. In fact, of forty-nine *Times* stories on the 1984 campaign the week before the election, poll results were cited in 57 percent and received major or important discussion in 30 percent.⁵⁷ The *Wall Street Journal* and NBC News are also allies in opinion polling, as are the *Washington Post* and ABC News. Although polls sometimes create opinions just by asking questions, their net effect has been to generate more accurate knowledge of public opinion and to report that knowledge back to the public. Although widespread knowledge of public opinion does not guarantee government responsiveness to popular demands, such knowledge is required if government is to function according to the majoritarian model of democracy.

The mass media are less important in the pluralist model of democracy. Here, interest groups—such as the Farm Bureau, the National Education Association (NEA), and the National Rifle Association (NRA)—can inform their members of government action through publications and mass mailings. Interest groups use these same means of communication to urge their members to write Congress, and they increasingly

advertise in the media to generate public support for their special interests. But for political communication to and from the public as a whole, there is no substitute for the mass media.

Effects on Freedom, Order, and Equality

The media in the United States have played an important role in advancing equality, especially racial equality. Throughout the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, the media gave national coverage to conflict in the South, as black children tried to attend white schools or civil rights workers were beaten and even killed in the effort to register black voters. Partly because of the media coverage, civil rights moved up on the political agenda, and coalitions were formed in Congress to pass new laws promoting racial equality. Women's rights have also been advanced through the media, which focused attention on the National Organization for Women (NOW) and other groups working for sexual equality. In general, the mass media offer spokespersons for any disadvantaged group an opportunity to state their case before a national audience and to work for a place on the political agenda.

Although the media are willing to mobilize government action to infringe on personal freedom for equality's sake, they resist attempts to infringe on freedom of the press to promote order. The media, far more than the public, believe freedom of the press is sacrosanct. For example, 98 percent of the 2,703 journalists surveyed by the *Los Angeles Times* opposed allowing a government official to prevent the publication of a story seen as inaccurate, compared with only 50 percent of the public. Whereas the public felt that certain types of news should never be published—"exit polls saying who will win an election, secret documents dealing with national security issues, the names of CIA spies, photographs that invade people's privacy"—journalists are more reluctant to draw the line anywhere.⁵⁸

To protect their freedom, the media operate as an interest group in a pluralist democracy. They have an interest in reporting whatever they wish whenever they wish, which certainly erodes government's efforts to maintain order. Three examples illustrate this point.

- The media's sensational coverage of the Beirut hijacking fits a general pattern of coverage given to all sorts of terrorist activities. By publicizing terrorism, the media give terrorists exactly what they want, making it more difficult to reduce terrorist threats to order.
- The portrayal of brutal killings and rapes on television, often under the guise of entertainment, has produced "copycat" crimes, those admittedly committed "as seen on TV."
- The national publicity given to deaths from adulterated drugs (for instance, Tylenol capsules laced with cyanide) has prompted similar tampering with other products.

Freedom of the press is a noble value and one that has been important to our democratic government. But we should not ignore the fact that we sometimes pay a price for pursuing it without qualification.

SUMMARY

The mass media transmit information to large, heterogeneous, and widely dispersed audiences through print and broadcasts. The main function of the mass media is entertainment, but the media also perform the political functions of reporting news, interpreting news, influencing citizens' opinions, setting the political agenda, and socializing citizens about politics.

The mass media in the United States are privately owned and in business to make money, which they do mainly by selling space or air time to advertisers. Both print and electronic media determine which events are newsworthy, a determination made on the basis of audience appeal. The rise of mass-circulation newspapers in the 1830s produced a politically independent press in the United States. In their aggressive competition for readers, those newspapers often engaged in sensational reporting, a charge sometimes leveled at today's media.

The broadcast media operate under technical, structural, and content regulations set by the government, which tend to promote the equal treatment of political contests on radio and television more than in newspapers and news magazines.

The major media maintain staffs of professional journalists in major cities across the world. Washington, D.C., has the largest press corps in the United States, and nearly one-third of those correspondents concentrate on the presidency. Because Congress is a more decentralized institution, it is covered in a more decentralized manner. All professional journalists recognize rules for citing sources that guide their reporting. What actually gets reported in the media depends on the media's gatekeepers, the publishers and editors.

The media's elite, including reporters from the major television networks, tend to be more liberal than the public, as judged by the journalists' tendency to vote for Democratic candidates and by their own self-descriptions. However, if the media systematically demonstrate pronounced bias in their news reporting, it tends to work against incumbents and frontrunners, regardless of their party, rather than for liberal Democrats.

Although more people today get more news from television than newspapers, those with higher levels of education rely more on newspapers. Newspapers usually do a more thorough job of informing the public about politics. Despite citizens' heavy exposure to news in the print and electronic media, their ability to retain much political information is shockingly low. And despite the media's vaunted reputation for

influencing behavior, American voters are able to ignore a candidate's bad press and elect him or her anyway. The amount of coverage given to a candidate may be the most important source of press influence.

From the standpoint of majoritarian democracy, one of the most important effects of the media is to facilitate communication from the people to the government through the reporting of public opinion polls. The media zealously defend the freedom of the press, even to the point of encouraging disorder through criticism of the government and the granting of extensive publicity to violent protests, terrorist acts, and other threats to order.

Key Terms

communication	Federal
mass communication	Communications
mass media	Commission (FCC)
print media	equal opportunities rule
broadcast media	fairness doctrine
yellow journalism	reasonable access rule
muckrakers	gatekeepers
attentive policy elites	horse race journalism
two-step flow of	media event
communication	political agenda
newsworthiness	

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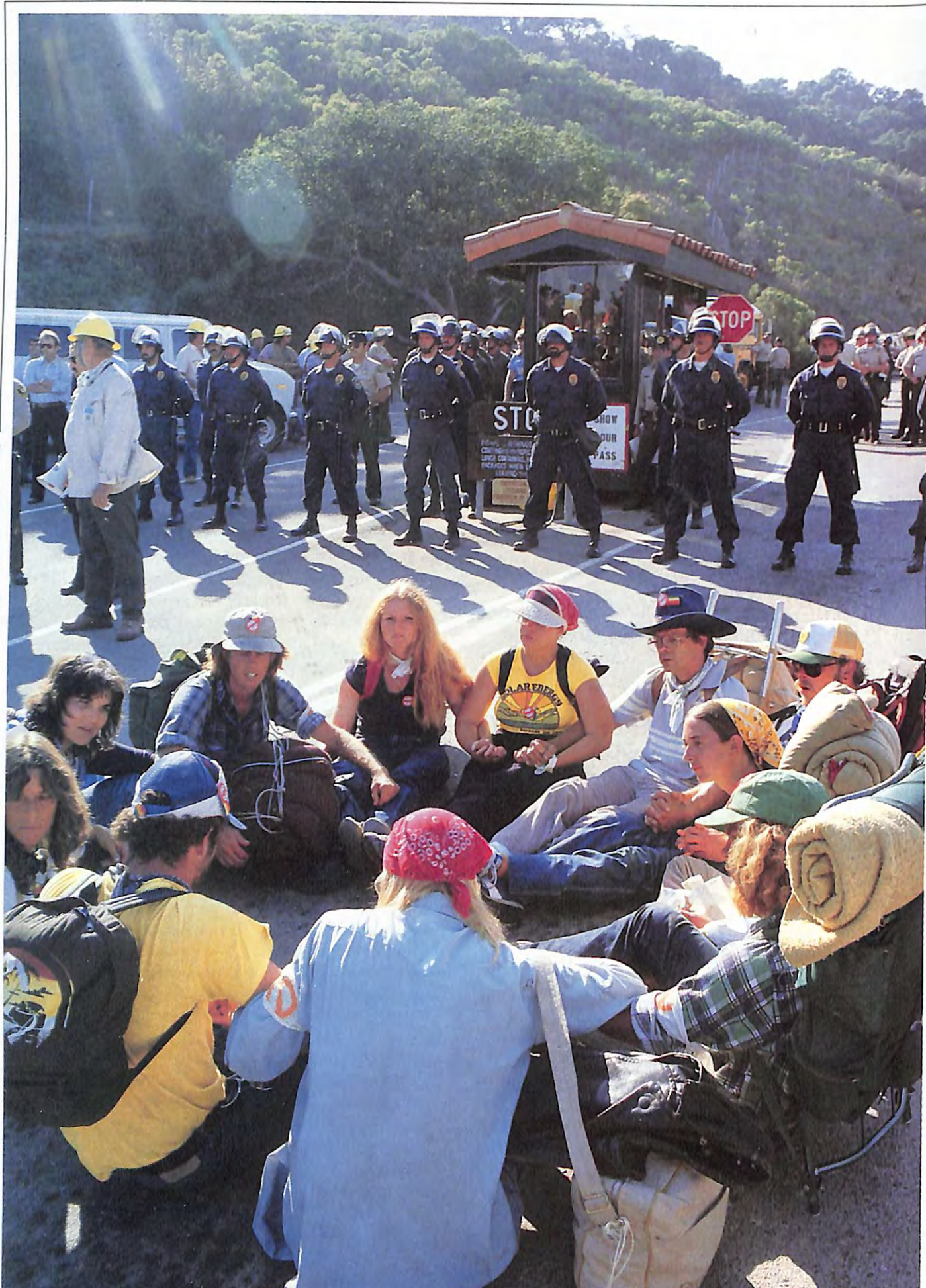
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7

Participation and Voting

Democracy and Political Participation

Unconventional Participation

Support for Unconventional Participation • The Effectiveness of Unconventional Participation • Unconventional Participation in America

Conventional Participation

Supportive Behavior • Influencing Behavior • Conventional Participation in America

Participating Through Voting

Expansion of Suffrage • Voting on Policies • Voting for Candidates

Explaining Political Participation

Patterns of Participation over Time • The Standard Socioeconomic Explanation • Low Voter Turnout in America

Participation and Freedom, Equality, and Order

Participation and Freedom • Participation and Equality • Participation and Order

Participation and the Models of Democracy

Participation and Majoritarianism • Participation and Pluralism

Mayor Richard J. Daley vowed, "Law and order will be maintained." Chicago was preparing to host the 1968 Democratic National Convention, and Daley had reason to be concerned. Groups of young antiwar protesters—ranging from neatly dressed supporters of peace candidate Eugene McCarthy to hard-core revolutionaries—were planning to demonstrate against the Vietnam War at the convention. To keep his word, Daley put Chicago's 11,900-member police force on twelve-hour shifts. He also called up more than 5,000 Illinois National Guard troops and arranged for 6,500 federal troops to be flown in as reserves. In all, he had more than 23,000 law enforcement officers available to deal with the 8,000 to 10,000 demonstrators who showed up for the convention in late August.¹

Skirmishes between the protesters and the police, the first line of Mayor Daley's defense, began before the convention formally opened. Daley had refused to allow the protesters to sleep in Lincoln Park, a 1,200-acre park a distance from the convention site. The protesters, most of them in their teens and twenties, tried to stay in the park after the 11:00 p.m. curfew but were easily driven out the first night. Clashes between demonstrators and police intensified on subsequent nights, and soon the National Guard troops were called in. When the convention started, the battleground shifted to Grant Park, just in front of the Conrad Hilton Hotel, where many delegates were staying. On the final night of the convention, a crowd estimated at three thousand taunted the police with cries of "Pig!" and worse, and threw bricks and bottles. The police responded with tear gas and nightsticks.

The orgy of beatings that followed was closely covered by the mass media. One reporter wrote, "The sound of nightsticks smashing into skulls resounded through the park, mixed with shrieks and screams. 'Oh, no!' 'Oh, my God!' 'No, no, no!'" The reporter quoted a policeman: "If they'd gotten beaten like this when they were kids, they wouldn't be out here starting riots."² The police flailed at everyone in sight, injuring at least 17 reporters that one night. During the week, more than 700 civilians and 83 police officers were injured. Of the 653 people arrested, only 91 were thirty or older.³

Watching the conflict from their living rooms, a nationwide television audience heard horrified commentators criticizing the police for using excessive force on the young protesters. The public thought otherwise. People flooded the networks with mail, berating the reporters and praising the police. A national poll taken two months later found that 75 percent of respondents with opinions on the riot thought the police had used the right amount of force or should have used even more.⁴

In Chapter 5, we saw that about half the population chose order over freedom on the issue of allowing a communist to teach in college. On the subject of the Vietnam War, most of the public rejected freedom of organized protest and approved massive force to prevent demonstrators from disturbing the orderly conduct of the Democratic convention. Perhaps the public was simply fed up with the wave of protests against the war, the draft, capitalism, and social inequalities that characterized student activism in the 1960s.

Today's young people do not seem to take part in political protest as readily or as intently. The relatively few students who demonstrated in 1986 against college investments in South Africa had only limited success. At Dartmouth College, a few conservative students even tore down the shantytown that other students had built to protest Dartmouth's South African investments. The students at Gallaudet College met with more success in 1988, when their campus protests against the appointment of a hearing president produced the first deaf president ever at the nation's only college for deaf students. In the political arena, however, college students kept a low profile at the 1988 Democratic and Republican nominating conventions—a far cry from the turbulent scene outside the Democratic convention in 1968.

What has happened during the last two decades to change the political behavior of American youth? It seems we are witnessing widespread political apathy among Americans of all ages. Are Americans today less active politically? How do they compare with citizens of other countries? And how much and what kind of participation are necessary to sustain the pluralist and majoritarian models of democracy?

In this chapter, we try to answer these and other important questions about popular participation in government. Although most people think of political participation primarily in terms of voting, there are other forms of political participation, and sometimes they are more effective than voting. We begin by looking at the role of participation in democratic government, distinguishing between conventional and unconventional participation. Then we evaluate the nature and extent of both types of participation in American politics. Next, we study the expansion of voting rights and voting as the major mechanism for mass participation in politics. Finally, we examine the extent to which the various forms of political participation serve the values of freedom, equality, and order, and the majoritarian and pluralist models of democracy.

DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

"Government ought to be run by the people." That is the democratic ideal in a nutshell. But how much and what kind of citizen participation are necessary for democratic government? Neither political theorists nor politicians, neither idealists nor realists, can agree on an answer. Champions of direct democracy believe that if citizens do not participate *directly* in government affairs, making government decisions among themselves, they should give up all pretense of democracy. More practical observers contend that people can govern indirectly through their elected representatives. And they maintain that choosing leaders through **elections**—formal procedures for voting—is the only workable approach to democracy in a large complex nation.

We talked about the distinction between direct and indirect democracy in Chapter 2. In a direct democracy, citizens meet and make decisions themselves. In an indirect democracy, citizens participate in government by electing representatives to make decisions for them. Voting

is central to the majoritarian model of government, but it is not the only means of political participation. In fact, the pluralist model of democracy relies less on voting and more on other forms of participation.

Elections are a necessary condition of democracy, but they do not guarantee democratic government. The Soviet Union has regularly held elections in which more than 90 percent of the electorate turn out to vote, but the Soviet Union has certainly not functioned as a democracy. Both the majoritarian and pluralist models of democracy rely to varying degrees on voting but expect citizens to take part in other forms of political behavior as well. For example, they expect citizens to discuss politics, to form interest groups, to contact public officials, to campaign for political parties, to run for office, and even to protest government decisions.

We define **political participation** as "those actions of private citizens by which they seek to influence or to support government and politics."⁵ This definition embraces both conventional and unconventional forms of political participation. In plain language, *conventional* behavior is behavior that is acceptable to the dominant culture in a given situation. Wearing a swimsuit at the beach is conventional; wearing one at a formal dance is not. Plastering campaign posters on public buildings is conventional; writing political slogans on walls is not.

At times, it can be difficult to decide whether a particular political

Unconventional Political Participation

In August 1968, thousands of youthful antiwar protesters gathered in Chicago, where the Democrats were holding their national convention. Protests against the war had already forced President Lyndon Johnson not to seek re-election. Mayor Richard Daley vowed that the protesters would not disturb the convention's impending nomination of Hubert Humphrey, Johnson's vice president. Daley's police kept the youths from demonstrating at the convention, but the resulting violence did not help Humphrey, who lost to Richard Nixon in an extremely close election.



Conventional Political Participation

In contrast to the violent protests outside the 1968 Democratic convention, these young people patiently stuff envelopes in behalf of Senator Robert Dole's campaign for the 1988 Republican presidential nomination. Today's youth are less inclined to engage in organized political protests and more inclined to participate in politics in conventional ways.



act is conventional or unconventional. We find the following distinction useful in analyzing political participation:

- **Conventional participation** is relatively routine behavior that uses the institutional channels of representative government, especially campaigning for candidates and voting in elections.
- **Unconventional participation** is relatively uncommon behavior that challenges or defies government channels (and thus is personally stressful to participants and their opponents).

Voting and writing letters to public officials are examples of conventional political participation; staging sit-down strikes in public buildings and chanting slogans outside officials' windows are examples of unconventional participation. Some forms of unconventional participation are used by powerless groups to gain political benefits while still working within the system.⁶ It is stressful because it means doing something that is not approved by the dominant culture, acting against the established order.

There is no question that voting and other methods of conventional participation are important to democratic government. But so are unconventional forms of participation. Here we look at both kinds of political participation in the United States, beginning with unconventional forms and working toward the most visible form of conventional participation—voting in elections.

UNCONVENTIONAL PARTICIPATION

On Sunday, March 7, 1965, a group of about six hundred people attempted to march 50 miles from Selma, Alabama, to the state capital at Montgomery. The marchers were demonstrating in favor of voting rights for blacks. (At the time, Selma had fewer than five hundred registered black voters, out of fifteen thousand who were eligible.)⁷ Alabama Governor George Wallace declared the march illegal and sent state troopers to stop it. The two groups met at the Pettus Bridge over the Alabama River at the edge of Selma. The marchers were beaten and trampled by troopers and deputy sheriffs—some on horseback—using clubs, bullwhips, and tear gas. The day became known as “Bloody Sunday.”

The march from Selma was a form of unconventional political participation. Marching 50 miles in a political protest is certainly not common; moreover, the march challenged existing institutions, which prevented blacks from voting. From the beginning, the marchers knew they were putting themselves in a dangerous situation, that they certainly would be taunted by whites along the way and could be physically hurt as well. But they had been prevented from participating conventionally—voting in elections—for many decades, and they chose this unconventional way of dramatizing their cause.

The march ended in violence because Wallace would not allow even this peaceful mode of unconventional expression. Unlike the antiwar protesters at the 1968 Democratic convention, the civil rights marchers themselves posed no threat of violence. The brutal response to them helped the rest of the nation realize the seriousness of the civil rights problem in the South. Unconventional participation is stressful and occasionally violent, but it is sometimes worth the risk.

Support for Unconventional Participation

Unconventional political participation has a long history in the United States. The Boston Tea Party in 1773, in which American colonists dumped three cargoes of British tea into Boston Harbor, was only the first in a long line of violent protests against British rule that eventually led to revolution. Yet, we know less about unconventional political participation than about conventional participation. The reasons are twofold: First, data on conventional means are easier to collect and so are more frequently studied. Second, political scientists are biased toward “institutionalized,” or conventional, politics. In fact, some basic works on political participation explicitly exclude any behavior that is “outside the system.”⁸

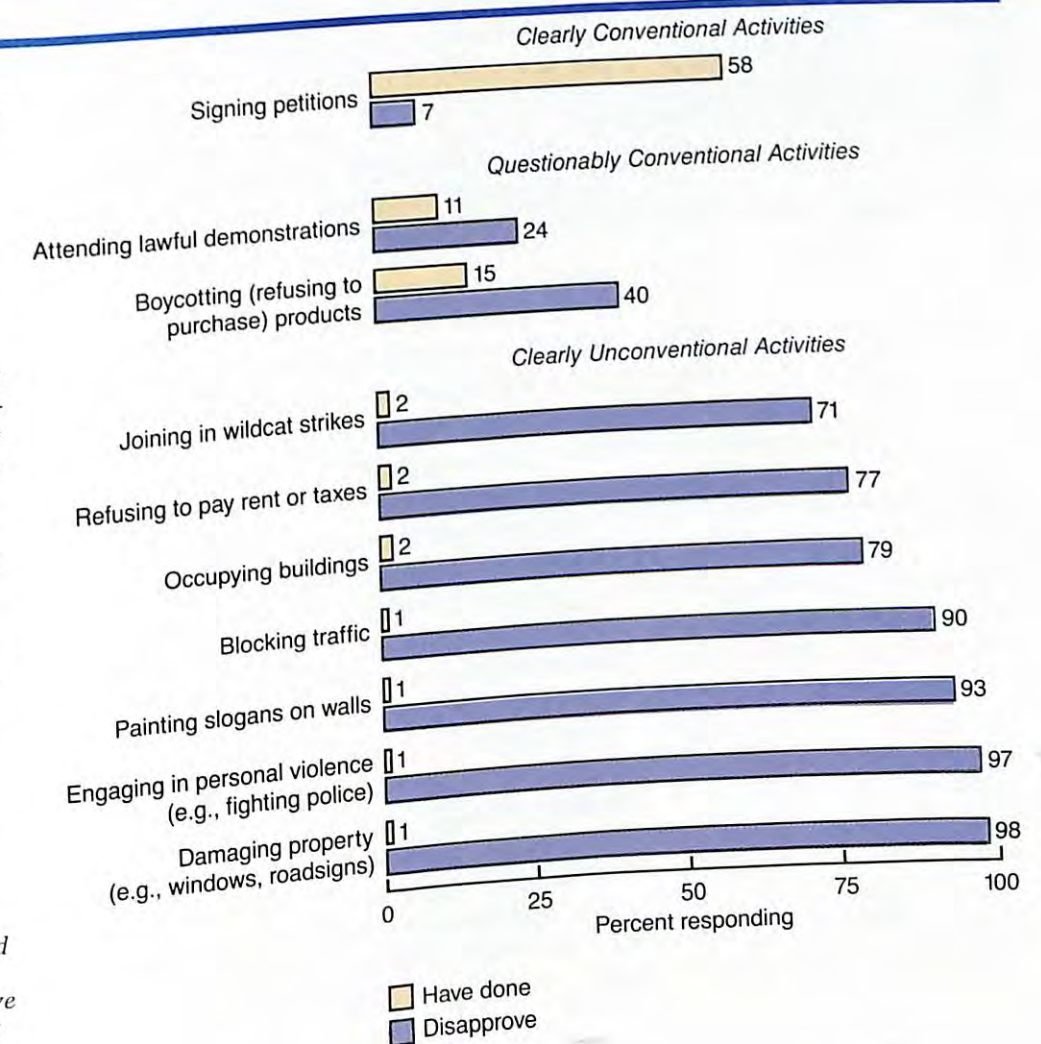
The waves of political protest that swept across this country and Western Europe in the 1960s prompted researchers to conduct studies of political action in five nations, including the United States.⁹ The researchers asked people whether they had engaged in or approved of ten types of political participation outside of voting. The Americans’ responses are shown in Figure 7.1. Of the ten activities, only signing petitions was clearly regarded as conventional, in the sense that the behavior is nearly universally approved and widely practiced.

There was a question about the conventionality of two other forms of behavior. Nearly a quarter of the respondents disapproved of lawful demonstrations, and only one out of ten had ever participated in a lawful demonstration. What is and is not “lawful” is hard to determine, however. The demonstrators in Chicago had a constitutional right to assemble peaceably and to protest the war, but they did violate the law by trying to sleep in the park. The marchers in Selma, although peaceful, violated Governor Wallace’s decree. If we measure conventionality in terms of the number of people who disapprove of an action and the number who actually practice it, then it might be argued that all demonstrations border on the unconventional. The same reasoning could be applied to boycotting products—for example, refusing to buy lettuce or grapes picked by nonunion farm workers. Lawful demonstrations and boycotts are problem cases in deciding what is and is not conventional political participation.

The other political activities listed in Figure 7.1 are clearly unconventional. In fact, when political activities interfere with daily living (blocking traffic) or involve the destruction of property (painting slogans

Figure 7.1
What Americans think of as Unconventional Political Behavior

A survey of Americans asked whether they approved or disapproved of ten different forms of participation outside of the electoral process. The respondents disapproved of most of the ten forms, often overwhelmingly. Signing petitions is one form that was rarely disapproved and also widely done. But even attending lawful demonstrations (a right guaranteed in the Constitution) was disapproved by 24 percent of the respondents and rarely practiced. Boycotting products was more objectionable but more widely practiced. Attending demonstrations and boycotting products are only marginally conventional. The other seven forms are clearly unconventional. (Source: Samuel H. Barnes and Max Kaase, eds., *Political Action: Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies* [Beverly Hills, Calif.: SAGE, 1979] p. 545.)



on walls, breaking windows) or physical violence, disapproval is nearly universal. Americans do not approve of unconventional political behavior. This is why the public condemned the protesters, not the police, in Chicago in 1968.

Why this overwhelming disapproval of most unconventional political action? The reason is not simply that Americans see such tactics as failing in their purpose. While most respondents in the survey felt that unconventional political actions are ineffective, there were more respondents who thought such actions were effective than respondents who personally approved of them.¹⁰ What, then, accounts for the rejection of unconventional behavior?

The researchers on the project suggested the following explanation. Noninstitutionalized political protest has been used mainly by powerless groups that have been denied access to channels of political influence. For example, Mayor Daley denied permission for the Chicago antiwar demonstrators to sleep in the park, although granting permission could have averted the initial clashes. When government authorities confront and resist protesters who have no other bases of power, unconventional political action tends to erupt in violence as the authorities use force to impose order. The authorities thus see the direct action of opposed groups as violent and their own actions as nonviolent.¹¹ Mayor Daley, for instance, justified his police force's behavior by describing the antiwar protesters as "terrorists."

The Effectiveness of Unconventional Participation

Does unconventional participation ever work, especially when it provokes violence? Yes. Antiwar protesters discouraged President Lyndon Johnson from seeking re-election, and they heightened public concern over U.S. participation in the Vietnam War. American college students who disrupted campuses in the late 1960s and early 1970s helped end the military draft in 1973, and—as we study more closely later—they were surprised by speedy passage of the Twenty-sixth Amendment, which lowered the voting age to eighteen.

The unconventional activities of the civil rights workers also had notable success. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., led the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott (prompted by Rosa Parks's refusal to surrender her seat to a white man; see page 9) that sparked the civil rights movement. He used **direct action**, assembling crowds to confront businesses and local governments, to demand equal treatment in public accommodations and government. The civil rights movement used over a thousand such noteworthy demonstrations nationwide—387 in 1965 alone.¹² And, like the march in Selma, many of these protests provoked violent confrontations between whites and blacks.

Denied opportunities for conventional political participation, the civil rights movement used unconventional politics to pressure Congress to pass a series of civil rights laws in 1957, 1960, 1964, and 1968—each one in some way extending federal protection against discrimination by

FEATURE 7.1

Selma, Alabama, Twenty Years Later

On March 7, 1965, civil rights marchers were beaten by Alabama state troopers and local law enforcement officers. Twenty years later, on March 3, 1985, state troopers gave a protective escort to those who marched to commemorate Bloody Sunday. Some things do change.

SELMA, ALA., March 3—More than 2,500 people paraded through the streets of this river city today, retracing the route of a group whose protest march 20 years ago marked a turning point in the movement for black voting rights in the South.

The demonstration today, led by Coretta Scott King and the Rev. Jesse Jackson, commemorated what is remembered as Bloody Sunday, when 600 civil rights protesters were beaten and routed by state troopers and mounted sheriffs deputies blocking their route toward Montgomery over the Edmund Pettus Bridge.

"When I think about Selma I think about blacks not being able to drink water when we were thirsty," said Mr. Jackson, speaking outside the Brown Chapel African Methodist Epis-

copal Church, where the marchers gathered 20 years ago. "Whenever our spirits are down and our hearts are heavy, we can always return to this landmark and remember how far we've come."

The violent confrontation on the bridge 20 years ago was captured by television news cameras and aired across the nation, provoking widespread protest and outrage and leading, later in 1965, to passage by Congress of the Voting Rights Act.

As one measure of the kinds of change that have occurred in central Alabama over the last 20 years, Joe T. Smitherman, the white man who is Mayor of Selma today as he was in 1965, was applauded as he presented keys to the city to the Rev. Mr. Jackson and another black leader, the Rev. Joseph E. Lowery, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Source: William E. Schmidt, "Selma Marchers Mark 1965 Clash," *New York Times*, 4 March 1985. Copyright © 1985 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission.

reason of race, color, religion, or national origin. (The 1964 act also prohibited discrimination in employment on the basis of sex.)

In addition, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 put state electoral procedures under federal supervision, increasing the registration of black voters and the rate of black voter turnout—especially in the South, where much of the violence occurred. Black protest activity (both violent and nonviolent) has also been credited with increased welfare support for blacks in the South.¹³ Finally, we know that social change can occur, even when it is violently opposed at first. Twenty years after law enforcement officers beat civil rights marchers in Selma, state troopers and deputy sheriffs gave a protective escort to those who marched to commemorate Bloody Sunday (see Feature 7.1).

Although direct political action and the politics of confrontation can work, it takes a special kind of commitment to use them. Studies show that direct action appeals most to those who both (1) *distrust* the political system and (2) have a strong sense of political *efficacy*—the feeling that they can do something to affect political decisions.¹⁴ Whether or not this combination of attitudes produces behavior that challenges the system depends on the extent of organized group activity.¹⁵ The civil rights

Charming 1 bedrm; good loc.; low rent; blacks only
 Students at many college campuses in 1986 protested college investments in South Africa because of its policy of apartheid (radical separation of races). One form of peaceful protest involved building and sometimes living in shacks that represented the appalling shantytowns where many South African blacks are forced to live. This shack, which stood on the green at Dartmouth College, was torn down one night by conservative students who objected to its presence.



movement involved many groups: King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC); the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), headed by James Farmer; and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), led by Stokely Carmichael—to mention a few.

The decision to behave unconventionally also depends on the extent to which individuals develop a *group consciousness*—identification with the group and an awareness of its position in society, its objectives, and its intended course of action.¹⁶ These factors were present among blacks and young people in the mid-1960s and are present today among blacks and women. Indeed, some authors contend that black consciousness has heightened distrust of the political system and the sense of individual efficacy, producing more participation of different types by poor blacks than by poor whites.¹⁷ The National Organization for Women (NOW) and other women's groups have also heightened women's consciousness, contributing to their increased participation in politics, in both conventional and unconventional ways.

Unconventional Participation in America

Compared with citizens in the Netherlands, Britain, Germany, and Austria, Americans claim to "have done" as much or *more* in the way of unconventional behavior. Researchers have found that Americans were more likely to have participated in lawful demonstrations and were far more likely to have boycotted products of businesses for political reasons. Moreover, Americans were equally likely to have engaged in rent strikes, blocked traffic, painted political slogans, occupied buildings, damaged property, and fought with political opponents.¹⁸ Contrary to the popular view that Americans are apathetic about politics, studies suggest that they are more likely to engage in political protests of various sorts than citizens in other democratic countries.

One might question these findings because the data were collected in 1974, following the civil rights activities of the 1960s and the student protests against the Vietnam War. However, protest activity was also prevalent at that time across western Europe. The national patterns of unconventional participation do not seem to be peculiar to those times. A 1985 poll in Australia, Austria, Britain, Germany, Italy, and the United States showed similar patterns in public approval of various forms of protests.¹⁹

Is there something wrong with our political system if citizens resort to unconventional—and widely disapproved—methods of political participation? To answer this question, we must first learn how much Americans use conventional methods of participation.

CONVENTIONAL PARTICIPATION

A practical test of the democratic nature of any government is whether citizens can affect its policies by acting through its institutions—meeting with public officials, supporting candidates, voting in elections. If people must operate outside government institutions in order to influence policymaking—as civil rights workers had to do in the South—then the system is not democratic. Citizens should not have to risk life and property to participate in politics, and they should not have to take direct action to force their views to be heard in government. The objective of democratic institutions is to make political participation *conventional*—to see to it that ordinary citizens can engage in relatively routine, non-threatening behavior to cause government to heed their opinions, interests, and needs.

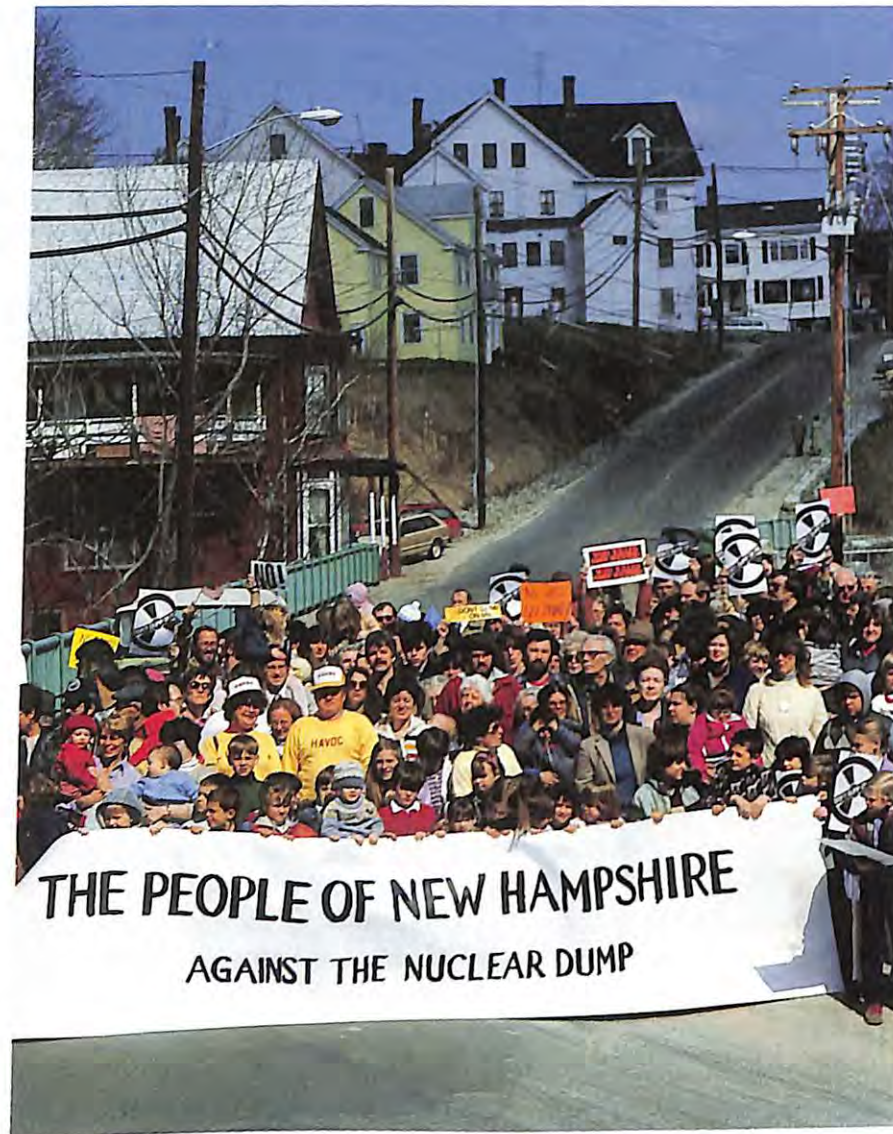
It is not unusual in a democracy for a group to gather at a statehouse or city hall to dramatize its position on an issue—say, a tax increase. This kind of demonstration is a form of conventional participation. The group is not powerless, and its members are not risking their personal safety by demonstrating. But violence can erupt between opposing groups demonstrating in a political setting, for instance, between antiabortion and prochoice groups. Circumstances, then, often determine whether organized protest is or is not conventional. In general, the less the threat to participants, the more conventional the protest.

Several types of participation are conventional except in extreme circumstances. (For example, voting is ordinarily a conventional act, but it would not have been conventional for a black to vote in Selma in the early 1960s.) The most visible form of conventional participation is voting to choose candidates. However, we must not rush to study voting too quickly; it leads us away from less prominent but equally important forms of conventional political participation. In fact, these other forms of participation are in many ways more important than voting, especially in the United States, where voter turnout is much lower than that in most other democratic nations.

There are two major categories of conventional political behaviors: actions that show *support* for government policies and those that try to change or *influence* policies.

Not in Our Town

Perhaps not everyone in New Hampshire is pictured here, but these protesters made their point. A cross section of Hillsboro, New Hampshire, residents marched to protest a nuclear waste disposal site in their town. Politicians usually listen closely when a diverse group of citizens are concerned enough to protest a specific government action. These citizens won: The dump site did not come to Hillsboro.



Supportive Behavior

Supportive behaviors are actions that express allegiance to country and government. When we recite the Pledge of Allegiance or fly the American flag on holidays, we are showing support for the country and, by implication, its political system. These kinds of ceremonial activities usually require little effort, knowledge, or personal courage; that is, they demand little initiative on the part of the citizen. The simple act of turning out to vote is in itself a show of support for the political system. Other supportive behaviors—for example, serving as an election judge in a nonpartisan election or organizing a holiday parade—demand greater initiative.

At times, their perception of patriotism moves people across the line from conventional to unconventional behavior. In their eagerness to support the American system, they break up a meeting or disrupt a rally of a group they believe is radical or somehow “un-American.” Radical

groups may threaten the political system with wrenching change, but superpatriots pose their own threat. Their misguided excess of allegiance denies nonviolent means of dissent to others.

Influencing Behavior

Influencing behaviors are used to modify or even reverse government policy to serve political interests. Some forms of influencing behavior seek particular benefits from government; others have broad policy objectives.

Particular benefits. Some citizens try to influence government to obtain benefits for themselves, their immediate families, or close friends. Two examples, which do not require much initiative, are voting to elect a relative to local office and voting against an increase in school taxes when one’s own children have already left school. Serving one’s own self-interest through the voting process is certainly acceptable to democratic theory. Each individual has only one vote, and no single voter can wangle particular benefits from government through voting unless a majority of voters agree.

Political actions that require considerable knowledge and initiative are another story, however. Individuals or small groups who influence government officials to advance their self-interests may benefit without others’ knowing about it. Those who quietly obtain particular benefits from government present a serious challenge to a democracy. Pluralist theory holds that groups ought to be able to make government respond to their special problems and needs. On the other hand, majoritarian theory holds that government should not do what a majority does not want it to do. A majority of citizens might very well not want the government to do what any particular person or group seeks—if it is costly to other citizens.

What might individual citizens or groups ask of their government, and how might they go about asking? Few people realize that using the court system is a form of political participation, a way for citizens to press their rights in a democratic society. Although most people use the courts to serve their particular interests, some also use them to meet broad objectives. Going to court demands high personal initiative.²⁰ It also demands a knowledge of the law and the financial resources to afford a lawyer.

Some citizens ask for special services from their local government. Such requests may range from contacting the city forestry department to remove a dead tree in front of a house to calling the county animal control center to deal with a vicious dog in the neighborhood. Studies of such “contacting” behavior as a form of political participation find that it tends not to be related to other forms of political activity but is related to socioeconomic status: People of higher socioeconomic status are more likely to contact public officials.²¹

Americans demand much more of local government than of national government. Although many people value self-reliance and individualism in national politics, most people expect local government to solve a

A Line of Argument

Tension may fill the air when citizens turn out in large numbers at local political meetings, and speaking out in such meetings requires high personal initiative. Knowledge of the issues involved sometimes helps, too. Citizens at this public transportation hearing in Austin, Texas, have come prepared to state their views. Looks like a long evening ahead.



wide range of social problems. A study of residents of Kansas City, Missouri, found that more than 90 percent thought it was the city's responsibility to provide services in thirteen areas, including maintaining parks, setting standards for new home construction, demolishing vacant and unsafe buildings, ensuring that property owners clean up trash and weeds, and providing bus service. The researcher noted that "it is difficult to imagine a set of federal government activities about which there would necessarily be any more consensus—defense, environmental controls, and other areas."²²

Finally, contributing money to a candidate's campaign is another form of influencing behavior. Here, too, the objective can be particular or broad benefits, although sometimes it can be difficult to determine which. An example: Zev Wolfson, a New York real estate developer, contributed \$1,000 to the re-election campaign of Democratic Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii in 1987. Wolfson was a member of the board of Ozar Hatorah, an Orthodox Jewish organization that builds schools for Jewish youngsters in France and the Middle East. Soon after Congress passed a massive appropriations bill for 1988, the press disclosed that Senator Inouye had included in it \$8 million for Ozar Hatorah's educational construction program. Senator Inouye conceded an error of judgment (presumably, neglecting the issue of church and state), moved to rescind the funds, and assured his colleagues, "I was not aware of this contribution and I did not solicit the funds."²³ Nevertheless, wealthy individuals sometimes make campaign contributions to further personal objectives that are less noble than schools for refugees.

Several points emerge from this review of "particularized" forms of political participation. First, approaching government to serve one's particular interests is consistent with democratic theory, because it encourages input from an active citizenry. Second, particularized contact may be a form of participation unto itself, not necessarily related to other forms of participation, such as voting. Third, such participation tends to be used more by citizens who are advantaged in terms of knowledge and resources. Fourth, particularized participation may serve private interests to the detriment of the majority.

Broad policy objectives. We come now to what many scholars have in mind when they talk about political participation: activities that influence the selection of government personnel and policies. Here, too, we find behaviors that require little initiative (such as voting) and high initiative (attending political meetings, persuading others how to vote).

Even when voting is used to influence policies, it remains a low-initiative activity. "Policy voting" differs from voting to show support or to gain special benefits by its broader impact on the community or the society. Obviously, this distinction is not sharp: Citizens vote for a number of reasons that mix allegiance, particularized benefits, and policy concerns. In addition to policy voting, many other low-initiative forms of conventional participation—wearing a campaign button, watching a party convention on television, posting a bumper sticker—are also connected with elections. In the next section, we focus on elections as a mechanism for participation. For now, we simply note that voting to influence policy is usually a low-initiative activity. It actually requires more initiative to *register* to vote in the United States than to cast a vote on election day.

ERA NOW!

The National Organization for Women was founded in 1966 to promote "full equality for women in truly equal partnership with men." The organization lobbies at all levels of government. Here Molly Yard, NOW president, holds a 1988 press conference outside the Capitol to display a stack of petitions launching a new attempt to pass the Equal Rights Amendment.



Other types of participation to affect broad policies require high initiative. Running for office requires the most (we discuss this in the next chapter, along with campaigning). Some high-initiative activities, such as attending party meetings and working in campaigns, are associated with the electoral process; others, such as attending legislative hearings and writing letters to Congress, are not. These nonelectoral activities are a form of contacting, but their objective is to obtain government benefits for some *group* of people—farmers, the unemployed, children, oil producers. In fact, studies of citizen contacts in the United States show that about two-thirds deal with broad social issues and only one-third are for private gain.²⁴

As we noted above, the courts can be used for personal benefit and broad policy objectives. **Class-action suits** are brought by a person or group on behalf of other people in similar circumstances. Lawyers for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People pioneered this form of litigation in the famous school desegregation case, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).²⁵ They succeeded in getting the Supreme Court to outlaw segregation in public schools, not just for Linda Brown, who brought suit in Topeka, Kansas, but for all others “similarly situated”—that is, for all other black students who want to attend white schools. Usually this form of participation is beyond the means of individual citizens, but it has proved to be effective for organized groups, especially those who have been unable to gain their objectives through Congress or the president.

Individual citizens try to influence policies at all levels of government—local, state, and national. Congressional hearings are public events, sometimes broadcast over the mass media and occasionally held in various parts of the country. Especially since the end of World War II, the federal government has sought to increase citizen involvement in creating regulations and laws by making information on government activities available to interested parties. For example, government agencies are required to publish notices of regulations in the *Federal Register* (a list, published daily, of all proposed and approved regulations), and to make documents available to citizens on request.

Conventional Participation in America

You may know someone who has taken part in a congressional or administrative hearing; the odds are better, though, that you do not. This is a form of high-initiative behavior. Relatively few people—only those with high stakes in the outcome of a decision—are willing to participate this way. How often do Americans contact government officials and engage in other forms of conventional political participation, compared with citizens in other countries?

The most common political behavior reported in a study of five countries was voting to choose candidates (see Compared With What? 7.1). Americans are *less* likely to vote than citizens in the other four countries. On the other hand, Americans are as likely (or substantially more likely) to engage in all of the other forms of conventional political participation—just as they are as or more likely to take part in uncon-

ventional behaviors. Americans, then, are more apt to engage in nearly all forms of unconventional *and* conventional political participation, *except* voting.

The researchers noted this paradox and wrote: “If, for example, we concentrate our attention on national elections we will find that the United States is the least participatory of our five nations.” But looking at the other indicators, they found that “political apathy, by a wide margin, is lowest in the United States. Interestingly, the high levels of overall involvement reflect a rather balanced contribution of both . . . conventional and unconventional politics.”²⁶ Clearly, low voter turnout in the United States constitutes something of a puzzle. We will work at that puzzle, but first we focus on elections and electoral systems.

PARTICIPATING THROUGH VOTING

The heart of democratic government lies in the electoral process. Whether a country holds elections and, if so, what kind constitute the critical differences between democratic and nondemocratic government. Elections are important to democracy for their potential to institutionalize mass participation in government according to the three normative principles for procedural democracy we discussed in Chapter 2. Electoral rules specify (1) *who* is allowed to vote, (2) *how much* each person’s vote counts, and (3) *how many* votes are needed to win.

Again, elections are formal procedures for making group decisions. **Voting** is the act that individuals perform when they choose among alternatives in an election. **Suffrage** and the **franchise** both mean “the right to vote.” By formalizing political participation through rules for suffrage and counting ballots, electoral systems allow large numbers of people, who individually have little political power, to wield great power. Electoral systems decide collectively who governs and, in some instances, what government should do.

The simple fact of holding elections is less important than the specific rules and circumstances that govern voting. According to democratic theory, everyone should be able to vote. In practice, however, no nation grants universal suffrage. All countries have age requirements for voting, and all disqualify some inhabitants on various grounds: lack of citizenship, a criminal record, mental incompetence, and so forth. What is the record of enfranchisement in the United States?

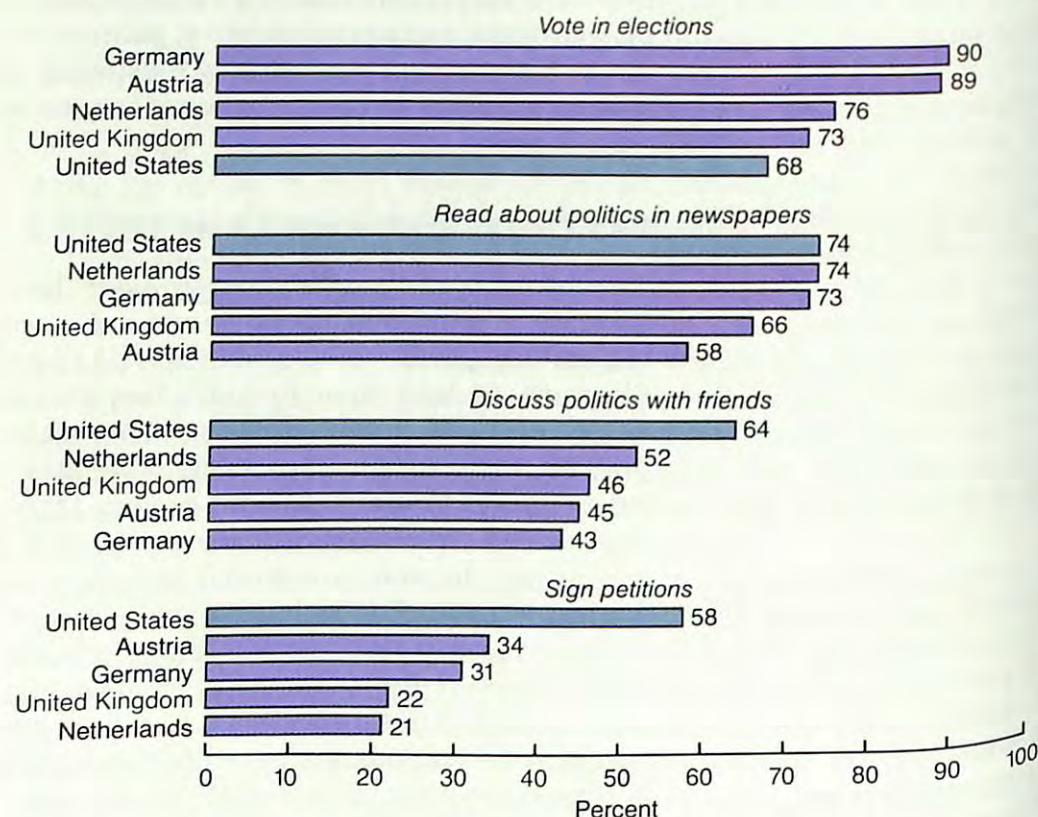
Expansion of Suffrage

The United States was the first country to provide for general elections of representatives through “mass” suffrage, but the franchise was far from universal. When our Constitution was framed, the idea of full adult suffrage was too radical to be considered seriously, much less adopted. Instead, the framers left the issue of enfranchisement to the states, stipulating only that individuals who could vote for “the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature” could also vote for their representatives to the U.S. Congress (Article I, Section 2).

COMPARED WITH WHAT? 7.1

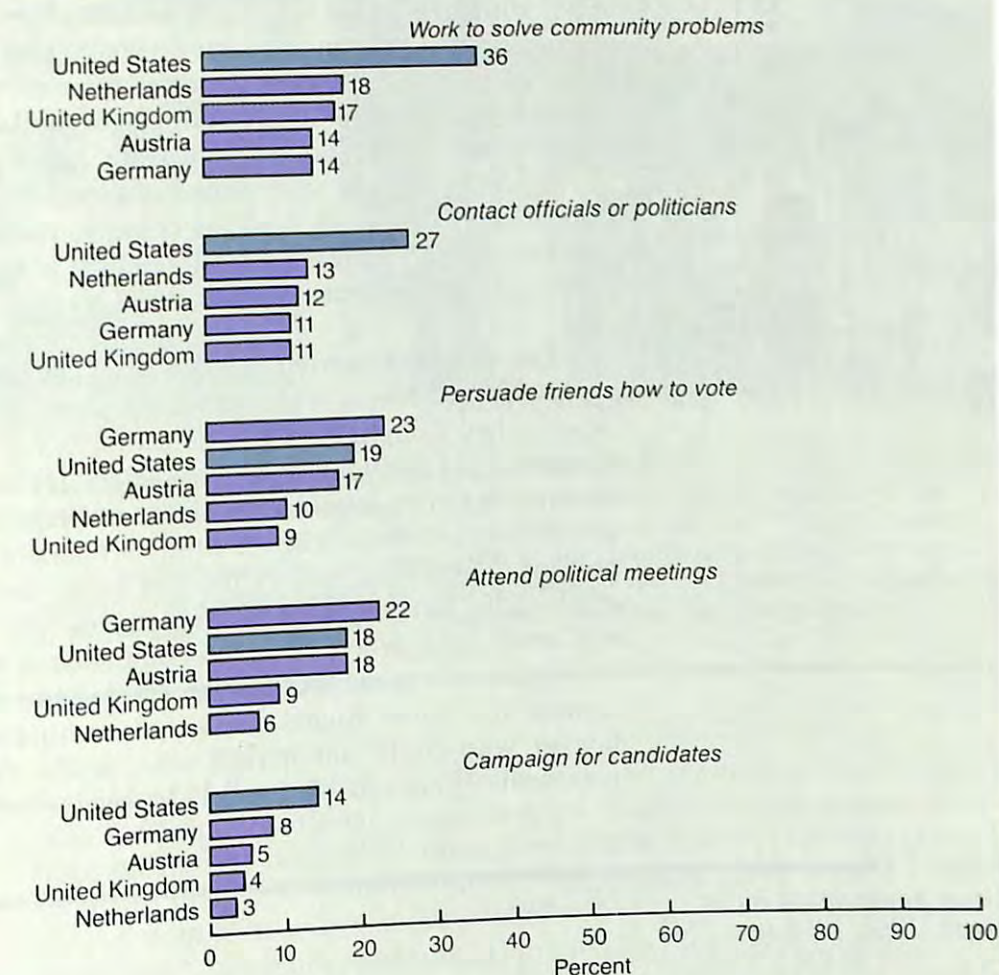
Conventional Political Participation

A study of five nations found that Americans are more likely than citizens in other countries to engage in various forms of conventional political behavior—except voting. These findings clearly contradict the idea that Americans are politically apathetic.



Initially, most states established taxpaying or property-holding requirements for voting, limiting political equality. Virginia, for example, required ownership of 25 acres of settled land or 500 acres of unsettled land. The original thirteen states began to lift these kinds of requirements after 1800. Expansion of the franchise accelerated after 1815, with the admission of new "western" states (Indiana, Illinois, Alabama), where land was more plentiful and widely owned. By the 1850s, virtually all taxpaying and property-holding requirements had been eliminated in all states, allowing the working class to vote—at least its white male members. Extending the vote to blacks and women took more time.

The enfranchisement of blacks. The Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution, adopted in 1870, prohibited the states from denying the right to vote "on account of race, color, or previous condition of servi-



Source: Samuel H. Barnes and Max Kaase, eds., *Political Action: Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: SAGE, 1979), pp. 541–542.

tude." However, the southern states of the old Confederacy worked around the amendment by re-establishing restrictive requirements (poll taxes, literacy tests) that worked against blacks. Some southern states also cut blacks out of politics through a cunning circumvention of the amendment. The amendment said nothing about voting rights in private organizations, so blacks were denied the right to vote in the "private" Democratic *primary* elections held to choose the party's candidates for the general election. Because the Democratic party came to dominate politics in the South, the "white primary" effectively disenfranchised blacks despite the Fifteenth Amendment. Finally, in many areas of the South, the threat of violence kept blacks from the polls.

The extension of full voting rights to blacks came in two phases, separated by twenty years. In 1944, the Supreme Court decided in *Smith v. Allwright* that laws preventing blacks from voting in primary elections

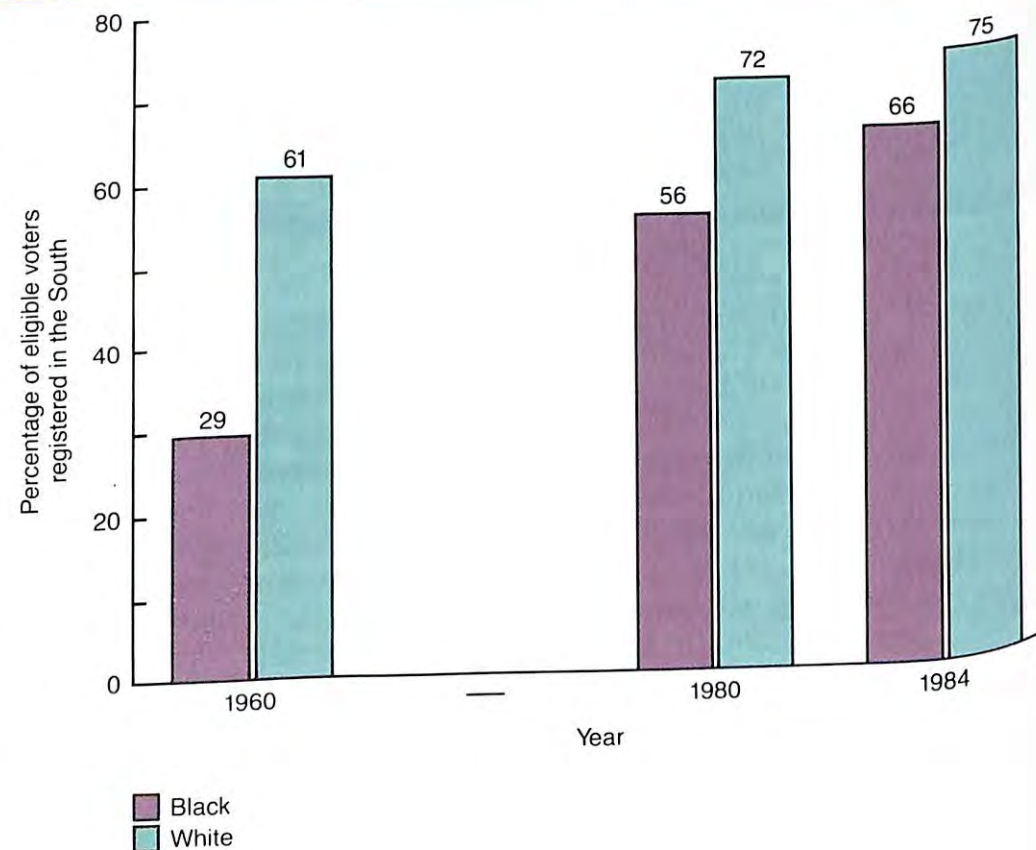
were unconstitutional, holding that party primaries are part of the continuous process of electing public officials.²⁷ The Voting Rights Act of 1965, which followed Selma's Bloody Sunday by less than five months, suspended discriminatory voting tests against blacks. The act also authorized federal registrars to register voters in seven southern states, where fewer than half of the voting-age population had registered to vote in the 1964 election. For good measure, in 1966 the Supreme Court ruled in *Harper v. Virginia State Board of Elections* that poll taxes are unconstitutional.²⁸ Although long in coming, these actions by the national government to enforce political equality within the states dramatically increased the registration of southern blacks (see Figure 7.2).

The enfranchisement of women. The enfranchisement of women in the United States is a less sordid story, but nothing to be proud of. Women had to fight long and hard to win the right to vote. Until 1869, women could not vote anywhere—in the United States or in the world.²⁹ Women began to organize to obtain suffrage in the mid-1800s. Known as *suffragettes*, these early feminists initially had a limited impact on politics. Their first victory did not come until 1869, when Wyoming, while still a territory, granted women the right to vote. No state followed suit until 1893, when Colorado enfranchised women.

In the meantime, the suffragettes became more active. In 1884, they formed the Equal Rights party and nominated Belva A. Lockwood, a lawyer who could not herself vote, as the first woman candidate for president.³⁰ Between 1896 and 1918, twelve other states gave women the

Figure 7.2
Voter Registration in the South, 1960, 1980, and 1984

As a result of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and other federal actions, black voter registration nearly doubled between 1960 and 1980. Efforts to register more black voters in conjunction with Jesse Jackson's campaign for the presidential nomination in 1984 produced another increase. In the twenty-four year period, the percentage of white registered voters also increased, but not nearly as much. (Source: The 1984 data are from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1987* [Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987], p. 245; data for earlier years are from previous editions of the *Statistical Abstract*.)



The Fights for Women's Suffrage . . . and Against It
Young people and minorities are not the only groups who have resorted to unconventional means of political participation. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, women marched and demonstrated for equal voting rights, sometimes encountering strong opposition. Their gatherings were occasionally disrupted by men—and other women—who opposed extending the right to vote to women.

vote. Most of these states were in the West, where pioneer women often departed from traditional women's roles. Nationally, the women's suffrage movement intensified, often resorting to unconventional political behaviors (marches, demonstrations), which occasionally invited violent attacks from men and even other women. In June 1919, Congress finally passed the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which prohibits states from denying the right to vote "on account of sex." The amendment was ratified in August 1920, in time for the November election.

Evaluating the expansion of suffrage in America. The last major expansion of suffrage in the United States took place in 1971, when the Twenty-sixth Amendment to the Constitution lowered the voting age to eighteen. For most of its history, then, the United States has been far from the democratic ideal of universal suffrage. Voting rights were initially restricted to white male taxpayers or property owners, and wealth requirements lasted until the 1850s. Through demonstrations and a constitutional amendment, women won the franchise less than seventy years ago. Through civil war, constitutional amendments, court actions, massive demonstrations, and congressional action, blacks finally achieved full voting rights slightly more than twenty years ago. Our record has more than a few blemishes.

But compared with other countries, the United States looks pretty democratic.³¹ Women did not gain the vote on equal terms with men until 1921 in Norway; 1922 in the Netherlands; 1944 in France; 1946 in Italy, Japan, and Venezuela; 1948 in Belgium; and not until 1971 in Switzerland. It is difficult to compare the enfranchisement of minority racial groups because most other democratic nations do not have this

kind of racial division. We should, however, note that the indigenous Maori population in New Zealand won suffrage in 1867, but the aborigines in Australia were not fully enfranchised until 1961. And, of course, in notoriously undemocratic South Africa, blacks have no voting rights at all—despite the fact that they outnumber whites by more than four to one. With regard to voting age, nineteen of twenty-seven countries that allow free elections also have a minimum voting age of eighteen (none has a lower age), and eight have higher age requirements.

When judged against the rest of the world, then, the United States—which launched mass participation in government through elections—has as good a record of providing for political equality in voting rights as other democracies, and a better record than many.

Voting on Policies

Disenfranchised groups have struggled to gain voting rights because of the political power that comes with suffrage. Belief in the ability of ordinary citizens to make political decisions and to control government through the power of the ballot box was strongest in the United States during the Progressive Era, which began around 1900 and lasted until about 1925. **Progressivism** was a philosophy of political reform that trusted the goodness and wisdom of individual citizens and distrusted “special interests” (railroads, corporations) and political institutions (traditional political parties, legislatures).

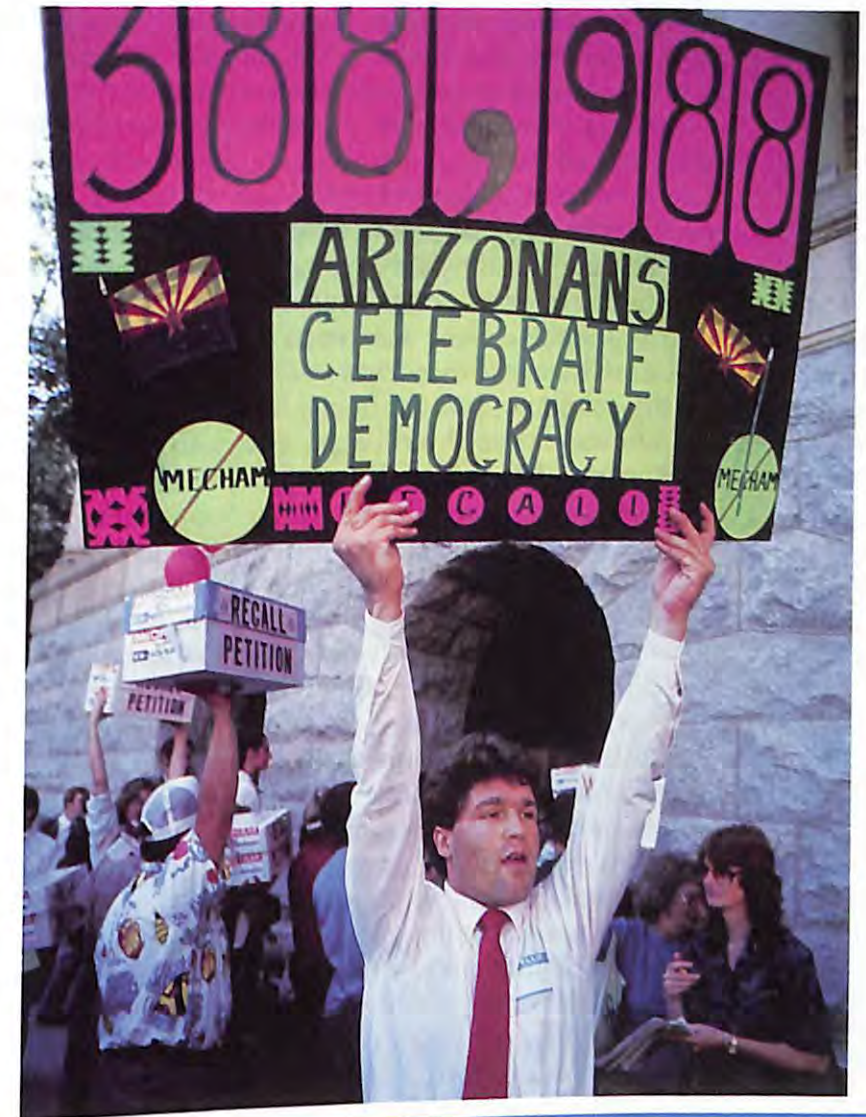
The leaders of the progressive movement were prominent politicians (former president Theodore Roosevelt, Senator Robert La Follette of Wisconsin) and eminent scholars (historian Frederick Jackson Turner, philosopher John Dewey). Not content to vote for candidates chosen by party leaders, the Progressives championed the **direct primary**—a preliminary election, run by the state government, in which the voters choose the party’s candidates for the general election. Wanting a mechanism to remove elected candidates from office, the Progressives backed the **recall**—a special election initiated by petition signed by a specified number of voters.

Progressives also relied on the voting power of the masses to propose and pass laws, thus approximating direct democracy—citizen participation in policymaking. They developed two voting mechanisms for policymaking that are still in use:

- A **referendum** is a direct vote by the people either on a proposed law or on an amendment to the state constitution. The issues subject to vote are known as **propositions**. Twenty-nine states permit popular referenda on laws, and all but Delaware require a referendum on constitutional amendments.
- The **initiative** is a procedure by which voters can propose an issue to be decided by the legislature or by the people in a referendum. The procedure involves gathering a specified number of signatures from registered voters (usually 5 to 10 percent of the total in the state), then submitting the petition to a designated state agency. About twenty states currently provide for some form of voter initiative.

Unelecting a Governor

In January 1988, Arizona citizens collected enough signatures on petitions to schedule a May election to recall Governor Evan Mecham. Among their complaints were Mecham’s insensitive ethnic remarks and actions, including canceling a state holiday honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Mecham was also indicted on (though later cleared of) criminal charges in connection with a campaign loan. In April, the state senate convicted him on two charges of official misconduct, and he was removed from office—eliminating a need for the recall election.



There is no provision for either the initiative or the referendum at the national level, but both are widely used in many states. State legislatures in North Dakota and Oregon each voted on over 125 statutes initiated by citizens between 1898 and 1979. Nationwide, 754 citizen-initiated statutes were put to a vote during this period, and 38 percent were adopted.³² Many more propositions are put to statewide popular vote. One scholar estimates that there have been more than 17,000 referenda since 1898, over 2,300 between 1968 and 1978 alone.³³ In fact, use of the initiative and referendum to propose and approve legislation is increasing.

The referendum and initiative are tools that allow citizens to participate directly in lawmaking. At times, the laws they propose and approve are strongly opposed by politicians. A prominent example is Proposition 13, a proposal submitted to California’s voters in 1978. The law was designed to cut property taxes and drastically reduce government expenditures. Proposition 13 was opposed by most of the state’s political,

business, educational, communications, and labor leaders, and was heavily attacked in the media. But the voters passed it by a landslide margin, 65 percent to 35 percent.

A referendum can also work to the advantage of politicians, freeing them from taking sides on a hot issue. Pornography is a hot issue concerning social order, and the citizens of Maine had their say on controlling pornography in a referendum on June 10, 1986. The question on the ballot read: "Do you want to make it a crime to make, sell, give for value or otherwise promote obscene material in Maine?" It was proposed by the Maine Christian Civic League and backed by the Concerned Citizens for Decency, who sponsored television advertisements in which an expert put the blame for child abuse on pornography. The proposition was opposed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), feminists, and librarians. These groups sponsored television spots showing a leather-jacketed policeman supervising a book burning. In the flames were copies of *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Color Purple*, and *The American Heritage Dictionary*. The proposition was defeated by a vote that ran about 2 to 1.³⁴

What conclusion can we draw about the Progressives' legacy of mechanisms for direct participation in government? One scholar who studied the use of the initiative and referendum paints an unimpressive picture. He notes that in the 1980s an expensive "industry" has developed that makes money circulating petitions, then managing the large sums of money needed to run a campaign to approve (or defeat) a referendum.³⁵ The money required to mount a statewide campaign has involved special interest groups in referendum politics, not eliminated them. Not only is turnout usually lower in referenda than in other elections, but most voters confess they do not know enough about most ballot propositions to vote intelligently on them. The author concludes:

The expectations of the proponents of direct legislation that voters would read and study ballot propositions and then cast informed ballots have been substantially disproven. Voters are not better informed about propositions than they are about candidates. In fact, on most propositions, voters have not heard much prior to entering the voting booth. When voting for candidates, voters can at least utilize the party label if they possess no other information. Typically, however, voters do know something about state candidates and many know something about their issue positions.³⁶

It is clear that citizens can exercise great power over government policy through the mechanisms of the initiative and referendum. What is not clear is whether these forms such direct democracy improve on the policies made by representatives elected for that purpose.

Voting for Candidates

We have saved for last the most visible form of political participation: voting to choose candidates for public office. Voting for candidates serves democratic government in two ways. First, it allows citizens to choose the candidates they think will best serve their interests. If citizens choose candidates "like themselves" in personal traits or party affiliation,

elected officials should tend to be like-minded on political issues. (Of course, if public officials really thought like most of the voters, they would automatically reflect the majority's views when making public policy. And the majority would not have to worry about monitoring the behavior of public officials and directing their policymaking.)

Second, voting allows the people to re-elect the officials they guessed right about and to kick out those they guessed wrong about. This is a very different function from the first. It makes public officials *accountable* for their behavior through the reward-and-punishment mechanism of elections. It assumes that officeholders are motivated to respond to public opinion by the threat of electoral defeat. It also assumes that the voters (1) know what politicians are doing while they are in office and (2) participate actively in the electoral process. We look at the factors that underlie voting choice in the next chapter. Here, we examine Americans' reliance on the electoral process.

In national politics, voters are content to elect just two executive officers—the president and vice president—and to trust the president to appoint a cabinet to round out his administration. But at the state and local levels, voters insist on selecting all kinds of officials. Every state elects a governor (and forty-two of them elect a lieutenant governor too). And forty-three elect an attorney general; thirty-eight, a treasurer; thirty-six, a secretary of state; twenty-five, an auditor. The list goes on, down through the superintendent of education, secretary of agriculture, controller, board of education, and public utilities commissioners.³⁷ Elected county officials commonly include a sheriff, a treasurer, a clerk, a superintendent of schools, and a judge (often several). Even at the local level, all but about 600 of 15,300 school boards across the nation are elected.³⁸ Instead of trusting state and local chief executives to appoint lesser administrators (as we do for more important offices at the national level), we expect voters to choose intelligently among scores of candidates they meet for the first time on a complex ballot in the polling booth.

Americans seem to believe that there is no limit to voters' ability to make informed choices among candidates and thus to control government. Their reasoning seems to be that elections are good; therefore, more elections are better, and the most elections are best. By this thinking, the United States clearly has the best and most democratic government in the world because it is the undisputed world champion at holding elections. The author of a study that compared elections in the United States with elections in twenty-six other democracies concluded:

No country can approach the United States in the frequency and variety of elections, and thus in the amount of electoral participation to which its citizens have a right. No other country elects its lower house as often as every two years, or its president as frequently as every four years. No other country popularly elects its state governors and town mayors; no other has as wide a variety of nonrepresentative offices (judges, sheriffs, attorneys general, city treasurers, and so on) subject to election. . . . The average American is entitled to do far more electing—probably by a factor of three or four—than the citizen of any other democracy.³⁹

COMPARED WITH WHAT? 7.2

Voter Turnout in Democratic Nations

Americans participate as much as or more than citizens of other nations in all forms of political behavior—except voting. Voter turnout in American presidential elections ranks at the bottom of voting rates for twenty-seven countries with competitive elections. As discussed in the text, the facts are correct, but the comparison is not as damning as it appears.



Source: Congressional Research Service, "Voter Participation Statistics from Recent Elections in Selected Countries" (Report to Congressman Mario Biaggi, 18 November 1987).

However, we learn from Compared With What? 7.2 that the United States ranks at the bottom of twenty-seven countries in voter turnout! How do we square low voter turnout with Americans' devotion to elections as an instrument of democratic government? To complicate matters further, how do we square low voter turnout with the findings we talked about earlier, which establish the United States as the leader among five Western democratic nations in both conventional and unconventional political participation? Americans seem to participate at high levels in everything except elections.

EXPLAINING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

As you have seen, political participation can be unconventional or conventional, can require little or much initiative, and can serve to support the government or influence its decisions. Researchers have found that people who take part in some form of political behavior often do not take part in others. For example, the same citizens who contact public officials to obtain special benefits may not vote regularly, participate in campaigns, or even contact officials about broader social issues. In fact, "particularized contacting" stands by itself as a form of participation. Because this sort of participation serves individual rather than public interests, it is not even considered *political* behavior by some people.

In this section, we examine some factors that affect the more obvious forms of political participation, with particular emphasis on voting. Our first task is to determine how much variation there is in patterns of participation within the United States over time.

Patterns of Participation over Time

Have Americans become more politically apathetic in the 1980s than they were in the 1960s? The answer lies in Figure 7.3, which plots several measures of participation from 1952 through 1984. The graph shows a mixed pattern of participation over the thirty-two years. Participation was *stable* across time in the percentage of citizens who worked for candidates (3 to 6 percent) or who attended party meetings (6 to 9 percent) during presidential election years. Participation *increased* across time by 8 to 10 percentage points on two other indicators: interest in campaigns and persuading people how to vote. Participation *decreased* over time when measured as voter turnout in presidential elections (dropping from 63 to 52 percent). The plot has thickened. Not only is voter turnout low in the United States compared with that in other countries, but turnout has declined over time. Moreover, while voting has decreased, other forms of participation have increased. What is going on? Who votes? Who doesn't? Why? And does it really matter?

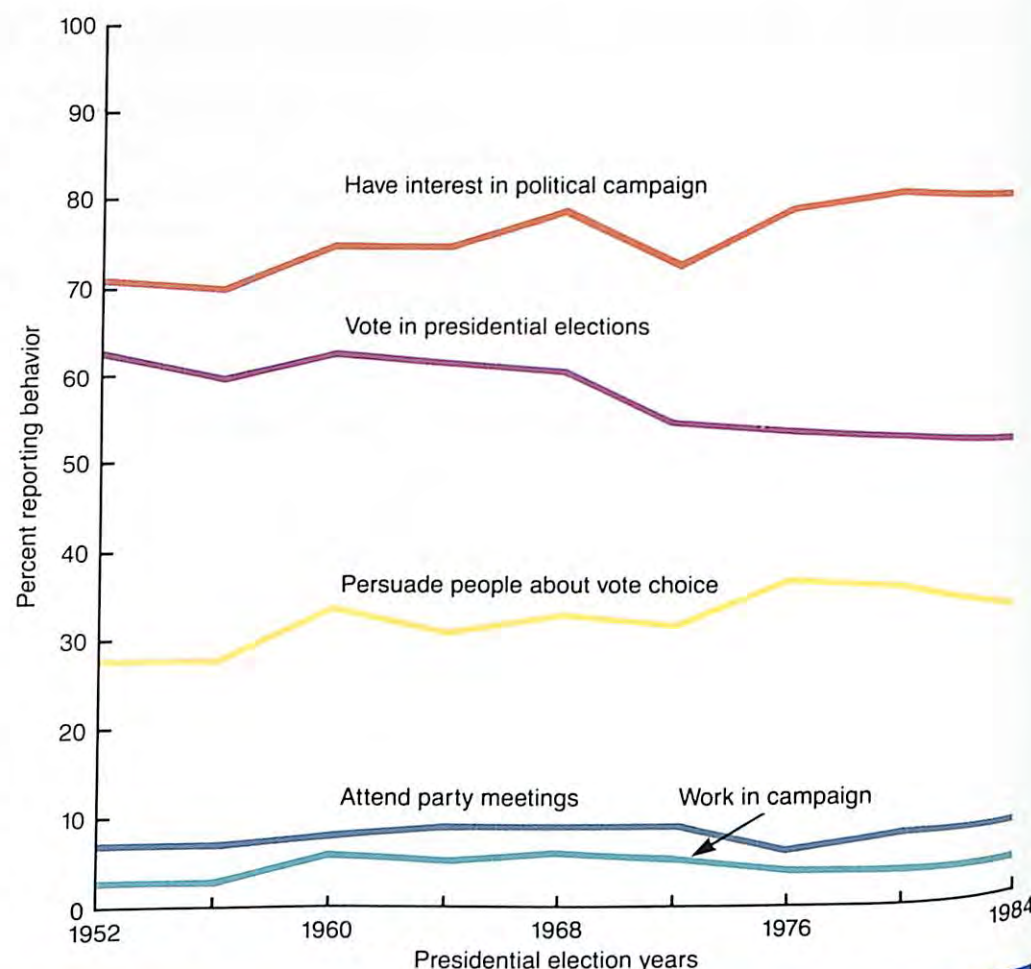
The Standard Socioeconomic Explanation

Researchers have found that socioeconomic status is a good indicator of most types of conventional political participation. People with more

Electoral Participation in the United States over Time

Participation patterns over three decades show that Americans participate about as much or more in election campaigns in the 1980s as in the 1950s on every indicator except voting turnout. The turnout rate dropped more than ten percentage points from 1952 to 1984. The drop in turnout compared with the other indicators also runs counter to the rise in educational level, constituting a puzzle that is discussed in the text. (Source: Warren E. Miller, Arthur H. Miller, and Edward J. Schneider, *American National Election Studies Data Sourcebook, 1952-1978* [Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980]. Data after 1978 came from the *National Election Studies* distributed by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research.)

Figure 7.3



education, higher incomes, and white-collar or professional occupations tend to be more aware of the impact of politics on their lives, to know what can be done to influence government actions, and to have the necessary resources (time, money) to take action. So they are more likely to participate in politics than are people of lower socioeconomic status. This relationship between socioeconomic status and conventional political involvement is called the **standard socioeconomic model** of participation.⁴⁰

Unconventional political behavior is less clearly related to socioeconomic status. Studies of unconventional participation in other countries have found that protest behavior is related to low socioeconomic status and especially to youth.⁴¹ However, scattered studies of unconventional participation in the United States have found that protesters (especially blacks) are often higher in socioeconomic status than those who do not join in protests.⁴²

Obviously, socioeconomic status does not account for all the differences in the ways people choose to participate in politics, even for conventional participation. Another important variable is age. As we noted above, young people are more likely to take part in political pro-

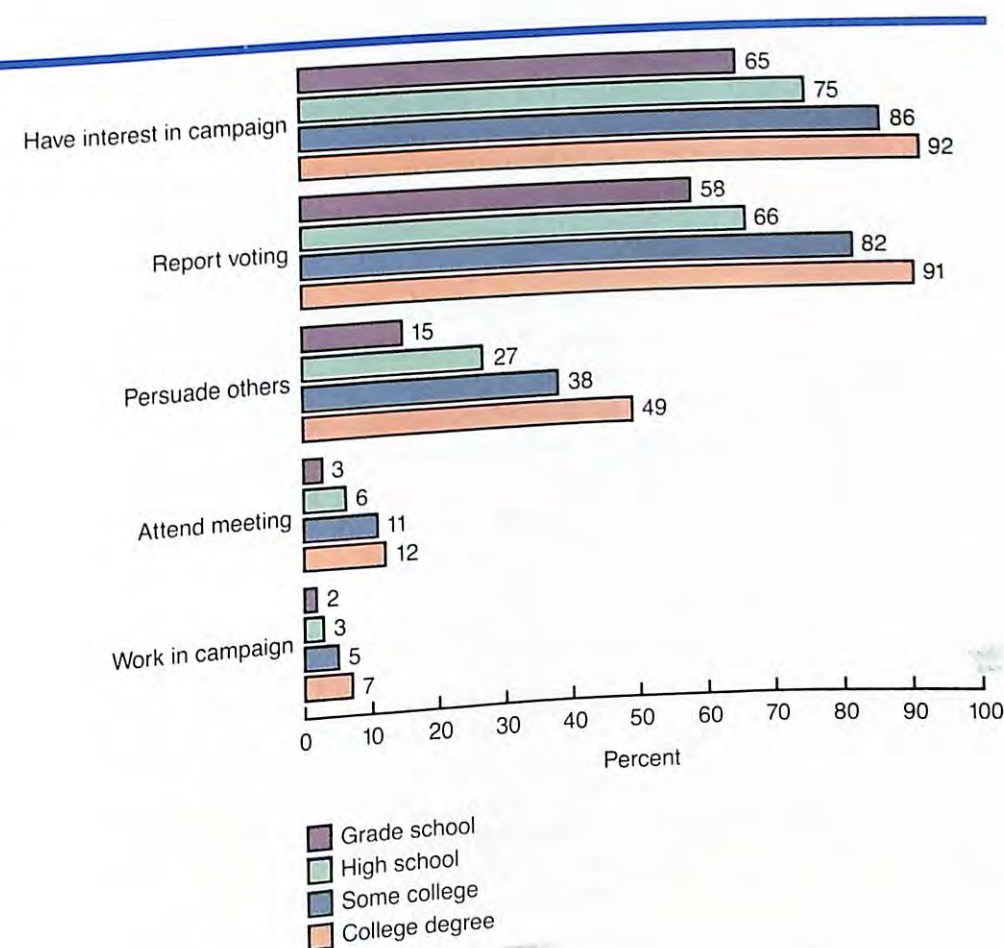
tests, but they are less likely to participate in conventional politics. Voting rates tend to increase as people grow older until about age sixty-five, when physical infirmities begin to lower voting rates again.⁴³

Two other variables—race and sex—have been related to participation in the past, but as times have changed, so have those relationships. Blacks, who had very low participation rates in the 1950s, now participate at rates comparable to whites, when differences in socioeconomic status are taken into account.⁴⁴ Women also exhibited low participation rates in the past, but sex differences in political participation have virtually disappeared.⁴⁵ (The one exception is in attempting to persuade others how to vote, which women are less likely to do than men.)⁴⁶

Of all social and economic variables, education is the strongest single factor in explaining most types of conventional political participation. The striking relationship between level of formal education and various types of conventional political behaviors is shown in Figure 7.4. This strong link between education and electoral participation raises questions about low voter turnout in the United States both over time and relative to other democracies. The fact is that the proportion of individuals with college degrees is greater in the United States than in other countries. Moreover, that proportion has been increasing steadily. Why,

Figure 7.4
Effects of Education on Political Participation in 1984

Education has a powerful effect on political participation in the United States. These data for a 1984 sample show that level of education is directly related to five different forms of conventional political participation. (Source: This analysis was based on the 1984 National Election Study distributed by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research.)



then, is voter turnout in elections so low? And why is it dropping over time?

Low Voter Turnout in America

Voting is a low-initiative form of participation that can satisfy all three motives for political participation—showing allegiance to the nation, obtaining particularized benefits, and influencing broad policy. Yet voter turnout in the United States has steadily dropped since 1960, while other forms of participation have increased. And, although Americans participate as much or more than citizens of other countries in conventional and unconventional political behaviors, they rank well below citizens of other countries in voter turnout. How do we explain the decline in voting within the United States over time and the low voter turnout in this country?

The decline in voting over time. The graph of voter turnout (Figure 7.3) shows that the sharpest drop (6 percentage points) occurred between the 1968 and 1972 elections. It was during this period (in 1971, actually) that Congress proposed and the states ratified the Twenty-sixth Amendment to the Constitution, which expanded the electorate by lowering the voting age from twenty-one to eighteen. Because people under twenty-one are much less likely to vote, they actually reduced the overall national turnout rate (the percentage of those eligible to vote who actually vote). Some observers estimate that the enfranchisement of eighteen-year-olds accounts for about 1 or 2 percentage points in the total decline in turnout since 1952.⁴⁷

Researchers attribute most of the decline in turnout to changes in voters' convictions about and attitudes toward politics. One major factor is the growing belief that government is not responsive to citizens and that voting doesn't do any good. Another is a change in attitude toward political parties, along with a decline in the sense of party identification.⁴⁸ According to these psychological explanations, voting turnout in the United States is not likely to increase until the government does something to restore people's faith in the effectiveness of voting—with or without political parties. According to the age explanation, turnout in the United States is destined to remain a percentage point or two below its highs in the 1960s because of the lower voting rate of citizens under twenty-one.

U.S. turnout versus turnout in other countries. Given the high level of education in the United States and our greater than usual participation in other forms of political activity, voter turnout is much lower than might be expected compared with that in other countries. Scholars cite two factors to explain the low percentage of voters in the United States. First, there are differences in voting laws and administrative machinery. In a few countries, voting is compulsory, and, obviously, turnout is extremely high. But there are other ways to encourage voting—declaring election days to be public holidays, providing a two-day voting period, making it easy to cast absentee ballots. The United States does

none of these things. Moreover, nearly every other democratic country places the burden of registration on the government rather than on the individual voter.

This is very important. Voting in the United States is a two-stage process, and the first stage—going to the proper officials to register—requires more initiative than the second stage—going to the polling booth to cast a ballot. In most American states, the registration process is separated from the voting process by both time (usually weeks in advance of the election) and geography (often at the county courthouse, not the polling place). Moreover, registration procedures are often obscure and require calling around to find out what to do. Furthermore, people who move (and roughly one-third of the U.S. population moves between national elections) must reregister. In short, although voting requires little initiative, registration usually requires high initiative. If we compute voter turnout on the basis of those who are registered to vote, then about 87 percent of Americans vote—a figure that moves the United States to the middle (but not the top) of all democratic nations.⁴⁹

The second factor usually cited to explain low turnout in American elections is the lack of political parties that mobilize the vote of particular social groups, especially lower-class and less-educated people. American parties do make an effort to get out the vote, but neither party is as closely linked to specific groups as parties are in many other countries, where certain parties work hand in hand with ethnic, occupational, or religious groups. Research shows that strong party-group links can significantly increase turnout.⁵⁰

To these explanations for low voter turnout in the United States—the burden of registration and the lack of strong party-group links—we add another. Although the act of voting requires low initiative, the process of learning about the scores of candidates on the ballot in American elections requires a great deal of initiative. Some people undoubtedly fail to vote simply because they feel inadequate to the task of deciding among candidates for the many offices on the ballot in U.S. elections.

Teachers, newspaper columnists, and public affairs groups tend to worry a great deal about low voter turnout in the United States, suggesting that it signifies some sort of political sickness—or at least that it gives us a bad mark for democracy. Some others who study elections closely seem less concerned. Voter turnout is only one indicator of political participation, and Americans tend to do better according to most other indicators. Moreover, one scholar argues:

Turnout rates do not indicate the amount of electing—the frequency of occasion, the range of offices and decisions, the “value” of the vote—to which a country's citizens are entitled. . . . Thus, although the turnout rate in the United States is below that of most other democracies, American citizens do not necessarily do less voting than other citizens; most probably, they do more.⁵¹

Despite these words of assurance, the nagging thought remains that turnout ought to be higher, so various organizations mount “get-out-the-vote” campaigns before elections. Civic leaders often back these campaigns because they value voting for its contribution to political order.

PARTICIPATION AND FREEDOM, EQUALITY, AND ORDER

As you have seen, Americans do participate in government in a variety of ways and to a reasonable extent, compared with citizens of other countries. What is the relationship of political participation to the values of freedom, equality, and order?

Participation and Freedom

From the standpoint of normative theory, the relationship between participation and freedom is clear. Individuals should be free to participate in government and politics the way they want and as much as they want. And they should be free *not* to participate as well. Ideally, all barriers to participation (such as restrictive voting registration and limitations on campaign expenditures) should be abolished—as should any schemes for compulsory voting. According to the normative perspective, we should not worry about low voter turnout because citizens should have the freedom not to vote as well as to vote.

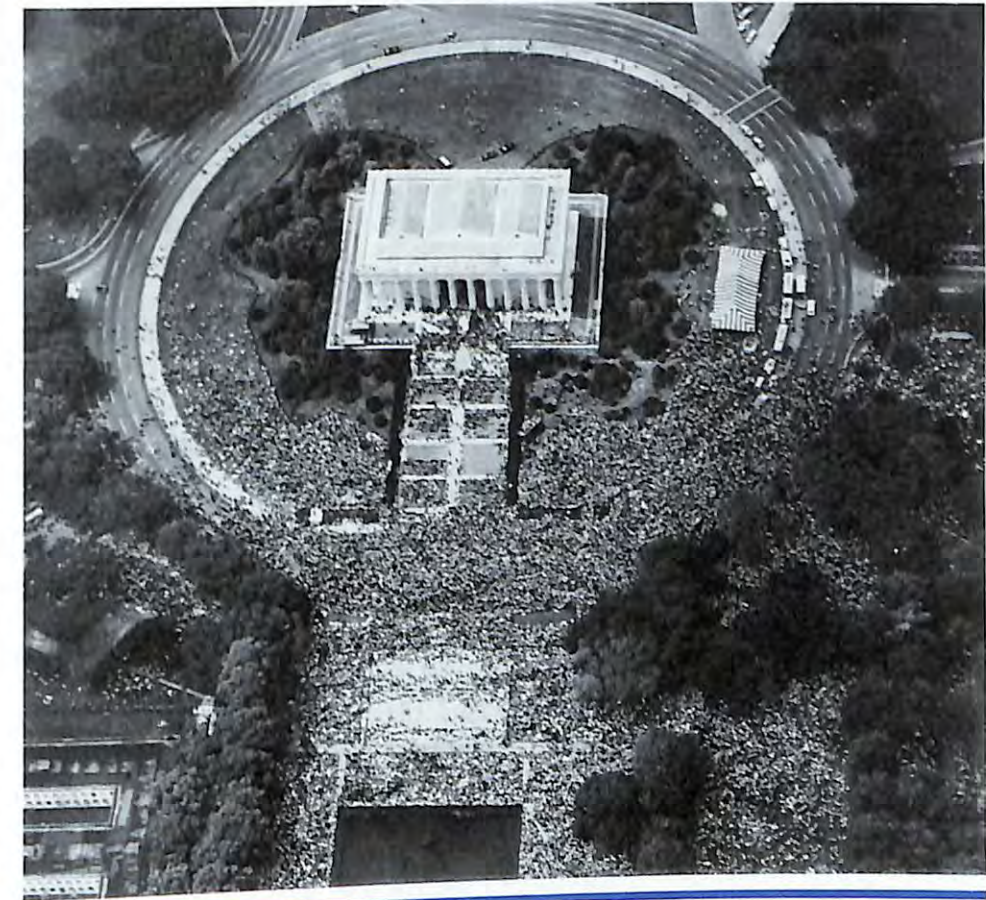
Bullets Defeat Ballots

For decades, the Caribbean nation Haiti was ruled dictatorially by “Papa Doc” Duvalier, who amassed vast wealth in the pitifully poor country. His son and successor—“Baby Doc”—was forced to flee Haiti in 1986, and its people hoped for free elections and democratic government. However, military leaders aborted the first election in November 1987 by shooting voters and attacking election offices like this one. A sham election supervised by the military was held in January 1988. By June, General Henri Namphy had deposed the new president, ending Haiti’s experiment with democracy. In September, Namphy was himself deposed.



America's Largest Civil Rights Demonstration

On August 28, 1963, more than 200,000 blacks and whites participated in a Freedom March on Washington, D.C. Martin Luther King, Jr., one of the march's leaders, delivered his electrifying “I Have a Dream” speech from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. The demonstrators pressed for legislation ensuring full civil rights for blacks, and their leaders were welcomed at the White House by President John F. Kennedy.



In theory, freedom to participate also means that individuals should be able to use their wealth, connections, knowledge, organizational power (including sheer numbers in organized protests), or any other resource to influence government decisions, provided they do so legitimately. Of all these resources, the individual vote may be the weakest—and the least important—means of exerting political influence. Obviously, then, freedom as a value in political participation favors those with the resources to advance their own political self-interest.

Participation and Equality

The relationship between participation and equality is also clear. Each citizen's ability to influence government should be equal to that of every other citizen, so that differences in personal resources do not work against the poor or otherwise disadvantaged. Elections, then, serve the ideal of equality better than any other means of political participation. Formal rules for counting ballots—in particular, one person, one vote—negate differences in resources among individuals.

At the same time, groups of people who have few individual resources can combine their votes to wield political power. This power was exercised in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by various European ethnic groups whose votes won them entry into the sociopolitical system and allowed them to share in its benefits (see

Chapter 5). More recently, blacks, Hispanics, homosexuals, and the handicapped have used their voting power to gain political recognition. However, minorities often have had to use unconventional forms of participation to win the right to vote. As two major scholars of political participation put it, "Protest is the great equalizer, the political action that weights intensity as well as sheer numbers."⁵²

Participation and Order

The relationship between participation and order is complicated. Some types of participation promote order and so are encouraged by those who value order; other types promote disorder and so are discouraged. Even giving women the right to vote was resisted by many citizens (men and women alike) for fear of upsetting the social order, of altering the traditional roles of men and women.

Both conventional and unconventional participation can lead to the ouster of government officials, but the *regime*—the political system itself—is threatened more by unconventional participation. To maintain order, the government has a stake in converting unconventional participation to conventional participation whenever possible. We can easily imagine this tactic being used by authoritarian governments, but it is used by democratic governments as well.

Think about the student unrest on college campuses during the Vietnam War. In private and public colleges alike, thousands of students stopped traffic, occupied buildings, destroyed property, struck classes, disrupted lectures, staged guerrilla theater, and behaved in other unconventional ways while protesting the war, racism, capitalism, their college presidents, the president of the United States, the military establishment, and all other institutions. (We are not exaggerating here. For example, students did all these things at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, after four students were killed by National Guardsmen in a demonstration at Kent State University in Ohio on May 4, 1970.)

Confronted by civil strife and disorder in the nation's institutions of higher learning, Congress took action. On March 23, 1971, it passed and sent to the states the proposed Twenty-sixth Amendment, lowering the voting age to eighteen. Three-quarters of the state legislatures had to ratify the amendment before it became part of the Constitution. Astonishingly, thirty-eight states (the required number) complied by July 1, establishing a new record for speedy ratification, cutting the old record nearly in half.⁵³ (Ironically, voting rights were about the only thing that students were not demanding.)

Testimony by members of Congress before the Judiciary Committee stated that the eighteen-year-old vote was needed to "harness the energy of young people and direct it into useful and constructive channels," to keep students from becoming "more militant" and engaging "in destructive activities of a dangerous nature."⁵⁴ As one observer argued, the right to vote was not extended to eighteen-year-olds because young people demanded it, but because "public officials believed suffrage expansion to be a means of institutionalizing youths' participation in politics, which would, in turn, curb disorder."⁵⁵

PARTICIPATION AND THE MODELS OF DEMOCRACY

Ostensibly, elections are institutional mechanisms that implement democracy by allowing citizens to choose among candidates or issues. But elections also serve several other important purposes:⁵⁶

- *Elections socialize political activity.* They transform what might otherwise consist of sporadic citizen-initiated acts into a routine public function. That is, the opportunity to vote for change encourages citizens to refrain from demonstrating in the streets. This helps preserve government stability by containing and channeling away potentially disruptive or dangerous forms of mass political activity.
- *Elections institutionalize access to political power.* They allow ordinary citizens to run for political office or to play an important role in selecting political leaders. Working to elect a candidate encourages the campaign worker to identify problems or propose solutions to the new official.
- *Elections bolster the state's power and authority.* The opportunity to participate in elections helps convince citizens that the government is responsive to their needs and wants, which increases its legitimacy.

Participation and Majoritarianism

Although the majoritarian model assumes that government responsiveness to popular demands comes through mass participation in politics, majoritarianism does not view participation broadly. It favors conventional, institutionalized behavior of a narrow form—primarily, voting in elections. Because majoritarianism relies on counting votes to determine what the majority wants, it is strongly biased toward political equality of citizens in political participation. Favoring collective decisions formalized through elections, majoritarianism offers little opportunity for motivated resourceful individuals to exercise private influence over government actions.

Majoritarianism also reduces individual freedom in another way. By focusing on voting as the major means of mass participation, it narrows the scope of conventional political behavior. In this way, the mechanisms for participation in the majoritarian model restrict freedom by defining what political action is "orderly" and acceptable. By favoring equality and order in political participation, majoritarianism goes hand in hand with the ideological orientation of populists (see Chapter 1).

Participation and Pluralism

Resourceful citizens who want the government's help with problems find a haven in the pluralist model of democracy. A decentralized and organizationally complex form of government allows many points of access and is well suited to various forms of conventional participation aside from voting. For example, wealthy people and well-funded groups

can afford to hire lobbyists to press their interests in Congress. In one view of pluralist democracy, citizens are free to ply and wheedle public officials to further selfish visions of the public good. From another viewpoint, pluralism offers citizens the opportunity to be treated as individuals when dealing with the government, to influence policymaking in special circumstances, and to fulfill (insofar as is possible in representative government) their social potential through participation in community affairs.

SUMMARY

To have "government by the people," the people must participate in politics. Conventional forms of participation—contacting officials and voting in elections—come most quickly to mind. However, citizens can also participate in politics in unconventional ways—staging sit-down strikes in public buildings, blocking traffic, and so on. Most citizens disapprove of most forms of unconventional political behavior. Yet, unconventional tactics have won blacks and women important political and legal rights, including the right to vote.

People are motivated to participate in politics for various reasons: to show support for their country, to obtain particularized benefits for themselves or their friends, or to influence broad public policy. Their political actions may demand very little political knowledge or personal initiative, or a great deal of both.

The press often paints an unflattering picture of political participation in America. Clearly, the proportion of the electorate that votes in general elections in the United States is dropping and is far below that in other nations. When compared with other nations on a broad range of conventional and unconventional political behavior, however, the United States tends to show as much or more citizen participation in politics. Voter turnout in the United States suffers by comparison with that in other nations, because of differences in voter registration here and elsewhere. We also lack institutions (especially strong political parties) that increase voter registration and help bring those of lower socioeconomic status to the polls.

The tendency to participate in politics is strongly related to socioeconomic status. Education, one component of socioeconomic status, is the single strongest predictor of conventional political participation in the United States. Because of the strong effect of socioeconomic status on political participation, the political system is potentially biased toward the interests of higher-status people. Pluralist democracy,

which provides many avenues for resourceful citizens to influence government decisions, tends to increase this potential bias.

Majoritarian democracy, which relies heavily on elections and the concept of one person, one vote, offers citizens without great personal resources the opportunity to control government decisions through elections. However, elections also serve to legitimize government simply by involving the masses in government through voting. Whether or not the vote means anything depends on the nature of the voters' choices in elections. The range of choice is a function of the nation's political parties, the topic of the next chapter.

Key Terms

election	suffrage
political participation	franchise
conventional	progressivism
participation	direct primary
unconventional	recall
participation	referendum
direct action	proposition
supportive behavior	initiative
influencing behavior	standard socioeconomic
class-action suit	model
voting	

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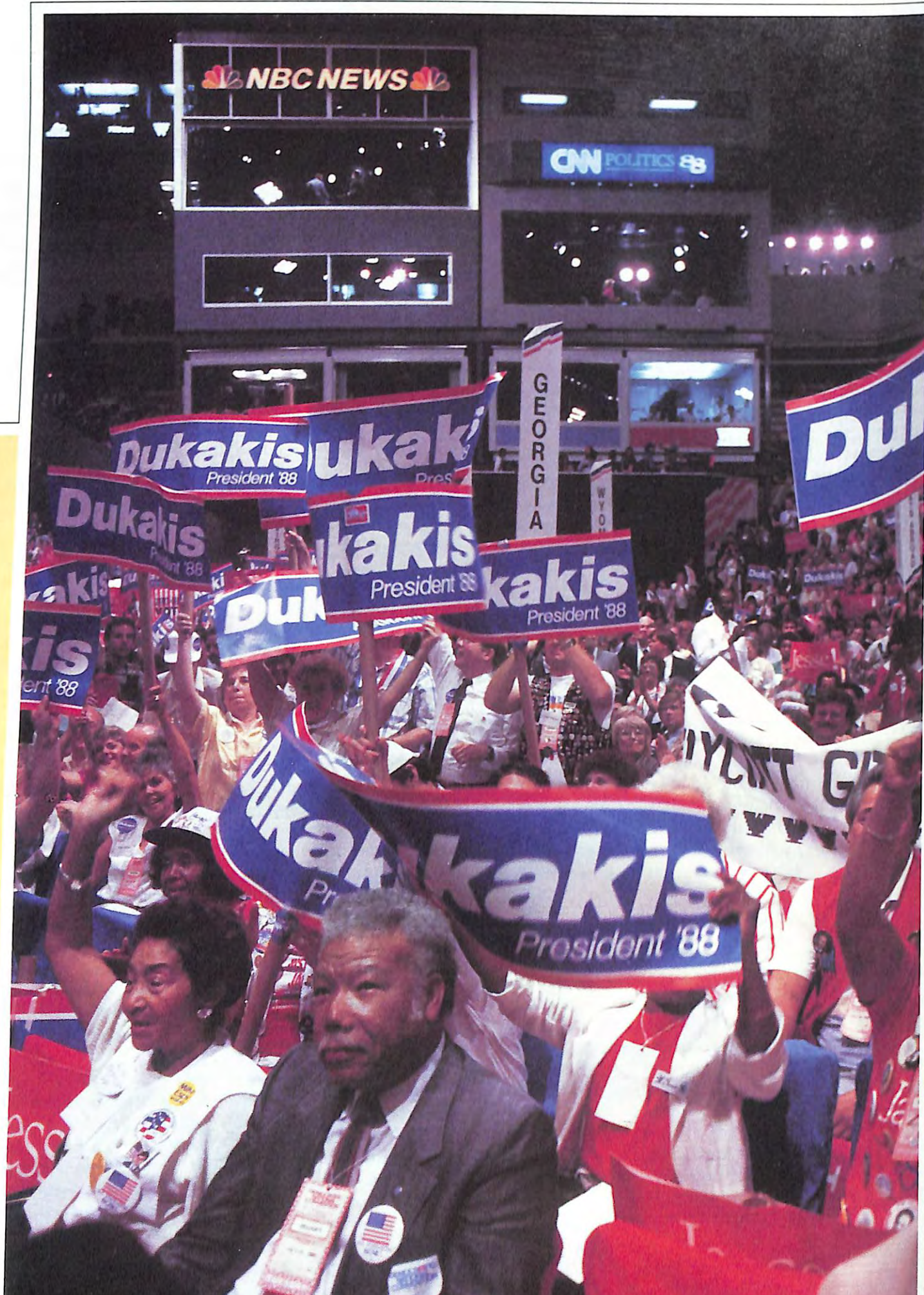
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8

Political Parties, Campaigns, and Elections

Political Parties and Their Functions

Definitions • Party Functions

A History of U.S. Party Politics

The Preparty Period • The First Party System: Federalists and Democratic Republicans • The Second Party System: Democrats and Whigs • The Present Party System: Democrats and Republicans • Eras of Party Dominance Since the Civil War

The American Two-Party System

Minor Parties in America • Why a Two-Party System? • The Federal Basis of the Party System • Party Identification in America

Party Ideology and Organization

Differences in Party Ideology • National Party Organization • State and Local Party Organizations

Campaigning for Election

The Nomination • Running for Office • Using the Media • Campaign Financing

Explaining Voting Choice

Party Identification • Candidates' Attributes • Issues and Policies • Voting for Congress

Political Parties and the Models of Democracy

Parties and the Majoritarian Model • Parties and the Pluralist Model

Phil Gramm, formerly an economics professor at Texas A&M University, was first elected to Congress in 1978 as a Democrat from Texas's Sixth District. His constituents, who lived in fourteen counties between suburban Dallas and suburban Houston, were basically conservative. That suited Gramm, himself a staunch conservative, who found most of his Democratic colleagues in Congress too liberal. He was re-elected in 1980, the same year that Ronald Reagan was first elected president. Although Reagan was a Republican, he was Gramm's kind of president: anxious to cut back on social spending and eager to increase military spending. Gramm could work with Reagan.

In 1981, Gramm won a seat on the House Budget Committee, an important committee that reviews the president's budget and prepares a version acceptable to the House. Gramm found his Democratic colleagues on the committee too willing to spend government money for social programs. He much preferred Reagan's cost-cutting, tax-cutting approach. Gramm quietly began to meet with Reagan's director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), David A. Stockman, to reveal the Democrats' plans and to devise an alternative budget for 1982. When word of the Gramm-Stockman connection leaked out, several Democratic members of the Budget Committee objected to Gramm's participation in their meetings. The chairman of the House Democratic Caucus described Gramm as "the fox in the hen house."¹

By spring 1981, Gramm stopped meeting with the Democrats and began to meet with the Republicans on the Budget Committee. He even cosponsored (with its leading Republican) the key amendment to the budget resolution that substituted Reagan's economic blueprint for the one backed by the Democrats. Reagan's 1981 income tax cut, his cuts in domestic spending, and his increases in military spending owed much to Phil Gramm, a Democrat from Texas—to the dismay of the House Democratic leadership.

The Democratic voters in Texas were not dismayed, however, and re-elected Gramm to the House in 1982. The Democratic leaders got their chance to even the score with Gramm in early 1983, when the committees were reorganized for the new Congress. Because party organization is so weak in Congress, party leaders rarely try to discipline members for cooperating with the opposition; too many members would have to be punished, and the party has few available ways to discipline them. But Gramm, by betraying the trust of his colleagues, had gone too far. He was denied reappointment to the Budget Committee on January 3. Two days later, Gramm quit the Democratic party, resigned his newly won seat, and announced that he would run for re-election in the same district as a Republican.

A special election was called on February 12 in the Sixth District of Texas, traditionally a Democratic stronghold. Running as the sole Republican, Gramm faced nine Democratic challengers and a stray Libertarian. He defeated all ten opponents, winning the election with 55 percent of the vote. Whatever he had done in Congress, the voters approved and sent him back to do more of it. Not only did a triumphant Gramm return to Congress as a Republican, but the Republican party

promptly rewarded him by appointing him to one of its seats on the Budget Committee! Two years later, Gramm's fame had outgrown his congressional district, and he ran for the U.S. Senate. He won easily and took his seat in 1985 as a Republican senator from the state of Texas. At the 1988 Republican National Convention, Gramm delivered the speech that nominated George Bush for president.

Phil Gramm's story is not a common one, but it illustrates some basic facts about the peculiar nature of American political parties. Each party has an ideological center of gravity, but each has supporters of varying political persuasions. Party preference is important in elections, but its influence can be overcome. In short, parties are important in American politics, but they are not all-powerful. Why do we have political parties? What functions do they perform? Are parties really necessary for democratic government? Or do they just interfere in the relationship between citizens and government? In this chapter, we answer these questions with an examination of political parties, perhaps the most misunderstood element in American politics.

POLITICAL PARTIES AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

According to democratic theory, the primary means by which citizens control their government is voting in free elections. Most Americans agree that voting is important: Of those surveyed after a recent presidential campaign, 86 percent felt that elections made the government "pay attention to what the people think."² However, Americans are not nearly as supportive of the role played by political parties in elections. An overwhelming majority (73 percent) surveyed in 1980 believed that "the best way to vote is to pick a candidate regardless of party label." A clear majority (56 percent) thought that "parties do more to confuse the issues than to provide a clear choice on issues." In fact, almost half (49 percent) took the extreme position: "It would be better if in all elections, we put no party labels on the ballot."³

On the other hand, Americans are quick to condemn as "undemocratic" countries that do not hold elections contested by political parties. In truth, Americans have a love-hate relationship with political parties. They believe that parties are necessary for democratic government; at the same time, they think parties are somehow "obstructionist" and not to be trusted. This distrust is particularly strong among younger voters. To better appreciate the role of political parties in democratic government, we must understand exactly what parties are and what they do.

Definitions

A **political party** is an organization that sponsors candidates for political office *under the organization's name*. The italicized part of this definition is important. True political parties **nominate** candidates for election to public office, by designating individuals as official candidates of the party. This function distinguishes the Democratic and Republican parties from interest groups. The AFL-CIO and the National Association

of Manufacturers are interest groups. They often support candidates in various ways, but they do not nominate them to run as their avowed representatives. If they do, the interest groups become transformed into political parties. In short, it is the giving and accepting of a political label by organization and candidate that defines an organization as a party.

Most democratic theorists agree that a modern nation-state could not practice democracy without at least two political parties that regularly contest elections. (All nineteen countries rated democracies in Chapter 2 have at least two competing parties.) In fact, the link between democracy and political parties is so close that many people define democratic government in terms of competitive party politics.

Party Functions

Parties contribute to democratic government through the functions they perform for the **political system**—the set of interrelated institutions that links people with government. We look at four of the most important functions: nominating candidates for election to public office; structuring the voting choice in elections; proposing alternative government programs; and coordinating the actions of government officials.

Nominating candidates. Political parties contribute to democratic government simply by nominating candidates for election to public office. In the absence of parties, voters would be confronted with a bewildering array of self-nominated candidates, each seeking a narrow victory over others on the basis of personal friendships, celebrity status, or name. Parties provide a form of quality control for their nominees through the

Eleanor Gives Her Blessing to the 1960 Democratic Ticket

The band was playing the Democrats' theme song, "Happy Days Are Here Again!" as John Kennedy, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Lyndon Johnson appeared at a rally in the New York Coliseum just before the 1960 presidential election. Eleanor Roosevelt, a party leader in her own right, was the wife of President Franklin Roosevelt, who forged the coalition of Northern urban workers, Southerners, Catholics, Jews, and white ethnic minorities that allowed the Democrats to replace the Republicans as the majority party in America.



process of *peer review*. Party insiders, the nominees' peers, usually know potential candidates much better than the average voter does, and candidates are judged by their peers for acceptability as the party's representatives.

In nominating candidates, parties often do more than pass judgment on potential office seekers; sometimes they go so far as to recruit talented individuals to become party candidates. In this way, parties help, not only to ensure a minimum level of quality among candidates who run for office, but also to raise the quality of those candidates.

Structuring the voting choice. Political parties also help democratic government by structuring the voting choice—reducing the number of candidates on the ballot to those who have a realistic chance of winning. Established parties—those that have contested elections in the past—acquire a following of loyal voters who guarantee the party's candidates a predictable base of votes. Parties that have won sizable portions of the vote in past elections are likely to win comparable portions of the vote in future ones. This has the effect of discouraging nonparty candidates from running for office, and new parties from forming. Consequently, the realistic choice is between candidates offered by the major parties. This focuses the election on the contest between parties and on candidates with established records, which reduces the amount of new information that voters need in order to make a rational decision.

Proposing alternative government programs. Parties also help voters choose candidates by proposing alternative programs of government action—general policies that party candidates will pursue if they win control of government. Even if voters know nothing about the qualities of the parties' candidates, they can vote rationally for candidates of the party that stands closest to the policies they favor. The specific policies advocated in an election campaign vary from candidate to candidate and from election to election. However, the types of policies advocated by candidates of one party tend to differ from those proposed by candidates of other parties. Although there are exceptions, candidates of the same party tend to favor policies that fit their party's underlying political philosophy, or ideology. In many countries, party labels reflect political stance (see Compared With What? 8.1).

Although the two major American parties have issue-neutral names, many minor parties in the United States have used their names to advertise their policies: the Prohibition party, the Farmer-Labor party, the Socialist party, for example. The neutrality of the names *Democratic* and *Republican* suggests that our parties are also undifferentiated in their policies. This is not true. The two major parties regularly adopt very different policies in their platforms, a fact we discuss at length later.

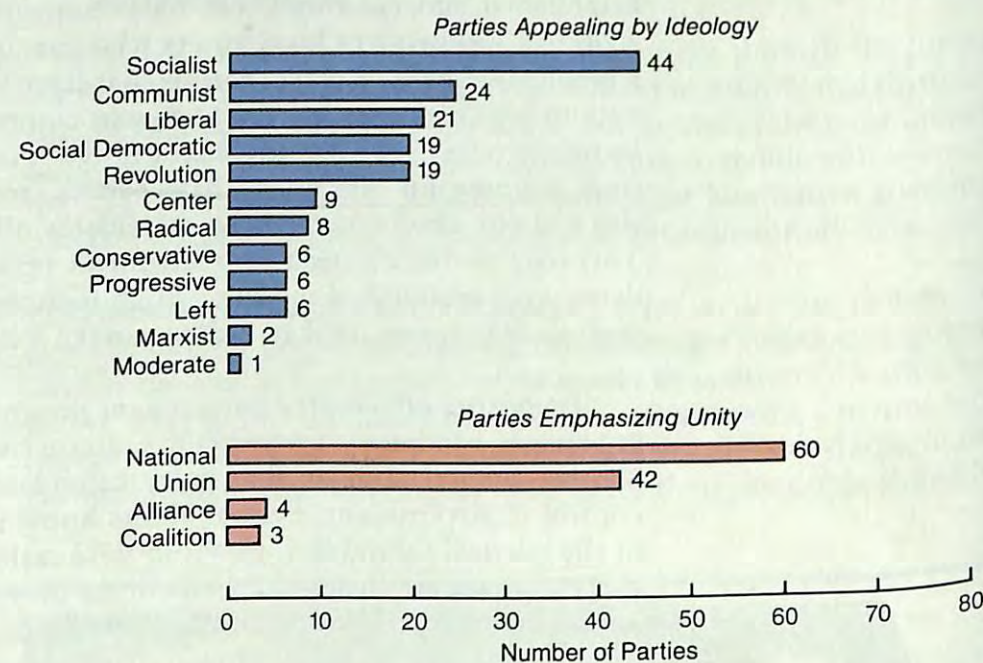
Coordinating the actions of government officials. Finally, parties help coordinate the actions of public officials. A government based on the separation of powers, like that of the United States, divides responsibilities for making public policy. The president and the leaders of the House and Senate are not required to cooperate with one another. Polit-

COMPARED WITH WHAT? 8.1

What's in a Name?

Many parties advertise their political philosophies in their names, and all parties pay careful attention to the image they project through their choice of a party label.

The labels of the major U.S. parties—*Democratic* and *Republican*—do not tell us much about the two parties' policy orientations. But in other countries, the party's label often symbolizes the party's policies. A study of party names across the world found that they fall into four categories. Nearly half the parties make ideological appeals, describing themselves as *Socialist* or *Communist*. About the same number use terms suggesting self-government, such as *democratic* and *people*. About a quarter of the parties stress



ical parties are the major means for bridging the separation of powers, of producing coordinated policies that can govern the country effectively. Individuals of the same party in the presidency, the House, and the Senate are likely to share political principles and thus to cooperate in making policy.

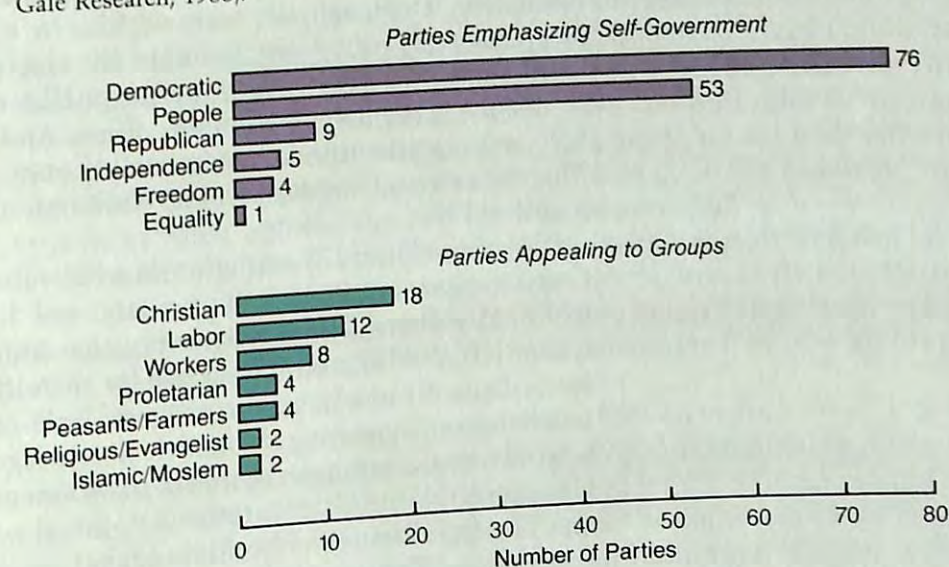
A HISTORY OF U.S. PARTY POLITICS

The two major U.S. parties are among the oldest in the world. In fact, the Democratic party, founded in 1828 but with roots reaching back into the late 1700s, has a strong claim to being the oldest party in existence. Its closest rival is the British Conservative party, formed in 1832, two decades before the Republican party was organized, in 1854. Both the Democratic and Republican parties have been supported by several gen-

national unity, using terms like *national* or *union* in their names. And about a sixth make explicit group appeals, identifying themselves as *Christian* or *labor*. (The fractions here add to more than 1 because some parties, the Christian Democrats for example, use more than one symbol.)

The appeal of democracy is so strong that nearly one-quarter of the world's parties use the term in some form (*democratic*, *democracy*, *democrats*). *Republican* is not nearly as popular; it is used by only eight parties outside the United States.

Source: This analysis is based on party names and translations from foreign languages in Alan J. Day and Henry W. Degenhardt, eds., *Political Parties of the World* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1980).



erations of citizens and are part of American history. They have become *institutionalized* in our political process.

The Preparty Period

Today we think of party activities as normal, even essential, to American politics. It was not always so. The Constitution makes no mention of political parties, and none existed when the Constitution was written in 1787. Instead, it was common to refer to groups pursuing some common political interest as *factions*. Although factions were seen as inevitable in politics, they were also considered dangerous. One argument for adopting the Constitution—proposed in "Federalist No. 10," (see Chapter 3 and the Appendix)—was that the separation of powers and checks and balances would prevent factional influences from controlling the government.

Factions existed even under British rule. In colonial assemblies, supporters of the governor (and thus of the Crown) were known as *Tories* or *Loyalists*, and their opponents were called *Whigs* or *Patriots*. After independence, the arguments over whether or not to adopt the Constitution produced a different alignment of factions. Those who backed the Constitution were loosely known as "federalists"; their opponents, as "antifederalists." At this stage, the groups could not be called parties because they did not sponsor candidates for election.

Elections then were vastly different from elections today. The Constitution provided for the president and vice president to be chosen by an **electoral college**—a body of electors who meet in the capitals of their respective states to cast their ballots. Initially, these electors (one for each senator and representative in Congress) were chosen by the state legislatures, not the voters. Presidential "elections" in the early years of the nation, then, actually were decided by a handful of political leaders. (See Chapter 11 for a discussion of the electoral college in modern presidential politics.) Often they met in small secret groups, called **caucuses**, to discuss candidates for public office. And often these caucuses were held among like-minded members of state legislatures and Congress. This was the setting for George Washington's election as the first president in 1789.

We can classify Washington as a federalist because he supported the Constitution, but he was not a factional leader and actually opposed factional politics. His immense prestige coupled with his political neutrality left Washington unopposed for the office of president, and he was elected unanimously by the electoral college. During Washington's administration, however, the political cleavage sharpened between those who favored a stronger national government and those who wanted a less powerful, more decentralized national government.

The first group, led by Alexander Hamilton, proclaimed themselves *Federalists*. The second group, led by Thomas Jefferson, called themselves *Republicans*. (Although they used the same name, they were not Republicans as we know them today.) The Jeffersonians chose the name *Republicans* to distinguish themselves from the "aristocratic" tendencies of Hamilton's Federalists. The Federalists countered by calling the Republicans the *Democratic Republicans*, attempting to link Jefferson's party to the disorder (and beheadings) spawned by the "radical democrats" in France during the French Revolution of 1789.

The First Party System: Federalists and Democratic Republicans

Washington was re-elected president unanimously in 1792, but his vice president, John Adams, was opposed by a candidate backed by the Democratic Republicans. This brief skirmish foreshadowed the nation's first major-party struggle over the presidency. Disheartened by the political split in his administration, Washington spoke out against "the baneful effects" of parties in his farewell address in 1796. But the party concept was already entrenched in the political system. (See "Two-Party Systems in U.S. History," in Essay C, page 345.)

In the election of 1796, the Federalists supported Vice President John Adams to succeed Washington as president. The Democratic Republicans backed Thomas Jefferson for president but could not agree on a vice presidential candidate. In the electoral college, Adams won 71 votes to Jefferson's 68, and both ran ahead of other candidates. At that time, the Constitution provided that the presidency went to the candidate who won the most votes in the electoral college, and that the vice presidency went to the runner-up. So Adams, a Federalist, had to accept Jefferson, a Democratic Republican, as his vice president. Obviously, the Constitution did not anticipate a presidential contest between candidates from opposing political parties.

The party function of nominating candidates emerged more clearly in the election of 1800. Both parties caucused in Congress to nominate candidates for president and vice president.⁴ The result was the first true party contest for the presidency. The Federalists nominated John Adams and Charles Pinckney; the Democratic Republicans, Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr. This time, the Democratic Republican candidates won. However, the new party organization worked too well. The Democratic Republican electors unanimously cast all their votes for both Jefferson and Burr. Unfortunately, the presidency was to go to the candidate with the most votes, and the top two candidates were tied.

Despite the fact that Jefferson was the party's presidential candidate and Burr its vice presidential candidate, the House of Representatives was empowered by the Constitution to choose one of them as president. After seven days and thirty-six ballots (encouraged by the ambitious Burr), the House decided in favor of Jefferson.

The Twelfth Amendment, ratified in 1804, prevented a repeat of the troublesome election outcomes of 1796 and 1800. It required the electoral college to vote separately for president and vice president, implicitly recognizing that presidential elections would be contested by party candidates nominated for the separate offices but running on the same ballot.

The election of 1800 marked the beginning of the end for the Federalists, who lost the next four elections. By 1820, the Federalists were no more. The Democratic Republican candidate, James Monroe, was re-elected in the first presidential contest without party competition since Washington's time. (Monroe received all but one electoral vote, which was reportedly cast against him so that Washington would remain the only president ever elected unanimously.) Ironically, the Era of Good Feelings under Monroe also signalled the beginning of the end for his party, the Democratic Republicans.

Lacking competition from another party, the Democratic Republicans neglected their function of nominating candidates. The party continued to hold a congressional caucus to nominate candidates for president, but attendance dropped off. Although a caucus was held in 1824, its nominee was challenged by three other Democratic Republicans, including John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson, who proved to be the most popular candidates among the voters in the ensuing election.

Prior to 1824, the parties' role in structuring the popular vote was relatively unimportant because relatively few people were entitled to vote. But the states began to drop restrictive requirements for voting

after 1800, and voting rights for white males expanded even faster after 1815 (see Chapter 7). With the expansion of suffrage, more states began allowing voters to choose presidential electors. The 1824 election was the first in which presidential electors were selected through popular vote in most states. Still, the role of political parties in structuring the popular vote had not yet developed fully.

Although Jackson won a plurality of both the popular vote and the electoral vote in 1824, he did not win the necessary majority vote in the electoral college. The House of Representatives was again required to decide the winner. It chose the second-place John Quincy Adams (from the established state of Massachusetts) over the voters' choice, Jackson (from the frontier state of Tennessee). The factionalism among the leaders of the Democratic Republican party became so intense that the party split in two.

The Second Party System: Democrats and Whigs

The Jacksonian faction of the Democratic Republican party represented the common people in the expanding South and West, and its members took pride in calling themselves, simply, *Democrats*. Jackson ran again for the presidency as a Democrat in 1828, a milestone that marked the beginning of today's Democratic party. That election was also the first "mass" election in U.S. history. Although many presidential electors had been chosen by popular vote in 1824, the total votes cast in that election numbered fewer than 370,000. By 1828, relaxed requirements for voting (and the use of popular elections to select presidential electors in more states) had increased the vote by more than 300 percent, to over 1.1 million.

As the electorate expanded, the parties changed. No longer could a few party members in Congress rely on close connections among relatively few political leaders in the state legislatures to control the votes cast in the electoral college. Parties now needed to campaign for votes cast by hundreds of thousands of citizens. Recognizing this new dimension of politics, parties responded with a new method for nominating presidential candidates.

Instead of selecting candidates in a closed caucus of party representatives in Congress, the parties devised the **national convention**. At these gatherings, delegates from state parties across the nation would choose candidates for president and vice president and adopt a statement of policies called a **party platform**. The first national convention was called in 1831 by the Anti-Masonic party, which was the first "third" party in American history to challenge the two major parties for the presidency. The Democrats adopted the convention idea in 1832 to nominate Jackson for a second term; so did their new opponents that year, the National Republicans.

The label *National Republicans* was applied to John Quincy Adams's faction of the former Democratic Republican party. However, the National Republicans did not become today's Republican party. Adams's followers called themselves *National Republicans* to signify their old

Federalist preference for a strong national government. But the symbolism did not appeal to the voters, and the National Republicans lost to Jackson in 1832.

Elected to another term, Jackson began to assert the power of the nation over the states (acting more like a National Republican than a Democrat). His policies drew new opponents, who started calling him "King Andrew." A coalition made up of former National Republicans, Anti-Masons, and Jackson-haters formed the Whig party in 1834.⁵ The name harked back to the English Whigs, who opposed the powers of the British throne; the implication was that Jackson was governing like a king. For the next thirty years, Democrats and Whigs alternated in the presidency. However, the issues of slavery and sectionalism eventually destroyed the Whigs. Although the party had won the White House in 1848 and had taken 44 percent of the vote in 1852, the Whigs were unable to field a presidential candidate in the 1856 election.

The Present Party System: Democrats and Republicans

In the early 1850s, antislavery forces (including Whigs, Free Soilers, and antislavery Democrats) began to organize. At meetings in Jackson, Michigan, and Ripon, Wisconsin, they recommended the formation of a new party, the Republican party, to oppose the extension of slavery into the Kansas and Nebraska territories. It is this party, founded in 1854, that continues as today's Republican party.

Ike Gives His Blessing to the 1960 Republican Ticket
Dwight Eisenhower was elected in 1952 as the first Republican president since Herbert Hoover, who lost a bid for re-election twenty years earlier. Here Ike appears at a campaign rally in the New York Coliseum just before the 1960 election. The Republican ticket consisted of Richard Nixon, who was vice president under Eisenhower, and Henry Cabot Lodge. Eisenhower's endorsement was not enough to swing the election, and Nixon and Lodge lost to the Democratic ticket of John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson.



FEATURE 8.1

The Wizard of Oz: A Political Fable

Most Americans are familiar with *The Wizard of Oz* through L. Frank Baum's children's books or the 1939 motion picture, but few realize that the story was written as a political fable to promote the Populist movement around the turn of the century. Next time you see it, try interpreting the Tin Woodsman as the industrial worker, the Scarecrow as the struggling farmer, and the Wizard as the president, who is powerful only as long as he succeeds in deceiving the people. (Sorry, but in the book Dorothy's ruby slippers were only silver shoes.)

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz was written by Lyman Frank Baum in 1900, during the collapse of the Populist movement. Through the Populist party, Midwestern farmers, in alliance with some urban workers, had challenged the banks, railroads, and other economic interests that squeezed farmers through low prices, high freight rates, and continued indebtedness.

The Populists advocated government ownership of railroads, telephone, and telegraph industries. They also wanted silver coinage. Their power grew during the 1893 depression, the worst in U.S. history until then, as farm prices sank to new lows and unemployment was widespread. . . .

In the 1894 congressional elections, the Populist party got almost 40 percent of the vote. It looked forward to winning the presidency, and the silver standard, in 1896. But in that election, which revolved around the issue of gold versus silver, Populist Democrat William Jennings Bryan lost to Republican William McKinley by 95 electoral votes. Bryan, a congressman from Nebraska and a gifted orator, ran again in 1900, but the Populist strength was gone.

Baum viewed these events in both rural South Dakota—where he edited a local weekly—and urban Chicago—where he wrote *Oz*. He mourned the destruction of the fragile alliance between the Midwestern farmers (the Scarecrow) and the urban industrial workers (the Tin Woodsman). Along with Bryan (the Cowardly Lion with a roar but little else), they had been taken down the yellow brick road (the gold standard) that led nowhere. Each journeyed to Emerald City seeking favors from the Wizard.

man, went along with them, innocent enough to see the truth before the others.

Along the way they meet the Wicked Witch of the East who, Baum tells us, had kept the little Munchkin people "in bondage for many years, making them slave for her night and day." She also had put a spell on the Tin Woodsman, once an independent and hardworking man, so that each time he swung his axe, it chopped off a different part of his body. Lacking another trade, he "worked harder than ever," becoming like a machine, incapable of love, yearning for a heart. Another witch, the Wicked Witch of the West, clearly symbolizes the large industrial corporations.

. . . The small group heads toward Emerald City where the Wizard rules from behind a papier-maché facade. *Oz*, by the way, is the abbreviation for ounce, the standard measure for gold.

Like all good politicians, the Wizard can be all things to all people. Dorothy sees him as an enormous head. The Scarecrow sees a gossamer fairy. The Woodsman sees an awful beast, the Cowardly Lion "a ball of fire so fierce and glowing he could scarcely bear to gaze upon it."

Later, however, when they confront the Wizard directly, they see he is nothing more than "a little man, with a bald head and a wrinkled face."

"I have been making believe," the Wizard confesses. "I'm just a common man." But the Scarecrow adds, "You're more than that . . . you're a humbug."

"It was a great mistake my ever letting you into the Throne Room," admits the Wizard, a former ventriloquist and circus balloonist from Omaha.

This was Baum's ultimate Populist message. The powers-that-be survive by deception. Only people's ignorance allows the powerful to manipulate and control them. Dorothy returns to Kansas with the magical help of her Silver Shoes (the silver issue), but when she gets to Kansas she realizes her shoes "had fallen off in her flight through the air, and were lost forever in the desert." Still, she is safe at home with Aunt Em and Uncle Henry, simple farmers.

Source: Peter Dinklage, *The Wizard of Oz*, 1936, p. 1.

A Democratic majority: 1932 to the present. The Republicans' majority status ended in the critical election of 1932 between incumbent president Herbert Hoover and the Democratic challenger, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Roosevelt promised new solutions to unemployment and the economic crisis of the Depression. His campaign appealed to labor, middle-class liberals, and new European ethnic voters. Along with Democratic voters in the Solid South, urban workers in the North, Catholics, Jews, and white ethnic minorities formed the "Roosevelt coalition." (The relatively few blacks who voted at that time tended to remain loyal to the Republicans—the "party of Lincoln.")

Roosevelt was swept into office in a landslide, carrying huge majorities into the House and Senate to carry out his liberal activist programs. The electoral realignment prompted by the election of 1932 made the Democrats the majority party. Not only was Roosevelt re-elected in 1936, 1940, and 1944, but Democrats held control of both houses of Congress from 1933 through 1980—interrupted by only two years of Republican control in 1953 and 1954, during the Eisenhower administration.

In presidential elections, however, the Democrats have not fared so well since Roosevelt. In fact, they have won only four elections (Truman, Kennedy, Johnson, and Carter), compared with the Republicans, who have won seven times (Eisenhower twice, Nixon twice, Reagan twice, and Bush once). In Reagan's stunning election in 1980, Republicans wrested control of the Senate from the Democrats for the first time since 1954 but lost it after the 1986 election.

There are strong signs that the coalition of Democratic voters forged by Roosevelt in the 1930s has already cracked. Certainly the South is no longer solid for the Democrats. Since 1952, in fact, it has voted more consistently for Republican presidential candidates than for Democrats. The party system in the United States does not seem to be undergoing another realignment; rather, we seem to be in a period of **electoral de-alignment**, in which party loyalties are less important in voting decisions.

THE AMERICAN TWO-PARTY SYSTEM

Our review of party history has focused on the major parties competing for presidential office. But we should not ignore the special contributions of certain minor parties, among them, the Anti-Masonic party, the Populists, and the Progressives of 1912. In this section, we study the fortunes of minor, or third, parties in American politics. We also look at the reasons why we have just two major parties, explain how federalism helps the parties survive, and describe voters' loyalties toward the major parties today.

Minor Parties in America

minor party, claiming organizations in all fifty states.¹⁰ The Libertarian party expounds libertarian ideology, stressing freedom over order and equality. Its candidate for president in 1988 was Ron Paul, a former Republican member of Congress, whose platform included abolishing the income tax, eliminating American military bases abroad, and generally restricting government activities.

There are several different types of minor parties:¹¹

- **Bolter parties** are formed from factions that have split off from one of the major parties. Six times in thirty presidential elections since the Civil War, disgruntled leaders have “bolted the ticket” and challenged their former parties. Bolter parties have occasionally won significant proportions of the vote. However, with the exception of Teddy Roosevelt’s Progressive party in 1912 and the possible exception of George Wallace’s American Independent party in 1968, bolter parties have not affected the outcome of presidential elections.
- **Farmer-labor parties** represent farmers and urban workers who believe that they, the working class, are not getting their share of society’s wealth. The People’s party, founded in 1892 and nicknamed the “Populist party,” was a prime example of a farmer-labor party. The Populists won 8.5 percent of the vote in 1892 and also became the first third party since 1860 to win any electoral votes. Flush with success, it endorsed William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic candidate, in 1896. When he lost, the party quickly faded. Many Populist ideas were revived by farm and labor groups in the Progressive party in 1924, which nominated Robert La Follette for the presidency. Although the party won 16.6 percent of the popular vote, it carried only La Follette’s home state of Wisconsin. The party died in 1925, although its ideals continued to influence American politics (see Chapter 7). In 1984, a Populist candidate ran for president but received fewer than seventy thousand votes. However, populism—a commitment to order and equality over freedom—still plays a part in today’s political system. A Populist caucus claimed twenty-eight members in the House and Senate in 1986.*
- **Parties of ideological protest** go further than farmer-labor parties in criticizing the established system. These parties reject prevailing doctrines and propose radically different principles, often favoring more government activism. The Socialist party has been the most successful party of ideological protest. However, at its high point in 1912, it garnered only 6 percent of the vote, and Socialist candidates for president have never won a single state. In recent years, the sound of ideological protest has been heard more from rightist parties, arguing for the radical disengagement of government from society. Ron Paul, the Libertarian candidate in 1988, received more votes than all the leftist candidates put together, but that was still less than 1 percent of the vote.

- **Single-issue parties** are formed to promote one principle, not a general philosophy of government. The Anti-Masonic parties of the 1820s and 1830s, for example, opposed Masonic lodges and other secret societies. The Free Soil party of the 1840s and 1850s worked to abolish slavery. The Prohibition party, the most durable example of a single-issue party, opposed the consumption of alcoholic beverages. Prohibition candidates consistently won from 1 to 2 percent of the vote in nine presidential elections between 1884 and 1916, and the party has run candidates in every presidential election since.

Third parties, then, have been formed primarily to express discontent with the choices offered by the major parties and to work for their own objectives within the electoral system.¹² How have they fared? As *vote getters*, minor parties have not performed well, with two exceptions. First, bolter parties twice won more than 10 percent of the vote; no other type has ever won as much. Second, the Republican party originated in 1854 as a single-issue third party opposed to slavery in new territories; in its first election, in 1856, the party came in second, displacing the Whigs. (Undoubtedly, the Republican exception to the rule has inspired the formation of other hopeful third parties.)

As *policy advocates*, minor parties have a slightly better record. At times, they have had a real effect on the policies adopted by the major parties. Women’s suffrage, the graduated income tax, and the direct election of senators all originated in third parties.¹³ Of course, one reason third parties don’t get more votes may well be the lack of popular support for their policies. This was a lesson the Democrats learned in 1896, when they adopted the Populists’ free-silver plank in their own platform. Both candidate and platform went down to a defeat that stained the Democratic party for decades.

Most important, minor parties function as *safety valves*. They allow those who are unhappy with the status quo to present their policies within the system, to contribute to the political dialogue. If minor parties indicate discontent, what should we make of the numerous minor parties—including the Libertarian, Workers’, and Prohibition parties—in the 1988 election? Not much. Despite the presence of minor parties, the two major parties collected over 99 percent of the vote. The number of third parties that contest elections is much less important than the total number of votes they receive.

Why a Two-Party System?

The history of party politics in the United States is essentially the story of two parties alternating control of the government. With relatively few exceptions, elections for national office and for most state and local offices are conducted within the two-party system. This pattern is unusual in democratic countries, where multiparty systems are more common. Why does the United States have only two major parties? The most convincing answers to this question stem from the electoral process of political socialization

simple plurality of votes. That is, in the typical U.S. election, one office is contested by two or more candidates and is won by the single candidate who collects the most votes. Think about the way the states choose representatives to Congress. If a state is entitled to ten representatives, the state is divided into ten congressional districts, and one representative is elected in each district. **Single-member district** representation is also employed in most state legislatures. There are, however, other ways to elect ten representatives to Congress. The state might have a single statewide election for all ten seats, with each party presenting a list of ten candidates. Voters could vote for the entire party list they preferred, and candidates would be elected from the top of each list, according to the proportion of votes won by the party.

Although this form of election may seem strange, it is used in many democratic countries. This electoral system, which awards legislative seats in proportion to votes won in elections, is known as **proportional representation**. It tends to produce (or to perpetuate) several parties, each of which has enough voting strength nationwide to elect some minimum number of candidates on its party list. In contrast, our system of single winners by simple plurality vote forces groups in society to work within one of the only two parties with any realistic chance of winning an election. Therefore, the system tends to produce only two parties. Moreover, the two major parties in a state benefit from laws that automatically list candidates on the ballot if their party won some minimum percentage of the vote in the previous election. These laws discourage minor parties, which must petition before every election for a place on the ballot.

The rules of our electoral system may explain why only two parties tend to form in specific election districts. But why do the *same* two parties (Democratic and Republican) operate within each state? The contest for the presidency is the key to this question. The presidential election can be won only by the single candidate who wins a majority of electoral votes across the entire nation. Presidential candidates must win votes under the same label in each state so that they can pool their states' electoral votes to win in the electoral college. The presidency is a big enough prize to produce uncomfortable coalitions of voters (southern white Protestants allied with northern Jews and blacks in the Democratic party, for example) just to win the electoral vote and the presidential election.

The American electoral system may force party politics into a two-party mold, but why must the same parties *reappear* from election to election? In fact, they do not. We have seen that the earliest two-party system pitted the Federalists against the Democratic Republicans. A later two-party system involved the Democrats and the Whigs. Over 130 years ago, the Republicans replaced the Whigs in what is our present two-party system. But, with modern issues so different from the issues then, why do the Democrats and Republicans persist? This is where *political socialization* comes into play. These two parties persist simply because they *have* persisted. After more than 100 years of political socialization, the two parties today have such a head start in structuring the vote that they discourage challenges from new parties. Of course, third parties still try to crack the two-party system from time to time, but most have had little success.

The Federal Basis of the Party System

Studying the history of American parties by focusing on contests for the presidency is convenient and informative. It also oversimplifies party politics to the point of distortion. By concentrating only on presidential elections, we tend to ignore electoral patterns in the states, where elections often buck national trends. In a party's darkest defeats for the presidency, it can still claim many victories for state offices. These victories outside the arena of presidential politics give each party a base of support that keeps its machinery oiled and running for the next contest.

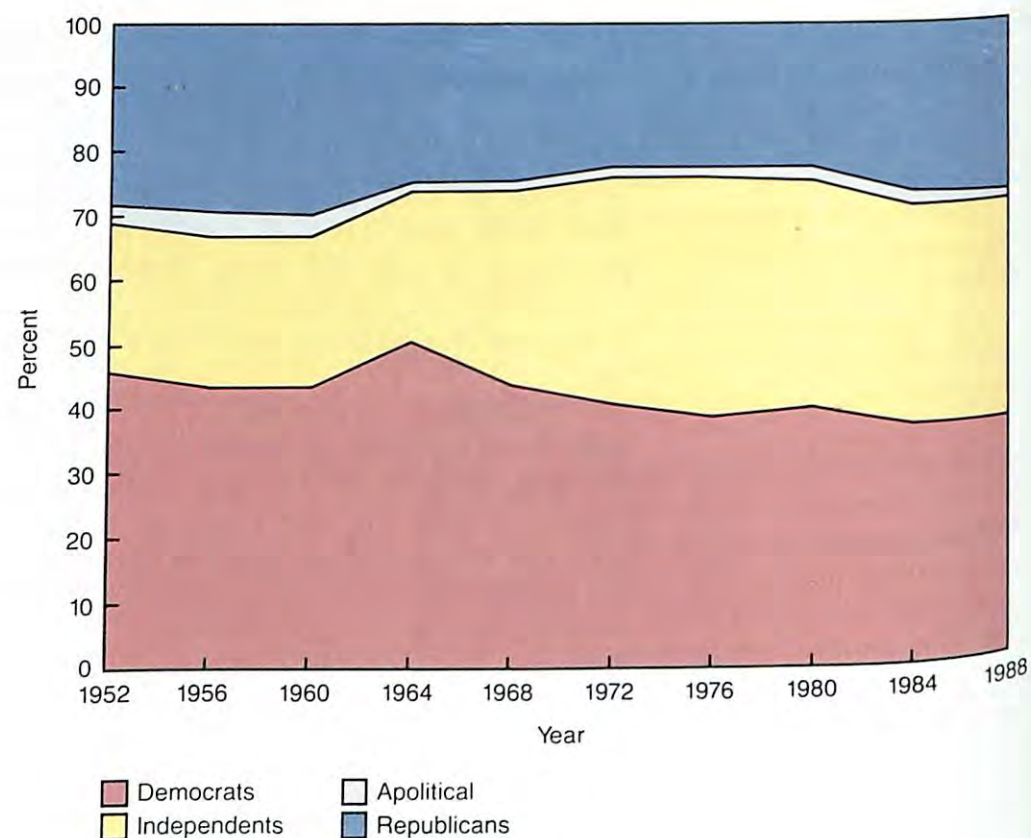
The Republican victories in the 1980 and 1984 presidential elections help illustrate how the states serve as a refuge for parties defeated for the presidency. Ronald Reagan carried forty-four states in his landslide victory in 1980. He swept forty-nine states in 1984—winning in every state but Minnesota, the home of his opponent, Walter Mondale. In 1980, the Republicans also won a majority in the Senate for the first time in twenty-eight years, and they kept that control in 1984. All this makes the early 1980s sound like dark times for the Democrats, but, in fact, they did very well at the state level. Even in the wake of Reagan's stunning victory in 1984, the Democrats kept control of the House of Representatives. They wound up with thirty-four state governorships to the Republicans' sixteen (unchanged from before the election) and 65 percent of the state legislatures. They controlled the governorship, the upper house, and the lower house in eighteen states compared to only four states for the Republicans.¹⁴

Reagan's strong victory in 1980 and his landslide in 1984 suggested that the Democrats were doomed to extinction. Perhaps in an earlier time, when the existing parties were not so well institutionalized, that would have been so. However, the Democratic party not only remained alive but thrived within most states in our federal system. The separation of state politics from national trends affords each party a chance to lick its wounds after a presidential election debacle and to return to campaign optimistically four years later—as the Democrats did in 1988.

Party Identification in America

According to a recent survey, over 90 percent of Americans say they vote for the person, not the party.¹⁵ Maybe they do, but most Americans also identify with one of the two major parties. The concept of **party identification** is one of the most important in political science. It refers to the voter's sense of psychological attachment to a party, which is not the same thing as voting for the party in any given election. Voting is a behavior; identification is a state of mind. For example, millions of southerners voted for Eisenhower for president in 1952 and 1956 although they still considered themselves Democrats. Across the nation, more people identify with one of the two major parties than reject a party attachment.

The proportions of self-identified Republicans, Democrats, and independents (no party attachment) in the electorate since 1952 are shown in Figure 8.1. Three significant points stand out.



Distribution of Party Identification, 1952-1988

In every presidential election since 1952, voters across the nation have been asked, "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an independent, or what?" Most voters readily admit to thinking of themselves as either Republicans or Democrats, but the proportion of those who think of themselves as independents has increased over time. The Democrats' status as the majority party has also lessened over time. Nevertheless, most Americans today still identify with one of the two major parties, and there are still more Democrats than Republicans. (Source: Warren E. Miller, Arthur H. Miller, and Edward J. Schneider, *American National Election Studies Data Sourcebook, 1952-1978*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980, 1981, supplemented by data from the 1980 and 1984 National Election Studies conducted at the Center for Political Studies, University of Michigan, and distributed by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research. Data for 1988 comes from the 1988 General Social Survey, provided by Dr. Tom W. Smith, National Opinion Research Center.)

Figure 8.1

- The proportion of Republicans and Democrats combined far exceeds the proportion of independents in every year.
- The proportion of Democrats consistently exceeds that of Republicans.
- The proportion of Democrats has shrunk somewhat over time, to the benefit of both Republicans and independents.

Although a sense of party identification predisposes citizens to vote for their favorite party, other factors may cause voters to choose the opposition candidate. If they vote against their party often enough, they may rethink their party identification and eventually switch. Apparently,



this rethinking has gone on in the minds of many southern Democrats over time. In 1952, about 70 percent of white southerners thought of themselves as Democrats, and fewer than 20 percent thought of themselves as Republicans. By 1984, white southerners were only 37 percent Democratic; 34 percent of them were Republican.¹⁶ Much of the nationwide growth in the number of Republicans and independents (and the parallel drop in the number of Democrats) stems from party switches among white southerners.

Who are the self-identified Democrats and Republicans in the electorate? Figure 8.2 shows party identification by social groups in 1988. The effects of socioeconomic factors are clear. People who have lower incomes, less education, less prestigious occupations, and who live in union households tend to think of themselves as Democrats more than Republicans. But the cultural factors of religion and race produce even sharper differences between the parties. Jews are strongly Democratic compared with other religious groups. Members of minority groups (especially blacks) are also overwhelmingly Democratic. Surprisingly strong differences between the sexes have opened a "gender gap" in American politics: Women are far more Democratic than men.

The influence of region on party identification has altered over time. The South is now only slightly more Democratic than the other regions, while the West has become predominantly Republican. Despite the erosion of Democratic support in the South, we still see elements of Roosevelt's old Democratic coalition in the socioeconomic groups. Perhaps the major change in that coalition has been the replacement of white European ethnic groups by blacks, attracted by the Democrats' backing of civil rights legislation in the 1960s.

Studies show that about half the citizens in the United States adopt their parents' party. But it often takes time for party identification to develop. The youngest group of voters is most likely to be independent; the oldest group shows the most partisan commitments. Curiously, the youngest and oldest age groups are most evenly divided between the parties. Some analysts believe this division of party identification among the young will continue as they age, contributing to further erosion of the Democratic majority and perhaps greater party dealignment.

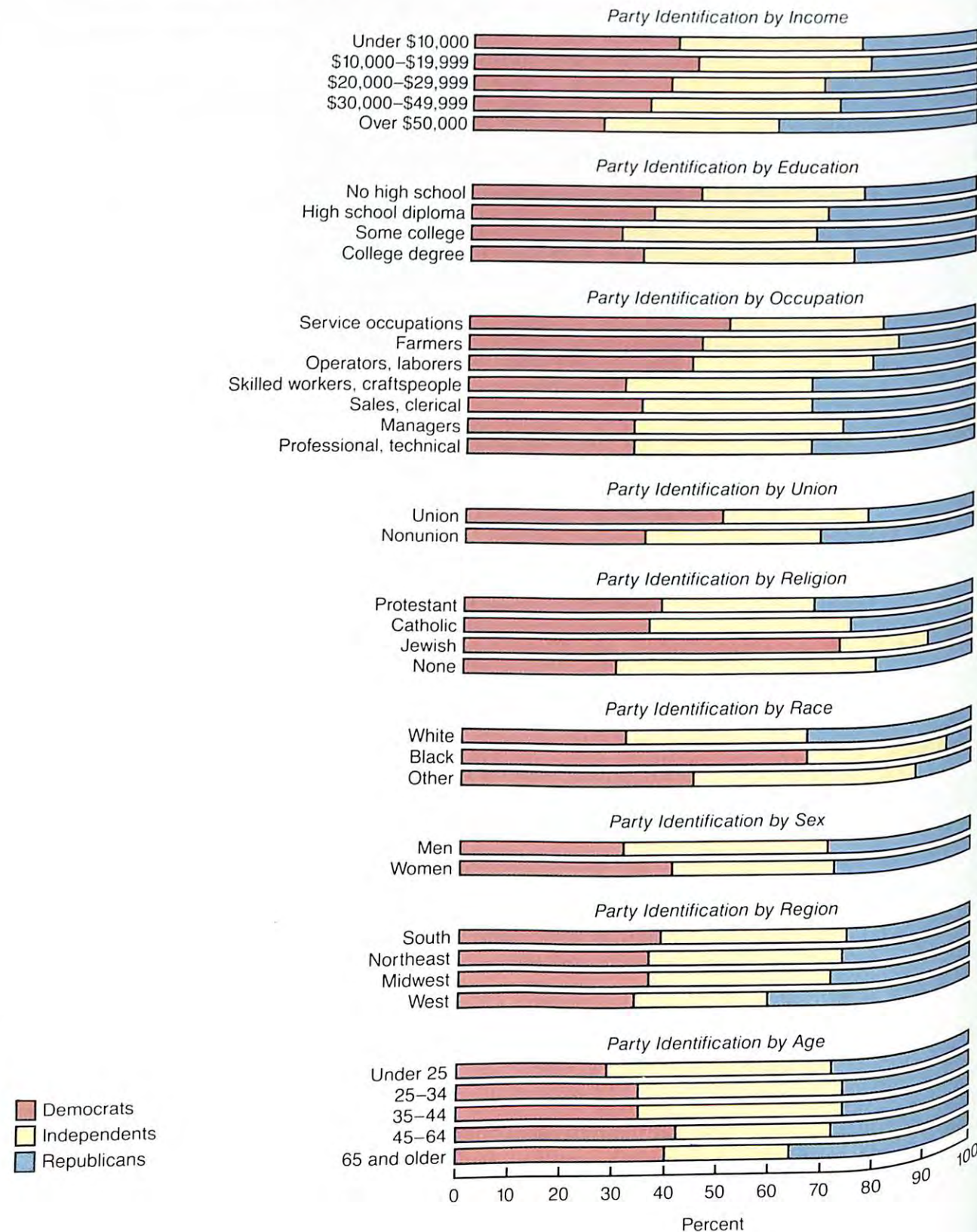
Still, citizens find their political niche, and they tend to stay there. The widespread enduring sense of party loyalty among American voters tends to structure the vote even before the election is held, even before the candidates are chosen. Later we examine the extent to which party identification determines voting choice. First, we take a closer look at today's parties.

PARTY IDEOLOGY AND ORGANIZATION

George Wallace, a disgruntled Democrat who ran for president on the American Independent party ticket, complained that "there isn't a dime's worth of difference" between the Democrats and Republicans. Humorist Will Rogers said, "I am not a member of any organized political party—I am a Democrat." Wallace's comment was made in disgust; Rogers's in

Party Identification by Social Groups

Respondents to a 1988 survey were divided into nine different social groups—by income, education, occupation, union membership, religion, race, sex, region, and age—and analyzed according to their self-descriptions as Democrats, independents, or Republicans. Region was found to have the least effect on party identification; religion and race had the greatest effects. (Source: 1988 General Social Survey; tabulations provided by Dr. Tom W. Smith, National Opinion Research Center.)



jest. Wallace was wrong; Rogers was close to being right. Here we try to dispel the myth that the parties do not differ significantly on issues and to explain how they are—or are not—organized.

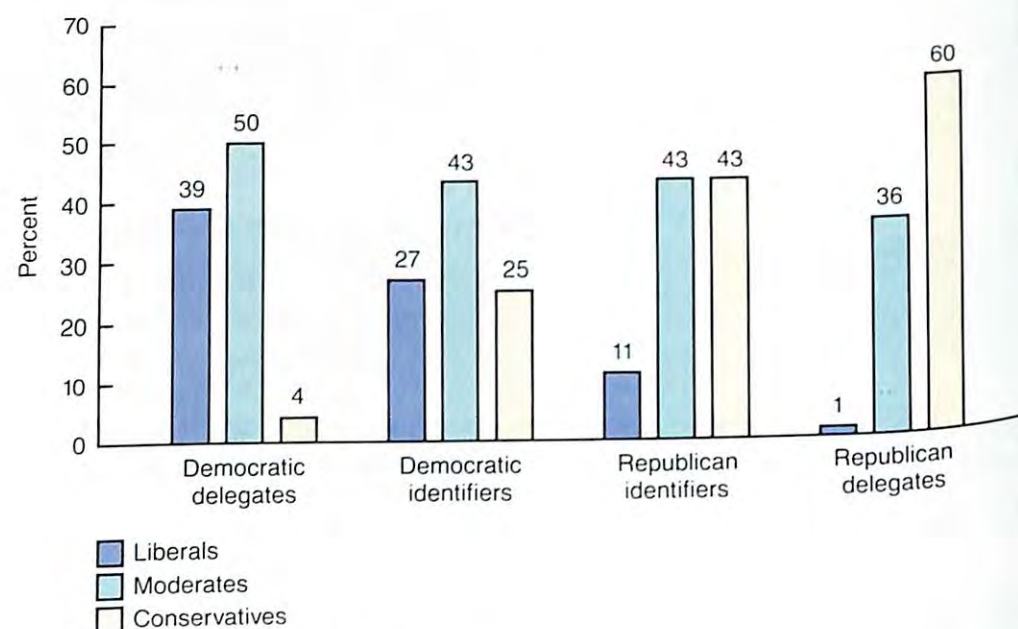
Differences in Party Ideology

George Wallace notwithstanding, there is more than a dime's worth of difference between the two parties. In fact, the difference amounts to many billions of dollars, the cost of the different government programs supported by each party. Democrats are more disposed to government spending to advance social welfare (and hence to promote equality) than are Republicans. And social welfare programs cost money, a lot of money. (You will see how much money in Chapters 15 and 16.) Republicans, on the other hand, are not averse to spending billions of dollars for the projects they consider important, among them, national defense. Ronald Reagan portrayed the Democrats as big spenders, but the defense buildup during just his first administration cost the country over \$1 trillion—more precisely \$1,007,900,000,000.¹⁷ And Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (the "Star Wars" space defense scheme) cost many billions more, even by conservative estimates. These differences in spending patterns reflect some real philosophical differences between the parties.

Voter identification. One way to examine these differences is to look at the voters who identify with the parties. As shown in the middle portion of Figure 8.3, 25 percent of those who identified themselves as Democrats described themselves as conservatives, compared with more than 40 percent of those who identified themselves as Republicans. As we discussed in Chapter 5, many ordinary voters do not think about politics in ideological terms. The ideological gap between the parties looms even larger when we focus on the party activists on the left- and right-hand sides of the figure. Only 4 percent of the delegates to the 1988 Democratic convention considered themselves conservatives, compared with 60 percent of the delegates to the Republican convention.

Platforms: Freedom, order, and equality. Surveys of voters' ideological orientations may reflect differences in self-image rather than actual differences in ideology. For another test of party philosophies, we can look to the platforms adopted in party conventions. Although citizens feel that party platforms don't matter very much, they do matter a great deal to delegates at conventions. The wording of a platform plank often means the difference between victory and defeat for factions within the party. Delegates fight, not only over ideas, but also over words and even punctuation in a plank. Platforms, then, give us a good indication of policy preferences among party activists.

The platforms adopted by the Democratic and Republican conventions in 1988 were strikingly different in style and substance. The Democrats, who met first, produced an unusually short document (fewer than 4,500 words), about one-tenth as long as their 1984 platform. It stressed broad themes rather than specific policies. The platform led with this principle: "We believe that all Americans have a fundamental right to



Ideologies of Party Identifiers and Delegates in 1988

Contrary to what many people think, the Democratic and Republican parties differ substantially in their ideological centers of gravity. When citizens were asked to classify themselves on an ideological scale, more Republican than Democratic identifiers described themselves as conservative. When delegates to the parties' national conventions were asked to classify themselves, even greater ideological differences appeared. (Source: Michael Oreskes, "Delegates Conservative, Poll Shows," *New York Times*, 14 August 1988, p. 14; and E. J. Dionne, Jr., "Democrats Are Hoping to End the Lean Years," *New York Times*, 17 July 1988, p. 10.)

Figure 8.3

economic justice"—a phrase usually interpreted as a commitment to reducing economic inequality. The party also pledged

equal access to education . . . equal access to government services, employment, housing, business, business enterprise and education to every citizen regardless of race, sex, national origin, religion, age, handicapping condition or sexual orientation . . . the adoption of the equal rights amendment to the Constitution . . . equal access of women and minorities to elective office and party endorsement.

Accusing the Democrats of hiding behind a vague platform, the Republicans adopted a detailed document of 50,000 words and 150 pages. But the Republicans had a theme, too—*freedom*:

Freedom works. This is not sloganeering, but a verifiable fact. . . . Our platform reflects on every page our continuing faith in the creative power of human freedom. . . . Defending and expanding freedom is our first priority.

The Democrats supported "an indexed minimum wage that can help lift and keep families out of poverty"; the Republicans opposed increases in the minimum wage as "inflationary—and job-destroying."

The Democrats said the national, state, and local governments "exist to help us solve our problems instead of adding to them"; the Republicans said "government empowers people to solve their own problems and to have more choices in their lives."

Although the Republicans opposed the use of government to promote equality, they were willing to use government to promote social order. The Democrats supported free choice on the abortion issue; the Republicans favored a constitutional amendment to outlaw abortion. The Democrats were silent on the death penalty; the Republicans urged the reinstatement of the death penalty for certain federal crimes.

These statements of values clearly separate the two parties on the values of freedom, order, and equality that underlie the dilemmas of government discussed in Chapter 1. According to the typology presented there, the Republicans' 1988 platform places their party in the conservative category, and the Democrats' platform puts their party squarely into the liberal category.

Different, but similar. The Democrats and the Republicans have very different ideological orientations. Yet many observers claim that the parties are really quite similar in ideology, especially when compared with other countries' parties. They are similar in that both support capitalism; that is, both reject government ownership of the means of production (see Chapter 1). A study of Democratic and Republican positions on four economic issues—ownership of the means of production, role in economic planning, redistribution of wealth, and providing for social welfare—found that Republicans consistently oppose increased government activity. Comparing these findings with data on party positions in thirteen other democracies, the researchers found about as much difference between the American parties as is usual within two-party systems. However, both American parties tend to be more conservative on economic matters than parties in other two-party systems. In most

How'd You Like to Be Vice President?

Campaigning for president puts candidates in touch with the common people. Here Michael Dukakis dines with a blue-collar worker in an Iowa cafe in 1988. In contrast to the "wholesale" politics fostered by television, the Iowa caucuses promote politicking at the "retail" level. Although Dukakis looks out of place in this setting, he is sure to get a different perspective on workers' problems from talking to some of them directly.



multiparty systems, the presence of strong socialist and antisocialist parties ensures a much greater range of ideological choice than we find in our system, despite genuine differences between the Democrats and Republicans.¹⁸

National Party Organization

Most political observers would agree with Will Rogers's description of the Democrats as an unorganized political party. This used to be true of the Republicans too, but this has changed over the last decade—at least at the national level. Bear in mind the distinction between levels of party structure. American parties parallel our federal system: They have separate national and state organizations (and virtually separate local organizations, in many cases).

At the national level, each major party has three main organizational components:

- *National convention.* Every four years, each party convenes thousands of delegates from the states and the territories for the purpose of nominating a candidate for president. This national nominating convention is also the supreme governing body of the party. It determines party policy through the platform, formulates rules to govern party operations, and designates a national committee, which is empowered to govern the party until the next convention.
- *National committee.* The **national committee** of each party is composed of party officials representing every state and including the chairpersons of every state party organization. Each party also adds other members, representatives of youth and ethnic groups, for example. The membership of the Republican National Committee (RNC) is over 150, and there are about 350 people on the Democratic National Committee (DNC). The chairperson of each national committee is chosen by the party's presidential nominee, then duly elected by the committee. If the nominee loses the election, the national committee usually replaces the nominee's chairperson.
- *Congressional campaign committees.* Democrats and Republicans in the House and Senate maintain their own **congressional campaign committees**, each of which raises its own funds to support its candidates in congressional elections. The fact that these are separate organizations tells us that the national party structure is loose; the national committee seldom gets involved with the election of any individual member of Congress. Moreover, even the congressional campaign organizations merely supplement the funds that senators and representatives raise on their own to win re-election.

It is tempting to think of the national party chairperson sitting at the top of a hierarchical party organization that runs through the state committees to the local level. Few ideas could be more wrong. There is very little national direction of and even less national control over state and local campaigns. In fact, the RNC and DNC do not really direct or control presidential campaigns. Individual candidates hire their own

campaign staffs to contest the party primaries to win delegates who will support them for nomination at the party conventions. The successful party nominees then keep their winning staffs to contest the general election. The main role of a national committee is to cooperate with its candidate's personal campaign staff, in the hope of winning the election.

In this light, the national committees appear to be relatively useless organizations. For many years, their role was essentially limited to planning for the next party convention. The committee would select the site, issue the call to state parties to attend, plan the program, and so on. In the 1970s, however, the roles of the DNC and RNC began to expand—but in different ways.

In response to street rioting during the 1968 Democratic convention (see Chapter 7), the Democrats created a special commission to introduce party reforms. The McGovern-Fraser Commission attempted to open the party to greater participation by women, minority members, and young voters and to weaken local party leaders' control over the process of selecting delegates. The commission formulated guidelines for the selection of delegates to the 1972 Democratic convention. Included in these guidelines was the requirement that state parties take "affirmative action"—that is, do something to see to it that women, blacks, and young people were included among their delegates "in reasonable relationship to the group's presence in the population of the state."¹⁹ Many state parties rebelled at the imposition of quotas by sex, race, and age. But the DNC threatened to deny seating to any state delegation at the 1972 convention that did not comply with the guidelines.

Never before had a national party committee imposed these kinds of rules on a state party organization, but it worked. Even the powerful Chicago delegation, led by Mayor Richard Daley, was denied seating at the convention for violating the guidelines. And overall, women, blacks, and young voters gained dramatically in representation at the 1972 Democratic convention. Although the party has since reduced its emphasis on quotas, the gains by women and blacks have held up fairly well. The representation of young people, however, has declined substantially.

While the Democrats were busy with *procedural* reforms, the Republicans were making *organizational* reforms.²⁰ The RNC did little to open up its delegate selection process; Republicans were not inclined to impose quotas on state parties through their national committee. Instead, the RNC strengthened its fund-raising, research, and service roles. Republicans acquired their own building and their own computer, and in 1976 they hired the first full-time chairperson of either national party. (Until then, the chairperson worked part-time and usually had some other career.) As RNC chairman, William Brock expanded the party's staff, launched new publications, started seminars, conducted election analyses, advised candidates, and did most of the things that national party committees had done routinely in other countries for years.

The vast difference between the Democratic and Republican approaches to reforming the national committees shows in the funds raised by the DNC and RNC during election campaigns. Since Brock's tenure as chairman of the RNC, the Republicans have raised three to four times

the money raised by the Democrats. Although Republicans have traditionally raised more campaign funds than Democrats, they no longer rely on a relatively few wealthy contributors. In fact, the Republicans received the larger portion of their funds from smaller contributors (of less than \$100), mainly through direct-mail solicitation. In short, the RNC has recently been raising far more money than the DNC from many more citizens, in a long-term commitment to improving its organizational services. Evidence of its efforts has appeared at the level of state party organizations.

State and Local Party Organizations

At one time, both major parties were firmly anchored in strong state and local party organizations. Big-city party organizations, such as the Democrats' Tammany Hall in New York City and the Cook County Central Committee in Chicago, were prototypes of the party machine. The **party machine** was a centralized organization that dominated local politics by controlling elections—sometimes by illegal means, often by providing jobs and social services to urban workers in return for their votes. The patronage and social service functions of party machines were undercut as government expanded its role in providing unemployment compensation, aid to families with dependent children, and other social services. As a result, most local party organizations lost their ability to deliver votes and thus to determine the outcome of elections. However, machines are still strong in certain areas. In Nassau County, New York, for example, suburban Republicans have shown that they can run a machine as well as urban Democrats.²¹

The state organizations of both parties vary widely in strength, but Republican state organizations tend to be stronger than Democratic organizations. The Republicans are likely to have larger budgets and staffs and tend to recruit candidates for more offices. Republicans also differ from Democrats in the help that the national organization gives to state organizations. A survey of forty Republican and thirty Democratic state chairpersons revealed that 70 percent of the Republican organizations received financial aid from the national organization compared with only 7 percent of the Democratic organizations.²² Republicans at the state level also received more candidate training, poll data and research, and campaign instruction from the national organization. The only service that the DNC supplied more often than the RNC was "rule enforcement"—reflecting the national party's enforcement of guidelines for selecting convention delegates.²³ Otherwise, the dominant pattern in both parties was for the national organization *not* to intervene in state activities unless asked, and then only to supply services.

If strong party organization means that control is vested in the national headquarters, then both the Democrats and Republicans are, in Will Rogers's phrase, unorganized political parties. We see this same decentralization in the way party candidates campaign for election and run the government after winning elections. In both instances, the party label is very important, but the party organization is not.

Are Your Parents Registered Voters?

Given an option, the Vice President of the United States probably would have done something else this day than grin at a piglet. But he did it to gain convention delegates in the 1988 Iowa caucuses, obtain his party's nomination for president, then win the White House. If Bush had known that he was destined to lose in Iowa, he might not have hoisted this porker.



CAMPAIGNING FOR ELECTION

Winning public office at the national or state level in the United States is a two-stage process. The first stage is to win the nomination of one of the two major parties, which is usually decided by an election within the party.* Once nominated, the candidate moves to the second stage: winning election to the office itself. Unless a candidate is lucky enough to run unopposed, the election must be won through an **electoral campaign**, an organized effort to persuade voters to choose one candidate over others competing for the same office.

A full-blown campaign waged by a credible candidate against a credible opponent proceeds through three broad stages:²⁴

- **Building a base.** Campaign workers must be recruited and organized to help publicize the candidate. Information about the electorate's past voting behavior must be obtained and analyzed. Funds to do all these things must be acquired, or sources of funds must be identified.
- **Planning a strategy.** Arguments in favor of voting for the candidate and against the opposition must be incorporated into a campaign theme. The basic choices among strategies are running a *party-centered campaign*, which relies heavily on the voters' party identification and the party organization for resources; an *issue-oriented*

* Of course, a candidate can be nominated by a third party or can run as an independent, but these routes are not usually successful.

campaign, which stresses policies that appeal to important groups; or a *personality-oriented campaign*, which emphasizes the candidate's personal qualities or image.

- *Clinching the vote.* The candidate must meet with voting groups. The campaign theme must be publicized. Opposition arguments must be countered. Supporters must be mobilized to go to the polls on election day. The victory party must be planned.

Many factors help shape decisions at these three stages. The most important is whether the candidate is campaigning to win the nomination or to win the office itself.

The Nomination

The most important feature of the nomination process in American party politics is that it involves an election. National party leaders do not choose the party's nominee for president or even the party's candidates for House and Senate seats. Virtually no other parties in the world nominate candidates to the national legislature through primary elections. In more than half the world's parties, legislative candidates are chosen by local party leaders—and in most of those cases, even these choices must be approved by the national organization. In fact, in more than one-third of the world's parties, the national organization itself selects the party candidates.²⁵

Primary elections. In the United States, most aspiring candidates for public office at all levels are nominated through a **primary election**, a preliminary election conducted within the party to select candidates who will run for office in a subsequent election. The nomination process, then, is highly decentralized, resting on the decisions of thousands, perhaps millions, of the party rank and file.

There are different types of primary elections for county, state, and congressional offices, depending on the state in which they are held. (We discuss presidential primaries in the next section.) The most common type (used by about forty states) is the **closed primary**, in which voters must declare their party affiliation before they are given the primary ballot, which lists the party's potential nominees. A handful of states use the **open primary**, in which voters need not declare a party affiliation but must choose one party's ballot to take into the polling booth. In a **blanket primary**, currently used in only two or three states, voters receive a ballot listing both parties' potential nominees and can help nominate candidates for all offices.

Most scholars believe that closed primaries strengthen party organization, and that blanket primaries weaken party organization. But the differences among types of primaries are much less important than the fact that the parties hold elections to choose their candidates. Placing the nomination of party candidates in the hands of voters rather than party leaders contributes mightily to the decentralization of power in American parties. The decentralized nature of American parties is clearly illustrated in campaigns for the party nomination for president.

Nominating a presidential candidate. Party candidates for president are nominated by delegates attending national conventions held in the summer before the presidential election in November. Gone are the days when a presidential candidate was chosen by top party leaders meeting in a smoke-filled room during the nominating convention—as the Republicans reportedly chose Warren G. Harding in 1920. Especially since the riots at the 1968 Democratic convention sparked changes in the nominating process, candidates have had to compete vigorously for the nomination by winning convention delegates in every state. There is no national legislation specifying how state parties must select delegates to their national conventions. Instead, state legislatures have enacted a bewildering variety of procedures that often differ for Democrats and Republicans in the same state. The most important distinction in delegate selection is between the primary and the caucus methods.

A **presidential primary** is a special primary used to select delegates to attend the party's national nominating convention. Primary elections were first used to select delegates to nominating conventions in 1912. In every election since, primaries have been held in at least twelve states

A Chorus Line

Blue suits and red ties predominated among the candidates at the first major Blue suits and red ties predominated among the candidates at the first major debate of the campaign for the 1988 presidential nomination. The debate, organized by NBC News, was held at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., on December 1, 1987. NBC's Tom Brokaw (center) was the host. To Brokaw's right are Republicans George Bush, Robert Dole, Pete du Pont, Alexander Haig, Jack Kemp, and Pat Robertson. To his left are Democrats Paul Simon, Jesse Jackson, Albert Gore, Richard Gephardt, Michael Dukakis, and Bruce Babbitt. (Democrat Gary Hart was not an active candidate at the time of the debate.)



and have always accounted for at least 33 percent of the delegates to the conventions.²⁶ There are two broad types of presidential primaries. In *presidential preference primaries* (used in about thirty states in 1988), party supporters vote directly for the person they favor as their party's nominee for president. In *delegate selection primaries* (used in only about five states in 1988), party voters directly elect convention delegates who may or may not have declared for a presidential candidate.

As a result of party reform, the number of presidential primaries began to grow in 1972. About 65 percent of the delegates to both national conventions in 1988 were selected in presidential primaries. Most of the remaining convention delegates were chosen through a system of party caucuses, vastly different from the defunct congressional caucuses that chose presidential candidates in the early 1800s. Today, a **party caucus** is a local meeting of party supporters to choose delegates to attend a subsequent meeting, usually at the county level. Most delegates selected in the local caucus openly back one of the presidential candidates. The county meetings, in turn, select delegates to a higher level. The process culminates in a state convention, which actually selects the delegates to the national convention. About twenty states used the caucus process in 1988 (a few states combined caucuses with primaries), and caucuses were employed more by Democrats than Republicans.

The process of nominating party candidates for president in the United States is a complex drawn-out affair that has no parallel in party politics in any other nation. Would-be presidents announce their candidacies and begin campaigning many months before the first convention delegates are selected. As shown in Feature 8.2, the selection process in 1988 began in early February with the Iowa caucuses, closely followed by the New Hampshire primary. By historical accident, these two small states have become the first tests of the candidates' popularity with party voters. Accordingly, each basks in the media spotlight once every four years. The Iowa and New Hampshire legislatures are now committed to leading off the delegate selection process, ensuring their states' share of national publicity and their bid for political history.

The Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary serve different functions in the presidential nominating process.²⁷ The contest in Iowa tends to winnow out candidates who are rejected by the party faithful. When Alexander Haig failed to gain the support of even 1 percent of Iowans at the Republican caucuses, he promptly dropped out of the race. Although fellow Republican Pete du Pont and Democrats Bruce Babbitt and Gary Hart did not formally withdraw until after the New Hampshire primary, their dismal showings in Iowa foretold their fate.

The New Hampshire primary, held one week after the Iowa caucuses, tests the Iowa frontrunners' appeal to ordinary party voters, which fore-shadows their likely strength in the general election. Because voting takes little effort, more citizens vote than attend caucuses, which can last for hours. In 1988, only about 11 percent of the voting-age population participated in the Iowa caucuses versus 37 percent who voted in the New Hampshire primary. Caucuses favor candidates with devoted supporters, like the backers of Pat Robertson and Jesse Jackson. Whereas Robertson finished a surprise second in the Iowa caucuses (beating

What's Your Sign?

No, it's not a picket line of campaign workers seeking unpaid wages. It's presidential primary day in New Hampshire. Supporters of most (but not all) of the 1988 candidates confront unsuspecting voters outside a polling place in Nashua. For 5 points, whose signs are missing? Hint: Check the photo caption on page 291. (Answer: du Pont, Haig, Gephardt, and Hart.)



George Bush), Robertson was only fifth in the New Hampshire primary. Although he won caucuses in three states, he did not come close to winning a single primary. Similarly, Jesse Jackson's only victory in a large state was in Michigan, where only about 100,000 attended the Democratic caucuses in a state with almost 7 million voters.

By winning the New Hampshire primary, George Bush and Michael Dukakis overcame their third-place finish in Iowa. By winning their party's nominations in 1988, Bush and Dukakis also added to the developing legend of the New Hampshire primary. Since 1952, no candidate has won the presidency without first winning that primary. In thirteen of the sixteen nominating contests in both parties since 1960, the candidate who won New Hampshire also won the party nomination. This remarkable record means that every four years, candidates will spend weeks of their life and millions of dollars trudging through snow, contesting for votes in a tiny state in the northeastern corner of the nation.

More than 35 million citizens voted in both parties' presidential primaries in 1988, and another million participated in party caucuses. Requiring prospective presidential candidates to campaign before many millions of party voters in primaries and hundreds of thousands of party activists in caucus states has several consequences:

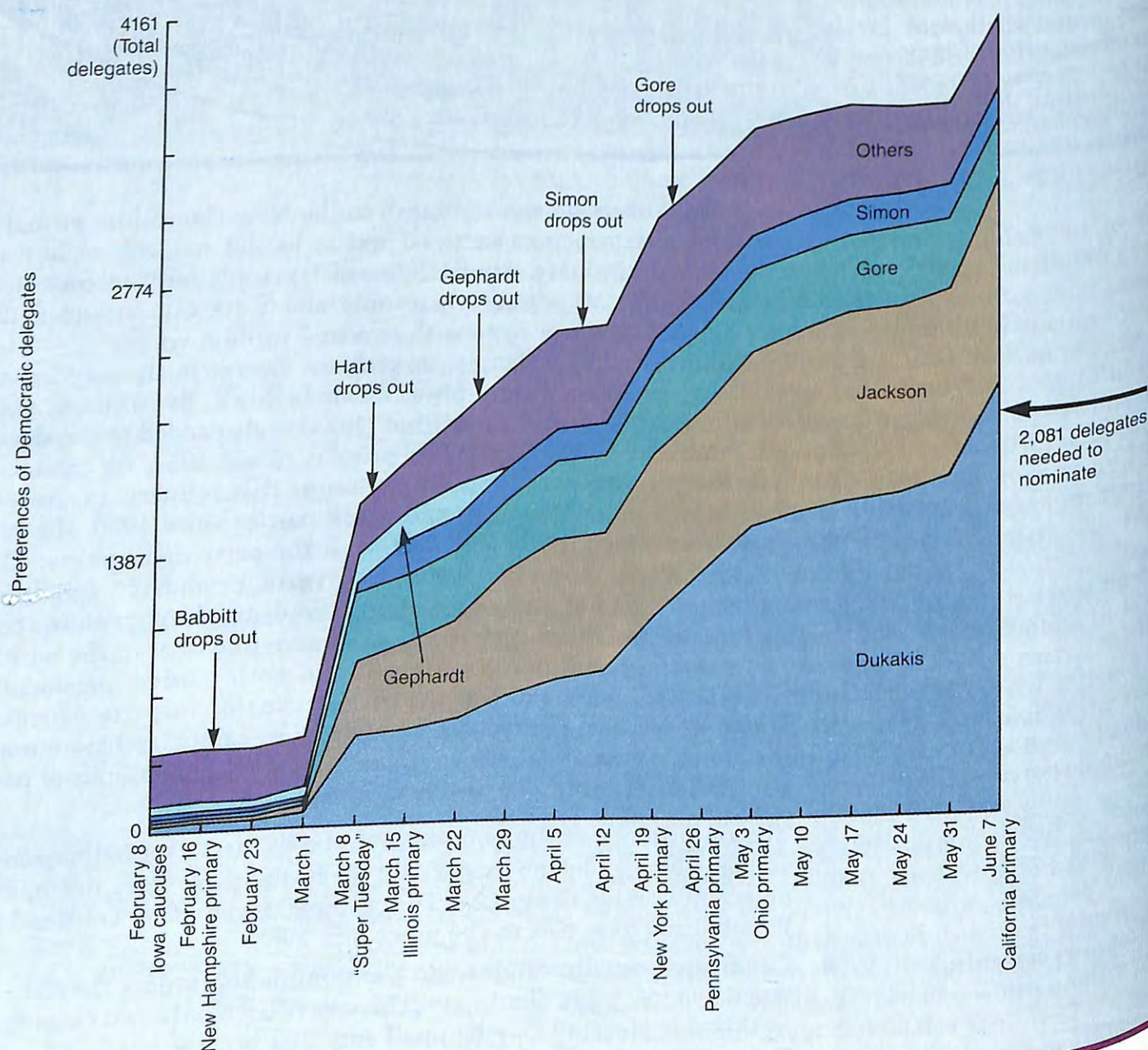
- The uncertainty of the nomination process attracts a half-dozen or so plausible candidates, especially when the party does not have a president seeking re-election. For example, seven Democrats and six Republicans took part in the process in 1988.
- Candidates usually cannot win the nomination unless they are favored by most party identifiers. There have been only two exceptions to this rule since 1936, when poll data first became available: Adlai E. Stevenson II in 1952 and George McGovern in 1972.²⁸ Both were Democrats; both lost impressively in the general election.

FEATURE 8.2

The 1988 Delegate Races for the Presidential Nomination

Prospective candidates for president face a complex, grueling race to win delegates to support them at their party's national convention. In 1988, the delegate selection process formally began in the cold in February and ended in the sunshine in June. The graphs below show how few delegates were at stake in the early contests in Iowa and New Hampshire. Still, some candidates did so badly that they dropped out quickly to avoid further expense and embarrassment. The graphs also show the impact of "Super Tuesday" on March 8, when twenty states—mostly in the South—chose delegates.

The Democratic race was closely contested in the early stages. Richard Gephardt—the winner in Iowa—dropped out in late March after winning only Missouri (his home state) on Super Tuesday. Paul Simon—who was second in Iowa—dropped out after failing to win anywhere but Illinois (his home state). Albert Gore—who abandoned Iowa for lack of early support—recovered by winning big on Super Tuesday but dropped out after a poor showing in New York. Jesse Jackson, who won the most delegates on Super Tuesday, continued to draw support and remained throughout the race. The winner at the very

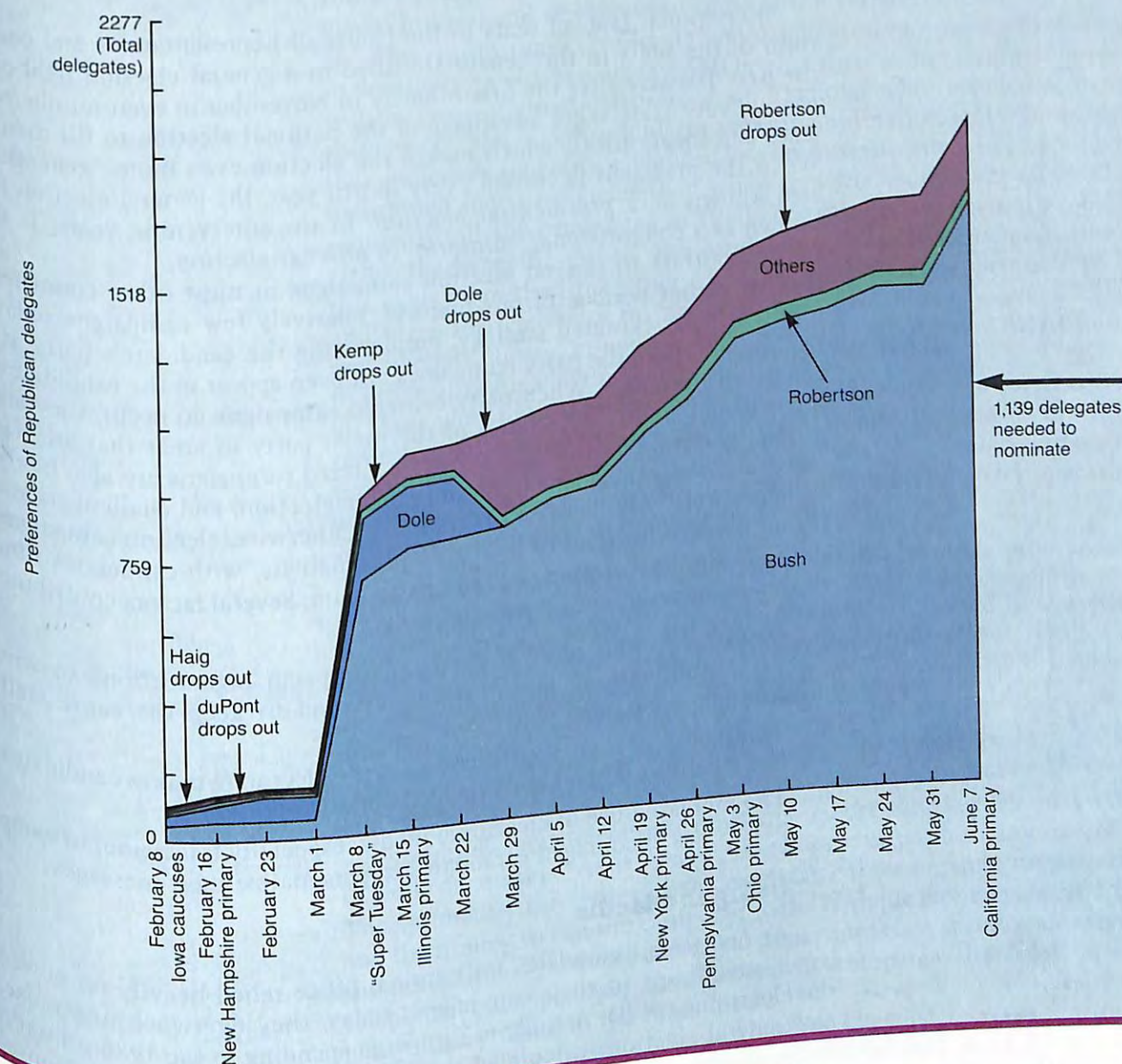


end was Michael Dukakis, who finished third in Iowa but who won the New Hampshire primary and three major states on Super Tuesday.

The race in the Republican party was really over in late March, when Robert Dole, the winner in Iowa, dropped out after failing to win a single state on Super Tuesday. Pat Robertson, who was second in Iowa and did well in other caucus states, failed to run well in primaries anywhere. Meanwhile, George Bush won every primary on Super Tuesday and over 70 percent of the delegates. Eventually running only against Robertson, Bush locked

up his party's nomination in April by winning the Pennsylvania primary. Although Bush, like Dukakis, finished third in the Iowa caucuses, he also won the New Hampshire primary. They both demonstrated that winning in Iowa—or even coming in second—was not essential to winning the nomination, but that winning in New Hampshire prophesied victory at the convention.

Source: The weekly breakdown of delegate support was estimated by the Associated Press, *National Journal*, 13 February to 11 June, 1988.



- Candidates who win the nomination do it mainly on their own and owe little or nothing to the national party organization, which usually does not push a candidate. In fact, Jimmy Carter won the nomination in 1976 against a field of nationally prominent Democrats, even though he was a party outsider with few strong connections in the national party leadership.

Because primary elections are held among candidates of the same party, it makes no sense to follow a party-centered campaign strategy. Therefore, primaries are limited to some mix of issue-oriented and personality-oriented campaign strategies. Campaigns between different parties' candidates for election to office, however, can use the full range of strategies.

Running for Office

By national law, all seats in the House of Representatives and one-third of the seats in the Senate are filled in a **general election** held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November in even-numbered years. Every state takes advantage of the national election to fill many state and local offices, which makes the election even more "general." When the president is chosen every fourth year, the general election is also known as a *presidential election*. In the intervening years, it is known as a *congressional, midterm, or off-year election*.

In contrast to general election campaigns in most other countries (and in earlier periods of our history), relatively few campaigns today follow a party-centered strategy, emphasizing the candidate's party attachment. Often, the party name does not even appear in the candidate's campaign literature. When party-centered campaigns do occur, they are often conducted by candidates of the major party in areas that are traditionally strong for one party. Party-centered campaigns are also likely when a popular president is running for re-election, and challengers see an opportunity to ride in on his coattails. Otherwise, election campaigns for national office tend to be highly personalistic, with candidates running as individuals rather than as a party team. Several factors contribute to this tendency:

- Candidates who rely on personal campaign organizations to win party nominations in the primaries tend to keep the same staff through the general election.
- The decline of party identification in the electorate makes candidates less likely to rely on party-related appeals.
- The increased use of electronic media, especially television, in campaigns has encouraged candidates to personalize their messages.

Using the Media

At one time, candidates for national office relied heavily on newspaper advertising in their campaigns; today, they overwhelmingly use the electronic media. A study of campaign spending in the 1986 primary and general elections calculated that candidates running for the House spent almost 20 percent of their campaign expenditures on television

and radio, versus only 6 percent for print advertisements. Candidates for the Senate spent almost 40 percent for the electronic media, versus less than 1 percent for print media.²⁹ This emphasis on electronic media, particularly on television, has raised concern about the packaging of candidates who rely on television producers to develop a "videostyle" that helps win elections—but is irrelevant to performance in office.

In cultivating a candidate's videostyle, both consultant and candidate arrive at a campaign theme by anticipating audience reactions. Then the consultant coaches the candidate on how to deliver the theme quickly and effectively in a thirty- or sixty-second commercial. A scholar who analyzed television use by six candidates in three Senate campaigns found that audiences do not usually spend time dissecting the message in a television spot; instead, they form impressions of the mood, which the producer creates using "background music, the sharpness of the visual images, and the persuasiveness of the verbal content."³⁰

The reason that consultants and candidates do not focus on issues in developing a videostyle may well be that their audience does not react well to issue-oriented discussions. One scholar who recorded scores of speeches by the major candidates seeking nomination in 1980 observed that audiences generally applauded less enthusiastically when candidates mentioned specific policies than when they made other appeals.³¹ Consequently, all the candidates in 1980 concentrated on general problems rather than specific issues, and candidate Ronald Reagan tended to do this even more than the others. Reagan regularly drew cheers from his audiences for references to "godless totalitarians" in the Soviet Union and "welfare cheats" at home. Not surprisingly, he stressed these themes in office after his election.

Lest you think that electronic image makers and campaign consultants have the power to control an election (see Politics in the Information Age 8.1), remember that the image makers regularly offset one another by working on opposite sides in an election. Moreover, specialists in the new campaign technology argue that:

no one has even a vague idea of what percentage of the vote a consultant or a piece of new campaign technology can or does add to a candidate under any given circumstances. Campaign observers rarely even have a precise idea of what event or series of events produced the election result. Campaigning remains complex, unpredictable, and very unscientific, and one may expect and be grateful that it always will be.³²

Campaign Financing

Speaking about election campaigns, House Speaker Thomas "Tip" O'Neill once said, "As it is now, there are four parts to any campaign. The candidate, the issues of the candidate, the campaign organization, and the money to run the campaign with. Without money you can forget the other three."³³ Money is needed to pay for office space, staff salaries, telephone bills, postage, travel expenses, campaign literature, and, of course, advertising in the mass media.

Two major principles govern the funds needed to wage a winning campaign. The first is that challengers need to raise more money than

POLITICS IN THE INFORMATION AGE 8.1

A Sampler of New Campaign Technology

Two scholars of campaign technology, Larry Sabato and David Beiler, compiled this list of six technological wonders in the 1988 presidential campaign.

- The *Presidential Campaign Hotline* is a computer network that transmits campaign information each morning over telephone lines to the computers of nearly two hundred subscribers at a basic rate of \$250 a month. The *Hotline* serves as a highly specialized wire service and also allows rapid communication among campaign organizations, the media, and interest group power brokers.
- *Audiovisual voter targeting* is enhanced through the use of cable television and videocassette distribution. By cross-referencing polling and census data, a campaign can send precise messages to key voters. This has been done for years using direct mail, but now that half the nation's homes are wired for cable television and half have VCRs, video messages can be directed to specific areas more cheaply than using television broadcasts.
- *Campaign-sponsored satellite feeds* can create a temporary television network for as little as \$5,000. Several days before the event, the campaign contacts local stations with satellite reception capabilities. To induce their cooperation, the campaign offers live interviews with the candidate, which appeals to small stations.
- *Instantaneous pulse reading of focus groups* provides quick reactions to campaign themes or advertisements. A focus group usually consists of ten to fifteen individuals, sometimes recruited at random in shopping centers, who are paid for participating in group discussion of issues and candidates' qualities. By asking probing questions and recording unstructured responses, a trained group leader is able to discern attitudes that do not register on sample surveys.
- *Video image generators* produce appealing computer graphics that can enhance political messages. Examples include the "peeling page" that facilitate cuts from one story to another, and the rotation of images on the screen to match a story line.
- *Micromapping* of demographic and voting data on a computer screen produces a detailed map of an area to help door-to-door canvassers. This technique is especially useful in drawing boundaries for legislative redistricting.

Source: Adapted from Larry Sabato and David Beiler, "Magic . . . or Blue Smoke and Mirrors? Reflections on New Technologies and Trends in the Political Consultant Trade" (Northwestern University: The Annenberg Washington Program in Communication Policy Studies, 1988), pp. 7–25.

incumbents (officeholders running for re-election). Challengers need more money to overcome the incumbents' advantage in name recognition. Ironically, it is usually easier for incumbents to raise money than it is for challengers, because incumbents can do favors for people while they are in office. People also expect that incumbents will be re-elected anyway.

If there is no incumbent in the election, the second principle applies: Candidates of the minority party need to raise more funds than candi-

dates of the majority party. Here, too, it is usually easier for candidates of the majority party to raise money. They have a better chance of winning, and people would rather contribute to winners than to losers. So the political facts of life are that electoral challengers and minority party candidates need to raise a good deal of money to run for office and win.

It is difficult to generalize about raising funds for political campaigns. Campaign financing is now heavily regulated by national and state governments, and regulations vary according to the level of the office—national, state, or local. Even at the national level, there are major differences in financing laws for presidential and congressional elections.

Regulating campaign financing. Strict campaign financing laws are relatively new to American politics. Early laws to limit campaign contributions and to control campaign spending were flawed in one way or another, and none clearly provided for administration and enforcement. In 1971, during the period of party reform, Congress passed the *Federal Election Campaign Act* (FECA), which imposed stringent new rules for full reporting of campaign contributions and expenditures. The weakness of the old legislation soon became apparent. In 1968, before the FECA was passed, House and Senate candidates reported spending \$8.5 million for their campaigns. With the FECA in force, the same number of candidates confessed to spending \$88.9 million in 1972.³⁴

The FECA has been amended several times since 1971, but the amendments have for the most part strengthened the law. A 1974 amendment created the **Federal Election Commission (FEC)** to implement the law. The FEC now enforces limits on financial contributions to national campaigns and requires full disclosure of campaign spending. The FEC also administers the public financing of presidential campaigns, which began with the 1976 election.

Financing presidential campaigns. Presidential campaigns have always been expensive, and at times the methods of raising funds to support them were open to question. In the presidential election of 1972, the last election before the FEC took over funding presidential campaigns and regulating campaign expenditures, President Nixon's campaign committee spent over \$65 million, some of it obtained illegally (for which campaign officials went to jail). In 1974, a new campaign finance law made public funds available to presidential primary and general election candidates under certain conditions.

Candidates for the nomination for president can qualify for federal funding by raising \$5,000 (in private contributions no greater than \$250 each) in each of twenty states. The FEC then matches these contributions up to one-half of the spending limit. Originally, under the 1974 law, the FEC limited spending in presidential primary elections to \$10 million. But cost-of-living provisions had raised the limit in the 1988 primaries to \$23.05 million (plus \$4.6 million for fund-raising activities).

The presidential nominees of the Democratic and Republican parties get a different deal when they campaign for election. They receive twice the primary election limit in public funds for the general election campaign (\$46.1 million in 1988) provided that they spend only the public

funds. Every major candidate since 1976 has accepted public funding, holding the costs of presidential campaigns well below Nixon's record expenditures in 1972.

Public funds are given directly to each candidate's campaign committee, not to the national committee of either party. But the FEC also limits what the national committees can spend on behalf of the nominees. In 1988, that limit was only \$8.3 million. And the FEC limits the amount individuals (\$1,000) and organizations (\$5,000) can contribute to candidates per election. They are not limited, however, in the amount of *expenses* they can incur to promote candidates of their choice.*

Public funding has had several effects on campaign financing. Obviously, it has limited campaign costs. Also, it has equalized the amounts spent by major candidates in general elections. And, it has strengthened the trend toward "personalized" campaigns. Federal funds are given to the presidential candidate of each party, not to the party organization that the candidate represents. Finally, public funding has forced candidates to spend a great deal of time seeking \$1,000 contributions—a limit that has not changed since 1974, despite inflation that has more than doubled the FEC's spending limits.

You might think that a party's presidential campaign would be closely coordinated with the campaigns of the party's candidates for Congress. But remember that campaign funds go to the presidential candidate, not the party, and that the national party organization does not run the presidential campaign. Presidential candidates may join congressional candidates in public appearances for mutual benefit, but presidential campaigns are usually isolated—financially and otherwise—from congressional campaigns.

EXPLAINING VOTING CHOICE

Why do people choose one candidate over another? Individual voting choices can be analyzed as products of *long-term* and *short-term* forces. Long-term forces operate over a series of elections, predisposing voters to choose certain types of candidates. Short-term forces are associated with particular elections; they arise from a combination of the candidates and the issues of the time. *Party identification* is by far the most important long-term force affecting U.S. elections. The most important short-term forces are *candidate attributes* and their *policy positions*.

Party Identification

Most research on voting in presidential elections stems from a series of studies that originated at the University of Michigan. Comparable

* The distinction between contributions and expenses hinges on whether funds are spent as part of a coordinated campaign (a contribution) or spent independently of the candidate's campaign (an expense). The 1974 amendment to the FECA had established limits on both campaign contributions and independent expenditures by interested citizens. In *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976), the Supreme Court struck down the limits on citizens' expenditures as an infringement on the freedom of speech, protected under the First Amendment.

surveys have been conducted for every presidential election and most congressional elections since 1952. When respondents to the 1984 survey were asked at what point they had decided how to vote for president, nearly half (44 percent) said that they "knew all along" or had decided before the conventions.³⁵ This figure is only slightly higher than the average. In every presidential survey since 1952, about 40 percent of the voters reported making up their minds before the candidates squared off in the general election campaign. And voters who make an early voting decision generally vote according to their party identification.

Party identification had a substantial effect on the presidential vote in 1988. Avowed Democrats voted 82 percent for Dukakis, while Republicans voted 91 percent for Bush. Independents split 55 percent for Bush. This is a common pattern in presidential elections. The winner holds nearly all of the voters who identify with his party. The loser also holds most of his identifiers, but some percentage defects to the winner, a product of the short-term forces—the candidates' attributes and the issues—surrounding the election. The winner usually gets most of the independents, who split disproportionately for him, also because of short-term forces.

Because there are more Democrats than Republicans, the Democrats should benefit. Why, then, have Republican candidates won seven out of ten presidential elections since 1952? For one thing, Democrats do not turn out to vote as consistently as Republicans. For another, Democrats defect more easily from their party identification. Defections are sparked by the candidates' attributes and the issues, which have favored Republican presidential candidates since 1952.

Candidates' Attributes

Candidates' attributes are especially important to voters who lack good information about a candidate's past behavior and policy stands—which means most of us. Without this kind of information, voters search for clues about the candidates to try to predict their behavior in office. Some fall back on their firsthand knowledge of marital status, religion, sex, and race in making political judgments. For example, most voters would rather have a "good guy" in the presidency than a "mean man." Research showed that Ronald Reagan exuded a "good guy" image when he ran in 1980 against President Carter, who was seen as being cross and ineffective. The researchers calculated that the perceived differences in the candidates' attributes cost Carter 4 percent of the vote.³⁶

For some reason, the Democrats since 1952 have tended to nominate candidates who were personally flawed in many voters' eyes. In 1952 and in 1956, the Democrats nominated Adlai E. Stevenson II, who was divorced. That may not seem like a flaw today, but it concerned voters in the 1950s. In 1960, the Democrats chose John F. Kennedy, whose flaw—to many Protestants—was his Catholicism. Although he was a young, handsome, charismatic candidate of the majority party, who might have been expected to win easily, Kennedy did poorly among Protestant Democrats and barely edged Nixon out in one of the closest elections in history.



Ger-ry! Ger-ry! Ger-ry!
Geraldine Ferraro, the first woman vice presidential candidate of a major political party, acknowledges cheers at the 1984 Democratic National Convention in San Francisco. Although the Mondale-Ferraro ticket lost the election, candidate Ferraro performed well as a campaigner, and she undoubtedly added to the credibility of women seeking the presidential nomination in both parties in the future.

In 1984, the Democrats nominated Geraldine Ferraro for vice president. Her flaw, for certain voters, was her sex. After an initial burst of enthusiasm for her nomination, many Democratic voters (especially in the South) came to resent a woman on the ticket. Divorced candidates and Catholics are commonplace in both parties now; some day, women presidential candidates will be too. The Democratic party may be ahead of the electorate's readiness to accept social change and so may occasionally hurt itself at the polls because of its candidates' personal attributes. In 1988, Jesse Jackson, a black, won 29 percent of the presidential primary votes in the Democratic party and captured 27 percent of the delegates before losing the nomination to Michael Dukakis. Whichever party nominates the first black candidate may also pay a price at the polls.

Issues and Policies

Choosing between candidates according to personal attributes might be defended, but it is not rational voting according to democratic theory. That theory insists that citizens should vote according to the candidates' past performance and proposed policies. The candidates clearly differed on their policies in the presidential election of 1988. Michael Dukakis, trying to recapture the presidency for the Democrats, stressed the government's responsibility to provide "good jobs for good wages." George Bush, seeking to retain the office for the Republicans, charged that his opponent was a spendthrift liberal who would surely raise taxes.

Voters who choose between candidates on the basis of their policies are voting "on the issues." Unfortunately for democratic theory, most studies of presidential elections show that issues are less important than either party identification or the candidate's image when people cast

their ballots. Only in 1972, when voters perceived George McGovern as too liberal for their tastes, did issue voting exceed party identification in importance.³⁷ Even that year, issues were less important than the candidate's image. According to polls taken at the time, voters saw McGovern as weak and uncertain, Nixon as strong and (ironically) highly principled.³⁸

Still, there has been an increase in issue voting since the 1950s. Moreover, there is a closer alignment now between voters' positions on the issues and their party identification. For example, Democratic party identifiers—who are more likely than Republican identifiers to describe themselves as liberal—are now even more likely than Republican identifiers to favor government spending for social welfare and abortions. The more closely party identification is aligned with ideological orientation, the more sense it makes to vote by party. In the absence of detailed information about candidates' positions on the issues, party labels are a handy indicator of those positions.

Voting for Congress

The candidates for the presidency are listed at the top of the ballot in a presidential election, followed by candidates for other national, state, and local offices. A voter is said to vote a **straight ticket** when he or she chooses only one party's candidates for all the offices. A voter who switches parties when choosing candidates for different offices is said to vote a **split ticket**. This voter might choose a Republican for president but cross over to the Democratic side of the ballot and vote for a Democratic member of Congress running for re-election.

As party identification has dropped off, the amount of split-ticket voting has increased, from about 30 percent of the voters in 1952 to more than half the voters in 1984. Split-ticket voting accounts for the Republicans' failure to win control of the House of Representatives in 1984, despite the fact that Reagan carried all but one state in the presidential election. Many who voted for Reagan crossed over to vote for incumbent Democratic representatives. A total of 254 of the 435 congressional contests in 1984 pitted Democratic incumbents against Republican challengers, and 241 (98 percent) of the Democratic incumbents won.

We offer a full explanation of the high rate of re-election for congressional incumbents in Chapter 10. In a nutshell, members of Congress have learned to use their powers of office to develop favorable impressions of themselves and their service to their districts. As a result, voting for congressional candidates has become increasingly detached from voting for presidents.

POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE MODELS OF DEMOCRACY

The importance of political parties in democratic government depends on the model of democracy we choose. Political parties as agents of government are much more important to the majoritarian model of democracy than to the pluralist model.

Parties and the Majoritarian Model

According to the majoritarian model of democracy, parties are essential to making the government responsive to public opinion. In fact, the ideal role of parties in majoritarian democracy has been formalized in the four principles of **responsible party government**.³⁹

1. Parties should present clear and coherent programs to voters.
2. Voters should choose candidates according to the party programs.
3. The winning party should carry out its program once in office.
4. Voters should hold the governing party responsible at the next election for executing its program.

How well are these principles being met in American politics? You've learned that the Democratic and Republican platforms are different and that they are much more ideologically consistent than many people believe. So the first principle is being met fairly well. The second principle is being met only partially. Most voters do have longstanding party identifications, which explain a great deal of their candidate choice. Although this is not the same thing as choosing candidates according to their party programs, the alignment of party identifiers according to liberal-conservative ideology is fairly strong and increasing. However, the relationship between party identification and voting choice is often stronger in presidential than in congressional elections.

The third principle—that the winning party should carry out its program—is the least applicable to American party politics. Regardless of which party wins the presidency, the president cannot count on his party members in Congress to vote solidly for his program. As we discuss in Chapter 10, members of Congress cater to their constituents in order to ensure their re-election. Accordingly, they often vote against their party's position when they think a law will harm their district or state. In truth, political parties in America are too decentralized to enforce party discipline in congressional voting. Congressional candidates win nomination on their own by contesting primary elections, and they win elections mainly by raising their own funds and by running their own campaigns. The conditions for party discipline simply are not adequate to force members of Congress either to support or oppose a president's program, as we saw in the case of Phil Gramm at the beginning of this chapter.

The fourth principle—that voters should hold the governing party accountable in the next election for executing the party program—also does not apply in American politics. In fact, the party program tends to fade from sight soon after the convention that wrote the platform. The platform represents the views of the delegates to the party convention; it may not reflect the views of the party's nominee for president. After the election, the winning candidate presents his own legislative program, which may emphasize certain planks more than others and may neglect some entirely. Neither national party organization in America would pretend to force its platform on its winning presidential candidate. It is the *president's* legislative program, not the party's platform, that party members in Congress are asked to support. And the next presidential

election becomes a referendum not so much on party government as on presidential government.

Parties and the Pluralist Model

The way parties in the United States operate is more in keeping with the pluralist model of democracy than with the majoritarian model. Our parties are not the basic mechanisms through which citizens control their government; instead, they function as two giant interest groups. They press their own interests (electing and re-electing their candidates) in competition with other groups in the swirl of pluralist politics. Parties repeatedly bargain away platform principles for short-term electoral gains.

Some scholars believe that stronger parties would contribute more to democratic government than our present weak ones, even if American parties could not then meet all the requirements of the responsible party model.⁴⁰ Although our parties today perform valuable functions structuring the vote and proposing alternative government policies, stronger parties might be able to play a more valuable role in coordinating government policies.

SUMMARY

Political parties perform four important functions in a political system: nominating candidates, structuring the voting choice, proposing alternative government programs, and coordinating the activities of government officials. Political parties have been performing these functions longer in the United States than in any other country. The Democratic party, founded in 1828, is the world's oldest political party. When the Republican party emerged as a major party after the 1856 election, it joined the Democrats to produce our present two-party system—the oldest party system in the world.

America's two-party system has experienced three critical elections, each of which realigned the electorate for years and affected the party balance in government. The election of 1860 established the Republicans as the major party in the North and the Democrats as the dominant party in the South. Nationally, the two parties were roughly balanced in Congress until the critical election of 1896. This election strengthened the link between the Republican party and business interests in the heavily populated Northeast and Midwest and produced a surge in voter support that made the Republicans the majority party nationally for more than three decades. The Great Depression produced conditions for the critical election of 1932, which transformed the Democrats into

the majority party, giving them almost uninterrupted control of Congress since then.

Minor parties have not enjoyed much electoral success in America, although they have contributed ideas to the Democratic and Republican platforms. The two-party system is perpetuated in the United States because of the nature of our electoral system and the political socialization process, which results in most Americans' identifying with either the Democratic or the Republican party. The federal system of government has also helped the Democrats and Republicans survive major national defeats by sustaining them with electoral victories at the state level. However, the pattern of party identification has been changing in recent years: As more people are becoming independents and Republicans, the number of Democratic identifiers is dropping.

Party identifiers, party activists, and party platforms show consistent differences in ideological orientations between the two major parties. Democratic identifiers and activists are more likely to describe themselves as liberal; Republican identifiers and activists tend to be conservative. The 1988 Democratic party platform also showed a more liberal orientation by stressing equality over freedom; the Republican platform was more conservative, concentrating on freedom but also emphasizing the importance of restoring social order. Organizationally, the Republicans have recently become the stronger party at both

national and state levels, but both parties are very decentralized compared with parties in other countries.

The successful candidate for public office usually must campaign first to win the party nomination, then to win the general election. A major factor in the decentralization of American parties is their reliance on primary elections to nominate candidates. Candidates who have to campaign for the party nomination owe little to the party organization and retain their own campaign staffs to help them win the general election. The dynamics of campaign financing also force candidates to rely mainly on their own resources or—in the case of presidential elections—on public funds. Party organizations contribute relatively little toward campaign expenses.

The voting choice can be analyzed in terms of party identification, candidates' attributes, and policy positions. Party identification is still the most important long-term factor in shaping the voting decision, but few candidates rely on party in their campaigns. Most candidates today run personalized campaigns that stress their attributes or their policies. In particular, votes for congressional candidates are tied to the personal relationships that incumbents have forged with their constituents. The high rate of re-election for incumbent members of Congress helps insulate them from party pressures in policymaking.

American parties do not fulfill the ideals of responsible party government that fit the majoritarian model of democracy. In particular, the parties are weak in carrying out their programs once in office, which makes it difficult for voters to hold them accountable at the next election. American parties are better suited to the pluralist model of democracy, which sees them as major interest groups competing with lesser groups to further their own interests.

Are America's parties carrying out their major functions? For the most part, yes. They do well nominating candidates and very well structuring the vote. Their record formulating alternative government programs is not as good. And they have very little control over the actions of officials in government. But political parties at least aspire to the noble goal of representing the needs and wants of most of the people. As we see in the next chapter, interest groups do not even pretend as much.

Key Terms

political party
nominate
political system
electoral college

caucus
national convention
party platform
critical election

electoral realignment
two-party system
majority party
minority party
electoral dealignment
bolter party
farmer-labor party
party of ideological protest
single-issue party
single-member district
proportional representation
party identification
national committee
congressional campaign organization

party machine
electoral campaign
primary election
closed primary
open primary
blanket primary
presidential primary
party caucus
general election
incumbent
Federal Election Commission (FEC)
straight ticket
split ticket
responsible party government

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9

Interest Groups

Interest Groups and the American Political Tradition

Interest Groups: Good or Evil? • The Roles of Interest Groups

How Interest Groups Form

Interest Group Entrepreneurs • Who Is Being Organized?

Interest Group Resources

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The Growth of Interest Group Politics

The Public Interest Movement • Business Lobbies

Interest Groups: An Evaluation

Regulation • Campaign Financing

Digital audio tape recorders (DATs) use computerized digital technology to produce recordings that are as perfect as the source. If you recorded a friend's record, tape, or compact disk (CD), the copy would be as good as the original, for only the cost of a blank tape. Although DATs are available in Japan and Europe, they are not yet being marketed in America. It's not because the Japanese manufacturers don't think they can sell them here; it's because a fight between competing interest groups has stopped them from trying.

When the Japanese companies first brought out DATs, the American music industry cried "foul" and the Recording Industry Association of America began lobbying Congress to place restrictions on the machines. They were afraid that sales of existing records, tapes, and CDs would be hurt by high-quality DAT copies. Testifying before a congressional committee looking at the DAT problem, country singer Emmylou Harris identified the issue for performers: "Maybe people think they're flattering us by copying our music. But the simple truth is they're choking off our livelihood."¹ The music industry advocated legislation that would require DATs be equipped with copy-code scanners that would effectively prevent the machines from making usable copies. Original recordings would be manufactured with tiny slices of sound missing—so small that the lapses would be inaudible to the human ear. A computer chip in the modified DAT would recognize these gaps, however, and would shut down the machine for twenty-five seconds every time it came across one. The recorded tapes—with their periodic lengthy silences—would be useless.

Not surprisingly, electronics retailers and consumer groups didn't like this proposal, and they too began to lobby Congress. Retailers knew there would be little market for the expensive machines if their taping capabilities were limited. Consumers would be denied a new technology, and music lovers were appalled at the idea of recordings that had even the tiniest bits of electronic blank spots. The Home Recording Rights Coalition vigorously opposed congressional sanctions against DATs. By spring 1988, the issue had not been resolved in Congress, and manufacturers were still unwilling to try to sell the DATs in the United States when their future here was so uncertain.

The DAT example illustrates some of the basic dynamics of interest group politics. At the heart of pluralist politics are groups fighting for their own narrow interests. Here, the recording industry was on one side, while retailers and manufacturers lined up on the other. The DAT example also shows how the interests of lobbying organizations are sometimes pitted against majoritarian interests. Should we try to protect recording artists and companies from high-quality copying as a matter of fairness? Or should we do what's best for consumers—the majoritarian interest—by allowing them to purchase an excellent product that is available in other countries?

The clash of interest groups (lobbies) may be visibly manifested in the struggle of different lobbyists to persuade government officials of the rightness of their views. We are interested in the lobbyists' activity because they work to get their constituents' views before those in government. In analyzing the process by which interest groups and lobbyists

come to speak on behalf of different groups, we focus on a number of questions. How do interest groups form? Who do they represent? What tactics do they use to convince policymakers that their views are best for the nation? Why has the number of interest groups grown so rapidly in recent years? And what is the impact of that growth?

INTEREST GROUPS AND THE AMERICAN POLITICAL TRADITION

An **interest group** is "an organized body of individuals who share some goals and who try to influence public policy."² Among the most prominent interest groups in the United States are the AFL-CIO (representing labor union members), the American Farm Bureau Federation (representing farmers), the Chamber of Commerce (representing businesspeople), and Common Cause (representing citizens concerned with reforming government). Interest groups are also called **lobbies**, and their representatives are referred to as **lobbyists**.

Interest Groups: Good or Evil?

A recurring debate in American politics concerns the role of interest groups in a democratic society. Are interest groups a threat to the well-being of the political system? Or do they contribute to its proper functioning? A favorable early evaluation of interest groups can be found in the writings of Alexis de Tocqueville, a French visitor to the United States in the early nineteenth century. During his travels, Tocqueville marveled at the array of organizations he found, and he later wrote that "Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions, constantly form associations" (see *Compared With What?* 9.1).³ Tocqueville was suggesting that the ease with which we form organizations reflects a strong democratic culture.

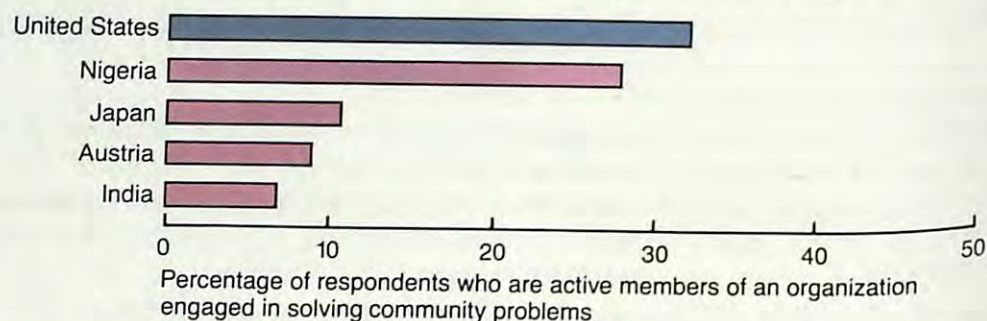
James Madison offered a different perspective. Writing in the *Federalist Papers*, he warned of the dangers of "factions," the major divisions in American society. In "Federalist No. 10," written in 1787, Madison said that it was inevitable that substantial differences would develop between factions. It was only natural that farmers would come to oppose merchants; tenants, landlords; and so on. Madison further reasoned that each faction would do what it could to prevail over other factions, that each basic interest in society would try to persuade government to adopt policies that favored it at the expense of others. He noted that the fundamental causes of faction were "sown in the nature of man."

But Madison argued against trying to suppress factions. He concluded that factions can be eliminated only by removing our freedoms: "Liberty is to faction what air is to fire." Instead, Madison suggested that "relief" from the self-interested advocacy of factions should come only through controlling the *effects* of that advocacy. This relief would be provided by a democratic republic in which government would mediate between opposing factions. The structure of government would also ensure that even a majority faction could never come to suppress the rights of others.⁴

COMPARED WITH WHAT? 9.1

Membership in Groups

Alexis de Tocqueville's observation that "Americans form associations for the smallest undertakings" may be an exaggeration, but Americans do seem to join groups in greater proportions than the people of other countries.*



* Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Richard D. Heffner (New York: Mentor, 1956), p. 36.

Source: Sidney Verba, Norman H. Nie, and Jae-On Kim, *The Modes of Democratic Participation: A Cross-National Comparison* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: SAGE, 1971), p. 36. © 1971 Sage Publications Inc.

How we judge interest groups—"good" or "evil"—depends on how strongly we are committed to freedom or equality (see Chapter 1). Giving people the freedom to organize lobbies does not guarantee that they will all end up with equally powerful interest groups acting on their behalf. Judgment is also influenced by whether we believe democracy works best if it abides by majoritarian or by pluralist principles (see Chapter 2). We return to these broader questions of democratic theory after looking at the operation of interest groups more closely.

The Roles of Interest Groups

The "evil" side of interest group politics is all too apparent. Each group pushes its own selfish interests, which, despite the group's claims to the contrary, are not always in the best interest of other Americans. The "good" side of interest group advocacy may not be as clear. How do the actions of interest groups benefit our political system?⁵

Representation. Interest groups *represent* people before their government. Just as a member of Congress represents a particular constituency, so does a lobbyist. A lobbyist for the National Association of Broadcasters, for example, speaks for the interests of radio and television broadcasters when Congress or a government agency is considering a relevant policy decision.

Whatever the political interest—the cement industry, excise taxes, endangered species—it is helpful to have an active lobby operating in Washington. Members of Congress represent a multitude of interests—

some of them conflicting—from their own districts and states. Government administrators, too, are pulled in different directions and have their own policy preferences. Interest groups articulate their members' concerns, presenting them directly and forcefully in the political forum.

Participation. Interest groups are also vehicles for political *participation*. They provide a means by which like-minded citizens can pool their resources and channel their energies into collective political action. And people band together because they know it is much easier to get government to listen to a group than to an individual. One farmer fighting for more generous price supports probably will not get very far; but thousands of farmers united in an organization stand a much better chance of getting policymakers to consider their needs.

Education. As part of their efforts at lobbying and increasing their membership, interest groups help *educate* their members, the public at large, and government officials. In 1987, when President Reagan nominated Judge Robert Bork for a seat on the Supreme Court, liberal and conservative citizen groups engaged in a spirited—some would say mean-spirited—effort to educate the American public about the nominee. Us-

Do I Look Like a Lobbyist to You?
Probably not, but this ad is a form of lobbying. It aims to convince people that legal abortion is an important option by arguing that it would be foolish for someone so young to raise a child. Through its use of a clean-cut, girl-next-door type, the ad also suggests that teenage pregnancy is not a problem that "happens only to other people."



"Do I look like a mother to you?"

She does if you look at the statistics. The United States is the only industrialized nation where the teenage pregnancy rate is going up. Forty percent of all girls who are now fourteen will get pregnant before they're eighteen. One million each year.

The social consequences are enormous. Because most teenage mothers are single mothers, trapped in a cycle of poverty that costs billions extra each year. In malnutrition. Disease. Unemployment. Child abuse. But the tragic effects of motherhood on each individual teenager can't be measured in dollars and cents. And it isn't reflected in the statistics. She's robbed of her childhood and her hope.

While we must do everything we can to help prevent unwanted pregnancy, we must also preserve the option of safe, legal abortion.

A teenage girl shouldn't be forced to become a mother if she's not ready. But there's an increasingly vocal and violent minority that disagrees. They want to outlaw abortions for all women, regardless of circumstances. Even if her life or health is endangered by a pregnancy. Even if she is a victim of rape or incest. And even if she is too young to be a mother. They're pressuring lawmakers to make abortions illegal. And that's not all. They also oppose birth control and sex education—ways of preventing abortion. They've already tried to slash federal funding for these and other family planning programs. And to get their way, they've resorted to threats, physical intimidation and violence. Speak out now. Or they just might succeed. Use the coupon.

The decision is yours.

☐ I've written my representatives in Congress to tell them I support government programs that reduce the need for abortion by preventing unwanted pregnancy, and keeping safe and legal abortion a choice for all women.

☐ Here's my tax-deductible contribution in support of all Planned Parenthood activities and programs. ☐ \$25 ☐ \$35 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$75 ☐ \$150 ☐ \$500 ☐ or \$_____

NAME _____
STREET/PO BOX _____

Planned Parenthood
Federation of America, Inc.
810 Seventh Avenue
New York, New York 10019

ing advertisements, each side tried to show what the "real" Bork record told us about what kind of Supreme Court justice he was likely to be. Interest groups give only their side of the "facts," but they do bring more information out into the open to be digested and evaluated by the public.

Agenda building. In a related role, interest groups bring new issues into the political limelight, through a process called **agenda building**. There are many problem areas in American society, but not all of them are being addressed by public officials. Interest groups make the government aware of problems through their advocacy, then try to see to it that something is done to solve them. After videocassette recorders (VCRs) became popular in the United States, competing lobbies raised a number of questions about copyright law and royalty payments to movie studios. The Motion Picture Association of America and the Electronic Industries Association (the trade group for VCR manufacturers) brought these issues to the fore by pressing Congress for action.⁶

Program monitoring. Finally, interest groups engage in **program monitoring**. In other words, they follow government programs important to their constituents, keeping abreast of developments in Washington and in the local communities where policies are implemented. When problems emerge, interest groups push administrators to resolve them in ways that promote the group's goals. They draw attention to agency officials' transgressions and even file suit to stop actions they consider unlawful. When the U.S. Department of Agriculture reduced food stamp benefits on the order of President Gerald Ford, the Food Research and Action Center acted on behalf of program recipients and took the department to court. The court sided with the lobby, and the original benefits were reinstated.

Interest groups do, then, play some positive roles in their pursuit of self-interest. But it is too soon to assume that the positive side of interest groups neatly balances the negative. Questions remain to be answered about the overall impact of interest groups on public policymaking. Most important, are the effects of interest group advocacy being controlled, as Madison believed they should be?

HOW INTEREST GROUPS FORM

Do some people form interest groups more easily than others? Are some factions represented while others are not? Pluralists assume that when a political issue arises, interest groups with relevant policy concerns begin to lobby. Policy conflicts are ultimately resolved through bargaining and negotiation between the involved organizations and government. Unlike Madison, who dwelled on the potential for harm by factions, pluralists believe interest groups are a good thing, that they further democracy by broadening representation within the system.

An important part of pluralism is the belief that new interest groups form as a matter of course when the need arises. David Truman outlined this idea in his classic work *The Governmental Process*.⁷ He said that when individuals are threatened by change, they band together in an

interest group. For example, if government threatens to regulate a particular industry, the firms comprising that industry will start a trade association to protect their financial well-being. Truman saw a direct cause-and-effect relationship in all of this: Existing groups stand in equilibrium until some type of disturbance (such as falling wages or declining farm prices) forces new groups to form.

Truman's thinking on the way interest groups form is like the "invisible hand" notion of classical economics: Self-correcting market forces will remedy imbalances in the marketplace. But in politics there is no invisible hand, no force that automatically causes interest groups to develop. Truman's disturbance theory paints an idealized portrait of interest group politics in America. In real life, people do not automatically organize when they are adversely affected by some disturbance. A good example of this "nonorganization" can be found in Herbert Gans's book *The Urban Villagers*.⁸ Gans, a sociologist, moved into the West End, a low-income neighborhood in Boston, during the late 1950s. The neighborhood had been targeted for urban redevelopment; the city was planning to replace existing buildings with modern ones. This meant that the people living there—primarily poor Italian-Americans who very much liked their neighborhood—would have to move.

Few things in life are less pleasant than being evicted, so the situation in the West End certainly qualified as a bona fide disturbance in Truman's scheme of interest group formation. Yet the people of the West End barely put up a fight to save their neighborhood. An organization was started but attracted little support. Residents remained unorganized; soon they were moved and buildings were demolished.

Disturbance theory clearly fails to explain what happened in Boston's West End. An adverse condition or change does not automatically mean that an interest group will form. What, then, is the missing ingredient? Political scientist Robert Salisbury says that the quality of interest group leadership may be the crucial factor.⁹

Interest Group Entrepreneurs

Salisbury likens the role of an interest group leader to that of an entrepreneur in the business world. An entrepreneur is someone who starts new enterprises, usually at considerable personal financial risk. Salisbury says that an **interest group entrepreneur** or organizer succeeds or fails for many of the same reasons a business entrepreneur succeeds or fails. The interest group entrepreneur must have something attractive to "market" in order to convince members to join.¹⁰ Potential members must be persuaded that the benefits of joining outweigh the costs. Some one starting up a new union, for example, must convince workers that the union can win them wages high enough to offset their membership dues. The organizer of an ideological group must convince potential members that the group can effectively lobby the government to achieve their particular goals.

The development of the United Farm Workers Union shows the importance of leadership in an interest group's formation. This union is made up of men and women who pick crops in California and other parts of the Southwest. The work is backbreaking, performed in a hot, desert

climate. The pickers are predominantly poor uneducated Mexican-Americans.

Their chronically low wages and deplorable living conditions made these farm workers prime candidates for organization into a labor union. And throughout the twentieth century, there had been efforts to organize the pickers. Yet for many reasons, including distrust of union organizers, intimidation by employers, and lack of money to pay union dues, all had failed. Then, in 1962, Cesar Chavez, a poor Mexican-American, began to crisscross the Central Valley of California, talking to workers and planting the idea of a union. Chavez had been a farm worker himself (he first worked as a picker at the age of ten), and he was well aware of the difficulties that lay ahead for his newly organized union.

After a strike against grape growers failed in 1965, Chavez changed his tactics of trying to build a stronger union merely through recruiting a larger membership. Copying the black civil rights movement, Chavez and his followers marched 250 miles to the state capitol in Sacramento to demand help from the governor. This march and other nonviolent tactics began to draw sympathy from people who had no direct involvement in farming. The Catholic clergy was a major source of support, seeing the movement as a way to help poor members of the church. This support, in turn, gave the charismatic Chavez greater credibility, and his followers cast him in the role of spiritual as well as political leader. At one point, he fasted for twenty-five days to show his commitment to nonviolence. Democratic Senator Robert Kennedy of New York, one of the most popular politicians of the day, joined Chavez when he broke his fast at a mass conducted on the back of a flatbed truck in Delano, California.¹¹

Cesar Chavez

Although many efforts had been made to organize migrant farm workers, none succeeded until Chavez's inspired leadership brought the United Farm Workers Union into existence. Growers bitterly resisted the unionization efforts, but economic pressures finally led many of them to the bargaining table. In this 1987 speech, Chavez described a three-year-old boycott of table grapes, designed to stop growers from using pesticides that endanger field workers.



Chavez, now a strong respected leader, called for a boycott. A small but significant number of Americans stopped buying grapes. The growers, who had bitterly fought the union, were finally hurt in their wallets. Under other economic pressure, they eventually agreed to recognize and bargain with the United Farm Workers Union. The union, in turn, helped its members through the wage and benefit agreements it negotiated.

Who Is Being Organized?

The case of Cesar Chavez is a good example of the importance of leadership in the formation of a new interest group. Despite many years of adverse conditions, efforts to organize the farm workers had failed. The dynamic leadership of Cesar Chavez is what seems to have made the difference.

But another important element is at work in the formation of interest groups. The residents of Boston's West End and the farm workers in California were poor, uneducated or undereducated, and politically inexperienced—factors that made it extremely difficult to organize them into interest groups. If they had been well-to-do, educated, and politically experienced, they probably would have banded together immediately. People who have money, are educated, and know how the system operates are more confident that their actions can make a difference. Together, these attributes give people more incentive to devote their time and ample resources to organizing and supporting interest groups.

Every existing interest group has its own unique history. Yet the three variables that we have discussed help explain why groups may or may not become fully organized. First, an adverse change or disturbance can contribute to people's awareness that they need political representation. However, change alone does not ensure that an organization will form. Second, organizations have formed in the absence of disturbance. Finally, the quality of leadership is critical in the organization of interest groups. Some interest group entrepreneurs are more skilled at convincing people to join their organizations. Finally, the higher the socioeconomic level of potential members, the more likely they are to know the value of interest groups and to participate in politics by joining them.

Because wealthy and better-educated Americans are more likely to form and join lobbies, they seem to have an important advantage in the political process. Nevertheless, as the United Farm Workers case shows, poor and uneducated people are also capable of forming interest groups. The question that remains, then, is not *whether* various opposing interests are represented but *how well* they are represented. Or, in terms of Madison's premise in "Federalist No. 10," are the effects of faction—in this case, the advantages of the wealthy and well educated—being controlled? Before we can answer this question, we need to turn our attention to the resources available to interest groups.

INTEREST GROUP RESOURCES

The strengths, capabilities, and effects of an interest group depend in large part on its resources. A group's most significant resources are its

members, lobbyists, and money, including funds that can be contributed to political candidates. The sheer quantity of a group's resources is important, and so is the wisdom with which its resources are used.

Members

One of the most valuable resources an interest group can have is a large, politically active membership. If a lobbyist is trying to convince a legislator to support a particular bill, it is tremendously helpful to have a large group of members living in the legislator's home district or state. A legislator who has not already taken a firm position on a bill might be swayed by the knowledge that voters back home are kept informed by interest groups of votes on key issues. The National Rifle Association (NRA) is an effective interest group on Capitol Hill because its 3 million members care very deeply about gun control. Members of Congress know that the NRA keeps its members informed on how each senator and representative votes on proposed gun control bills, and many of those members might be influenced by that information when they go to the polls.

Members give an organization not only the political muscle to influence policy, but also financial resources. The more money an organization can collect through dues and contributions, the more people it can hire to lobby government officials and monitor the policymaking process (see Figure 9.1). Greater resources also allow the organization to communicate with its members more and to inform them better. And funding helps the group maintain its membership and attract new members.

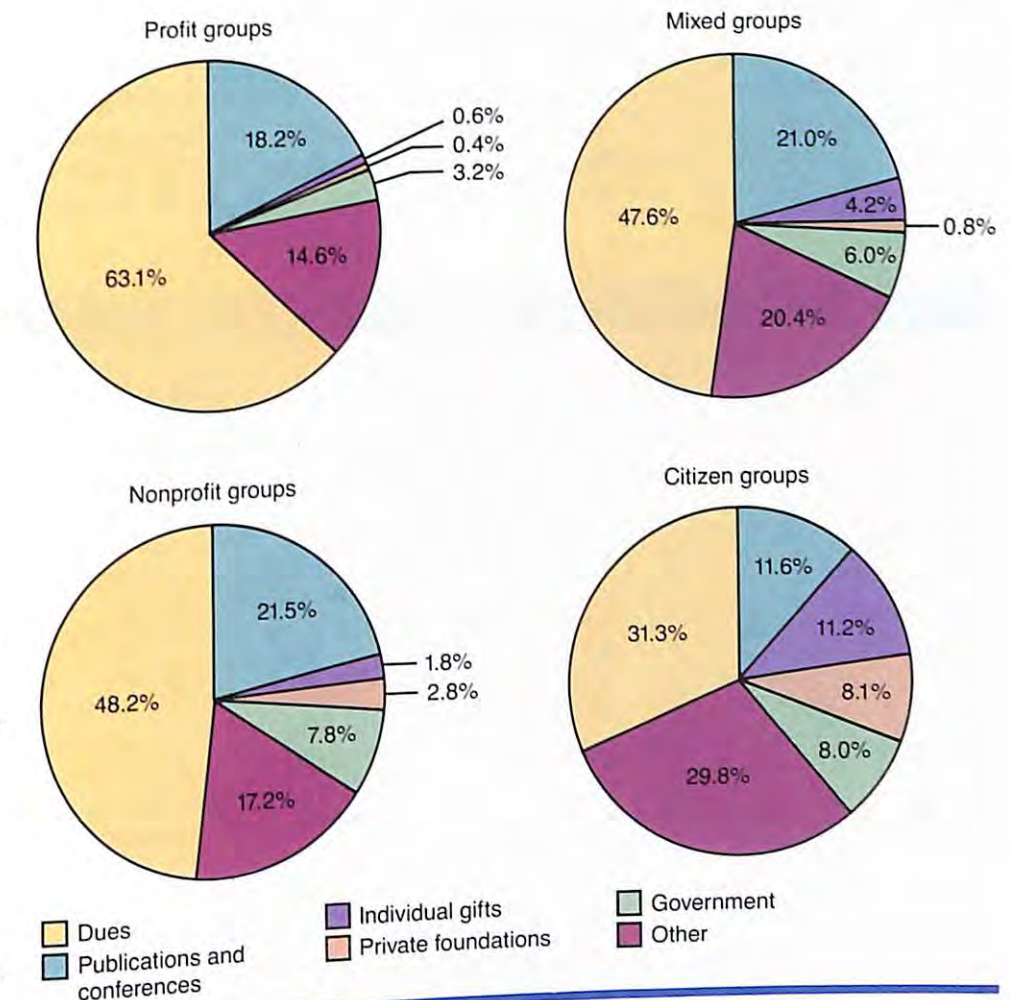
Maintaining membership. To keep the members it already has, an organization must persuade them that it is doing a good job in its advocacy efforts. A major tool for shoring up support among members is a newsletter or magazine. Through publications, members are informed and reminded about the organization's activities. Executives whose corporations belong to the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) receive *Enterprise*, a business magazine; *Briefing*, a weekly newsletter that focuses on legislative and regulatory action in Washington; and the two-page *Issue Briefs*, which summarizes current public policy disputes. Members also have access, through a toll-free number, to recordings that describe matters of immediate concern to the NAM. Most lobbies provide more modest offerings for their members, but they usually have at least a newsletter.

Business, professional, and labor associations generally have an easier time holding onto members than do **citizen groups**—groups whose basis of organization is a concern for issues that are not related to the members' jobs. In many corporations, membership in a trade group constitutes only a minor business expense. Large individual corporations have no memberships as such, but they often open up their own lobbying offices in Washington. They have the advantage of being able to utilize institutional financial resources; they do not have to rely on voluntary contributions.¹² Labor unions are helped in states where workers are required to belong to the union that is the bargaining agent with their employer.

Where the Money Comes From

The charts show the proportion of funds derived from different sources during 1985 for various types of interest groups. Profit groups are those whose members are in profit-making enterprises, such as business trade groups. Nonprofit groups are those whose members work in the nonprofit sector. Mixed groups have members in roughly equal proportions from the profit and nonprofit sectors. Citizen groups are organized on the basis of a political cause rather than the employment of their members. (Source: Mark A. Peterson and Jack L. Walker, "Interest Group Responses to Partisan Change," in *Interest Group Politics*, 2d ed., ed. Allan J. Cigler and Burdett A. Loomis [Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1986], p. 174.)

Figure 9.1



Citizen groups, on the other hand, base their appeal on members' ideological sentiments. These groups face a difficult challenge: Issues can blow hot and cold, and a particularly hot issue one year may not hold the same interest to citizens the next.

Attracting new members. All interest groups are constantly looking for new members to expand their resources and clout. Groups that rely on ideological appeals have a special problem because the competition in most policy areas is intense. People concerned about the environment, for example, can join a seemingly infinite number of local, state, and national groups. The National Wildlife Federation, Environmental Action, the Environmental Defense Fund, the Natural Resources Defense Council, Friends of the Earth, the Wilderness Society, the Sierra Club, and the Environmental Policy Center are just a few of the national organizations that lobby on environmental issues.

One method of attracting new members that is being used more and more is **direct mail**—letters sent to a selected audience to promote the organization and to appeal for contributions. The key to direct mail is a carefully targeted audience. An organization can purchase a list of people

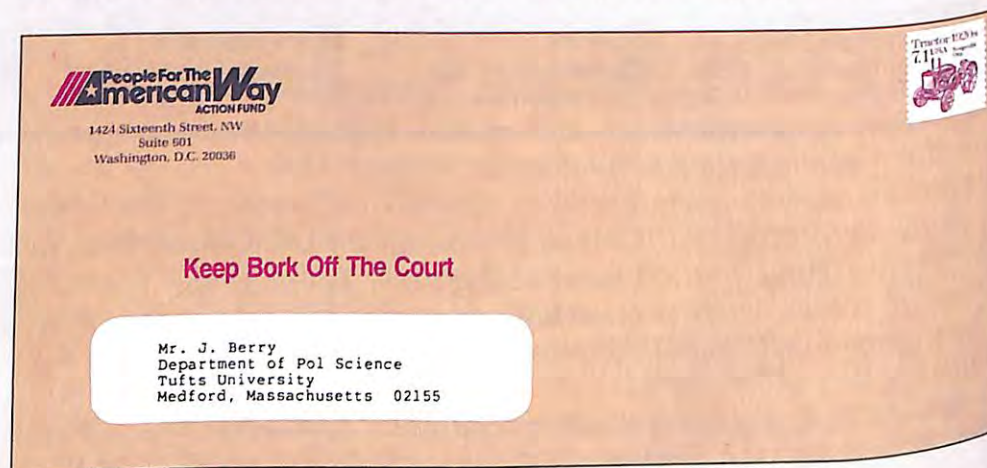
who are likely to be sympathetic to its cause or trade lists with a similar organization. A group trying to fight legalized abortion, for instance, might use a subscription list from the conservative magazine *National Review*, while a prochoice lobby might use that of the liberal *New Republic*. The main drawbacks to direct mail are its expense and low rate of return. A response rate of 2 percent of all those who receive

POLITICS IN THE INFORMATION AGE 9.1

Direct Mail: Your Letter Has to Grab 'Em

People are flooded with direct mail from interest groups, politicians, and charities. Whatever the organizations' cause, the letters are all trying to do the same thing: get you to part with your hard-earned cash. In this competitive environment, letters not only must be distinctive, but they must pull at your emotions so that your desire to help overcomes your desire to save your money. Look at how the civil liberties group People for the American Way Action Fund designed an appeal mailed out to thousands of prospective donors during the confirmation fight over Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork.

The first goal of a direct-mail package is to get people to open it rather than just toss it unopened into the wastebasket with other "junk mail." Consequently, envelopes often use a tease to entice readers into finding out what's in them. Here the tease is relatively straightforward: If you care about keeping Bork off the Court, you ought to open this up. The color of the envelope suggests something "official," adding to the urgency of what's inside.



Direct-mail letters are successful if they engage the reader. The goal is to make you care about the issue discussed. This letter begins with a couple of quotations that should upset civil libertarians. Later in the letter, readers are told that Bork rejects conventional views on the right to privacy, has criticized decisions favorable to women and minorities, and holds a restrictive view of the First Amendment. Letters are typically long—this one is six single-spaced pages—and packed with specifics. By the end of the letter, the reader should be so moved that he or she pulls out the checkbook.

Groups often try to validate their appeal by including an article from an outside source that confirms the point they are trying to make. Here an editorial from the *Austin American-Statesman* is included to reinforce the message in the letter.

membership or donation appeals is considered good. If the response rate falls below that level, costs usually exceed the money returned. To maximize the chances of a good return, care and thought are given to the design and content of letters (see Politics in the Information Age 9.1). Letters often try to play on the reader's emotions, to create the feeling that the reader should be personally involved in the struggle.¹³



Arthur J. Kropp
Executive Director

"Conservatives have waited over thirty years for this. . . . [Bork's nomination] is the most exciting news for conservatives since President Reagan's re-election."

-- Richard Viguerie, Right Wing Leader

"The Bork nomination is another part of the Reagan Revolution . . . politically, it gives us a cause."

-- Frank Donatelli, White House Political Director

Dear Friend,

Leaders of the Far Right can scarcely hide their glee over Robert Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court.

And it's no wonder.

Bork is their best hope to ensure that their political agenda will live on even after Ronald Reagan leaves office.

In a sense, Robert Bork will be the Reagan Revolution's living legacy -- for years to come. And, frankly, the Right Wing couldn't have designed a more fitting legacy.

You see, like the Far Right, Judge Bork's views of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights are appallingly out of step with America -- 30 years behind the times.

Out of step with America's hard fought gains in the areas of civil rights, individual liberty and personal privacy.

Incredibly, Robert Bork has rejected the principle of "one man one vote" . . . Supreme Court decisions outlawing poll taxes . . . the right of married couples to buy contraceptives.

And, even in 1963, when it was critical for all men and women of conscience to stand up for civil rights, he opposed the right of blacks to be served by white-owned businesses.

The Far Right knows, and we too can be certain:

if Robert Bork becomes the critical "swing vote" on the Supreme Court, the extremists philosophy held by people like Attorney General Ed Meese will dominate America's highest court for decades to come.

That is why PEOPLE FOR THE AMERICAN WAY ACTION FUND has launched a \$1 million citizen mobilization campaign to "KEEP BORK OFF THE COURT."

(over, please)

1424 Sixteenth Street, N.W. Suite 601 Washington D.C. 20036 202 462-4777

(continued)

POLITICS IN THE INFORMATION AGE 9.1 (continued)

Page A14

Friday

July 10, 1987

Bork's ideology demands close nomination scrutiny

Senate Democrats apparently will throw down the gauntlet on the nomination of Robert Bork to the Supreme Court; considering the pivotal vote he would represent on the court, a thorough confirmation process is called for and, if senators ultimately decide Bork is too radical and would push the court too far to the right, they should not hesitate to refuse confirmation and demand that President Reagan come up with a less ideological nominee.

The Democrats said this week that confirmation hearings on the nomination will not begin until Sept. 15.

point of view."

And, historically, the Senate has refused to confirm one out of five nominations submitted for its "advice and consent," beginning with the second term of the administration of George Washington.

Indeed, in 1968, Sen. Strom Thurmond (who now wants the Senate to hurry up and confirm Bork) underscored the importance of careful scrutiny by the Senate of nominee Abe Fortas:

"Therefore, it is my contention that the power of the Senate to advise and consent to this appointment

Austin
American-
Statesman

REPLY MEMORANDUM

Keep Bork Off The Court

TO: PEOPLE FOR THE AMERICAN WAY ACTION FUND

Robert Bork is 30 years out of step with America—we **must stop** his confirmation to the Supreme Court. Please forward the two Congressional Communications I have signed below.

Enclosed is my contribution towards the Action Fund "Keep Bork Off The Court" campaign of

☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$35 ☐ \$25 ☐ Other \$ _____

Mr. J. Berry
Department of Pol Science
Tufts University
Medford, Massachusetts 02155

Please make check payable to PEOPLE FOR THE AMERICAN WAY ACTION FUND and return it with entire form to Post Office Box 96200, Washington, D.C. 20077-4627.

Q318

The free-rider problem. The need for aggressive marketing by interest groups suggests that it is not easy to get people who sympathize with a group's goals to actually join and support it with their contributions. Economists call this difficulty the **free-rider problem**, but we might call it, more colloquially, the "let George do it" problem.¹⁴ The funding for public television stations illustrates this dilemma. Almost all agree that public television, which survives in large part through viewers' contributions, is of great value. But only a fraction of those who watch public television contribute on a regular basis. Why? Because people can watch the programs whether or not they contribute. The free-rider has the same access to public television as the contributor.

The same problem crops up for interest groups. When a lobbying group wins benefits, those benefits are not restricted to members of the organization. For instance, if the American Business Conference wins a tax concession from Congress for capital expenditures, all businesses that fall within the provisions of the law can take advantage of the tax

KEEP BORK OFF THE COURT CAMPAIGN
SENATE APPEAL RESPONSE ENCLOSED
PLEASE OPEN IMMEDIATELY!



NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

FIRST CLASS PERMIT NO. 15227 WASHINGTON, D.C.

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

People For The
American Way

Post Office Box 96200
Washington, D.C. 20077-4627

A payment card is enclosed to ensure that donors are properly entered into the group's computerized records. The best prospects for a direct mailing are those who have given to the group before, so once a name goes on the house list, that person is solicited frequently by the organization.

The name of the recipient of this letter did not come from the house list, but from a list that People for the American Way rented from a direct-mail broker or other organization. When recruiting new members, like-minded organizations often trade or rent their members' names to each other. Note the source code "Q318" in the lower right-hand corner of the payment card. This is used to track how well the list works. If the list produces a strong response rate (usually 1 to 2 percent), it will be mailed again.

A return envelope rounds out the package. They want to make it easy for you. Just write a check!

Source: Reprinted with permission of People for the American Way. Reprinted with permission of the *Austin American-Statesman*, Copyright 1987.

break. Thus many business executives might not support their firms' joining the American Business Conference, even though they might benefit from its efforts; they prefer instead to let others shoulder the financial burden.

The free-rider problem increases the difficulty of attracting paying members, but it certainly does not make the task impossible. In fact, as we discuss below, the number of interest groups has grown significantly in recent years. Clearly, many people realize that if everyone decides to "let George do it," the job simply won't get done. Millions of Americans contribute to interest groups because they are concerned about an issue or feel a responsibility to help organizations that work on their behalf.¹⁵ Also, many organizations offer membership benefits that have nothing to do with politics or lobbying. Business trade associations, for example, are a source of information about industry trends and effective management practices; and they organize conventions where members can learn, socialize, and occasionally find new customers or suppliers.

Lobbyists

Part of the money raised by interest groups is used to pay lobbyists, who represent the organizations before government. Lobbyists make sure that people in government know what their members want and that their organizations know what government is doing (see Features 9.1 and 9.2). For example, when an administrative agency issues new regulations, lobbyists are right there to interpret the content and implications of the regulations for rank-and-file members. As William Utz of the National Shrimp Congress puts it, "The reaction time to new rules and regulations is faster if the headquarters is based in Washington. If you have an ear here, you can translate things as they happen."¹⁶

Lobbyists can be full-time employees of the organization or employees of public relations or law firms who are hired on retainer. When hiring a lobbyist, an interest group looks for someone who knows his or her way around Washington. Lobbyists are valued for their experience and knowledge of how government operates. Often they are people who

FEATURE 9.1

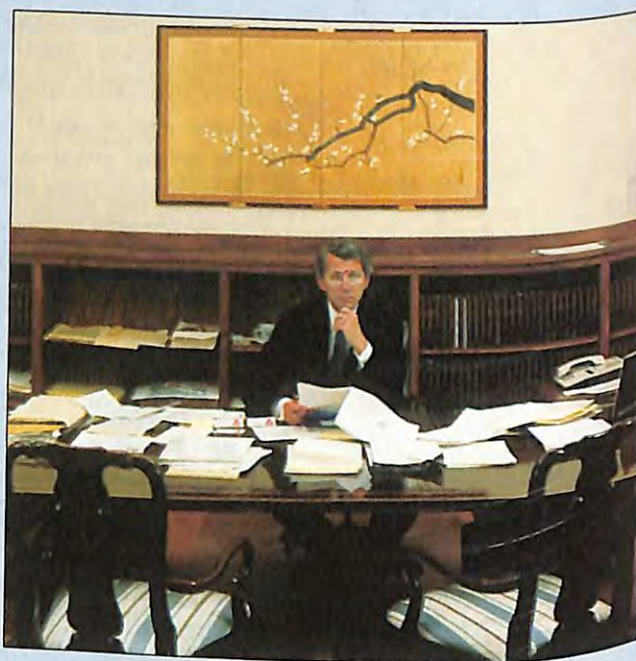
His Client: Japan, Inc.

When a Japanese company runs into a problem with the United States government, one person it's likely to call on for help is Stanton Anderson. Part lawyer, troubleshooter, and lobbyist, Anderson is very successful at all he does.

After graduating from college, Anderson became a Washington lobbyist for an aviation trade group. He also worked in Republican politics before pursuing a law degree. Later he gained invaluable experience working for the Commerce Department, where he held a high-ranking job doing congressional liaison.

In addition to being a senior partner in a law firm that he founded, Anderson is also head of Global USA, a lobbying firm. His Japanese clients include All Nippon Airways and high-tech companies like Fanuc Ltd. and Kyocera Corp. When clients like Japanese telecommunications companies are threatened with tariffs, Anderson devises strategies to convince members of Congress that a likely consequence of such a law would be retaliation by the Japanese government that would hurt American companies doing business there.

Anderson stresses that his job isn't just lobbying the United States government—he explains America to his foreign clients. Says Anderson, "I interpret things for my clients. They tend to want to solicit as much information as they can . . . I just happen to be a source."



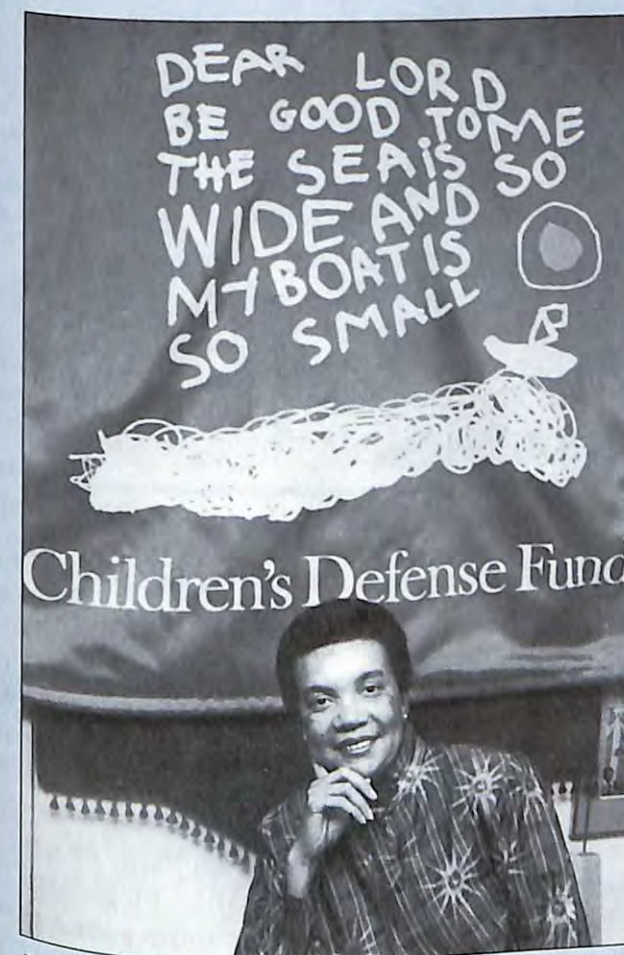
Stanton Anderson

Source: Clyde H. Farnsworth, "Japan's Top U.S. Lobbyist," *New York Times*, 2 June 1985, p. 6F; Kathryn Johnson, "How Foreign Powers Play For Status in Washington," *U.S. News and World Report*, 17 June 1985, pp. 35–40; and Eduardo Lachica, "Japanese Are Lobbying Hard in U.S. to Offset Big Protectionist Push," *Wall Street Journal*, 23 August 1985, p. 1.

FEATURE 9.2

Her Client: Poor Children

Marian Wright Edelman's constituents don't pay dues to her organization. They don't read newsletters that explain what her organization is doing for



Marian Wright Edelman

them. Indeed, precious few of this country's poor youth have ever heard of the Children's Foundation.

The Children's Foundation lobbies on behalf of a variety of health and social service issues, including family planning to prevent teenage pregnancy. Edelman knows the numbing statistics all too well: Every year 1.1 million teenage girls get pregnant. This figure includes 125,000 girls fifteen years old or younger. The poorest girls are the most likely to get pregnant.

The daughter of a small-town Baptist minister in South Carolina, Edelman went to Spellman College and Yale Law School. She worked as a civil rights lawyer for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund in Mississippi before coming to Washington. She founded the Children's Defense Fund in 1973 and has built it into a respected organization with an annual budget of \$4.4 million and a staff of sixty-seven.

One focus of Edelman's lobbying is to make government officials understand that helping poor children is not only a humane thing to do, but a way of saving resources in the long run. Says Edelman, "Our goal is to educate the nation about the needs of children and encourage preventive investment in children before they get sick, drop out of school, or get into trouble."

Source: *Public Interest Profiles* (Washington, D.C.: Foundation for Public Affairs, 1986), p. 13; Lena Williams, "She Whose Constituents Are 61 Million Children," *New York Times*, 27 February 1986, p. B10; Katherine Bouton, "Marian Wright Edelman," *Ms.*, July/August 1987, pp. 98ff; and Marian Wright Edelman, "How to Prevent Teenage Pregnancy," *Ebony*, July 1987, pp. 62–66.

have served in the legislative or executive branches, where they have had firsthand experience with government. William Timmons, who had firsthand experience with government. William Timmons, who heads his own lobbying firm, has attracted an impressive array of clients, among them the American Broadcasting Company, Anheuser-Busch, Chrysler, and Boeing. These companies know that Timmons's experience as a White House assistant for legislative liaison gives him a great deal of insight into the policymaking process, as well as valuable government contacts.¹⁷

Lobbying is a lucrative profession. One study of Washington representatives from a variety of organizations found that the average yearly salary was just over \$90,000.¹⁸ The financial rewards are such that nearly

seventysomething

Actually, lobbyist Evelyn Dubrow refuses to tell how old she is, but she's been on Capitol Hill longer than most members of Congress. Now working on behalf of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, this 4'11" dynamo is one of the most respected lobbyists in Washington. Here Dubrow presents her case to Democratic Representative Jim Moody of Wisconsin.



three hundred former members of Congress are part of the profession. As one old Washington saying has it, "They come to govern, they stay to lobby."¹⁹

By the nature of their location, many Washington law firms are drawn into lobbying. Corporations without their own Washington offices rely heavily on law firms to lobby for them before the national government. Over time, lawyer-lobbyists tend to develop expertise in particular policy areas.

The most common image of a lobbyist is that of an "arm twister," someone who spends most of the time trying to convince a legislator or administrator to back a certain policy. But lobbying is more subtle than that. Lobbyists' primary job is to pass on information to policymakers. Lobbyists provide government officials and their staffs with a constant flow of data that support their organizations' policy goals. But presenting data is not enough. Lobbyists must also build a compelling case, showing that the "facts" dictate that a change be made. What lobbyists are really trying to do, of course, is to convince policymakers that their data deserve more attention and are more accurate than those presented by other lobbyists.

Political Action Committees

One of the organizational resources that can make a lobbyist's job easier is a **political action committee (PAC)**. PACs pool campaign contributions from group members and donate those funds to candidates for political office. Under federal law, a PAC can give up to \$5,000 for each

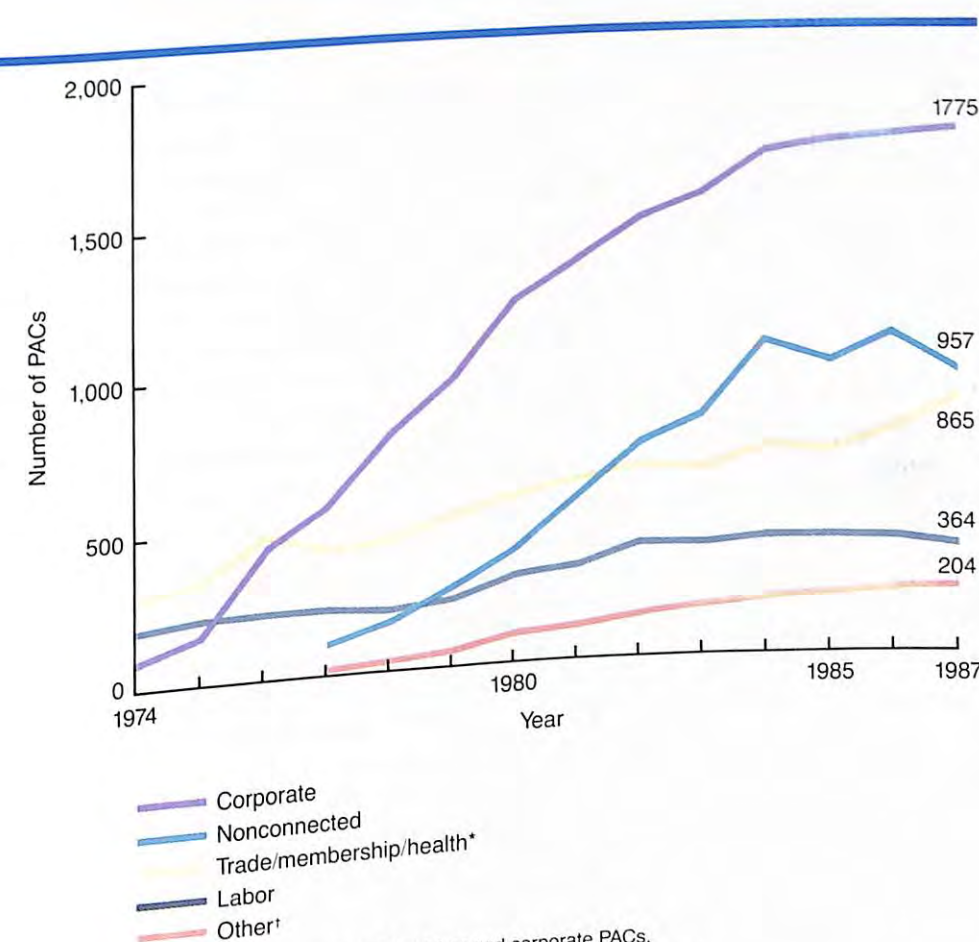
separate election to a candidate for Congress. As Figure 9.2 shows, more and more interest groups are organizing PACs. The greatest growth has come from corporations, most of which were legally prohibited from operating political action committees until the law was changed in 1974. There has also been rapid growth in the number of **nonconnected PACs**, largely ideological groups that have no parent lobbying organization and are formed only for the purpose of raising and channeling campaign funds. (So a PAC can be the campaign-wing affiliate of an existing interest group or a wholly independent, unaffiliated group.) From Exxon PAC to SixPAC (which represents the beer industry!), everyone seems to be getting into the PAC game.

Why do interest groups form PACs? One businessman said his company formed a PAC because "talking to politicians is fine, but with a little money they hear you better."²⁰ His words seem cynical, but they contain more than a kernel of truth. Lobbyists believe that campaign contributions help significantly when they are trying to gain access to a member of Congress. Members of Congress and their staffers generally are eager to meet with representatives of their constituencies, but their time is limited. However, a member of Congress or an assistant would

Figure 9.2

The Growth of PACs

In 1974, a change in the law removed the prohibition that prevented most corporations from forming political action committees; in addition, other types of PACs have become more numerous since that time. By the end of 1987, over 4,000 PACs were registered with the Federal Election Commission. (Source: Federal Election Commission, "FEC Releases New PAC Count," 18 January 1988.)



* Until 1977, this category consisted of all but labor and corporate PACs.
 † Includes PACs formed by corporations without capital stock and cooperatives.

find it difficult to turn down a request for a meeting with a lobbyist from, for example, the National Association of Realtors, if that group's PAC had made a campaign contribution in the last election.

Typically, PACs, like most other interest groups, are highly pragmatic organizations; pushing a particular political philosophy takes second place to achieving immediate policy goals. Even though many corporate executives have strong beliefs in a free-market economy, for example, their company PAC would probably hold congressional candidates to a much more practical standard. Except for nonconnected ideological PACs, access to congressional offices is usually considered much more important than finding and supporting true believers. Democrat Alan Cranston of California is one of the staunchest liberals in the Senate, but banking PACs showered him with \$240,000 in donations for his 1986 race, more than any other congressional candidate.²¹ The banking PACs surely would have preferred his Republican opponent (a businessman), but access to the powerful Cranston was too important to risk alienating him. As a group, corporations gave 75 percent of their contributions to incumbent members of Congress—many of them liberal and moderate Democrats—during the last two-year election cycle.²² Citizen group PACs tend to be moved more by ideology; they give a higher proportion of their funds to challengers than do business, labor, or trade group PACs.

The growing role of PACs in financing congressional campaigns has become the most controversial aspect of interest group politics. Critics believe that greater access to congressional offices brings greater influence over legislators. And access is increased by campaign contributions. It should come as no surprise that corporate PACs contribute more to congressional candidates than do any other PACs. But in a democracy, influence should not be a function of money; some citizens have little to give, yet their rights need to be protected. From this perspective, the issue is political equality. In the words of Republican Senator Robert Dole, "There aren't any Poor PACs or Food Stamp PACs or Nutrition PACs or Medicare PACs."²³

Still, strong arguments can be made for retaining PACs. They offer a means for people to participate in the political system. They allow small givers to pool their resources and to fight the feeling that one person cannot make a difference. Moreover, with continually escalating campaign costs, many campaigns would be underfunded without PAC money. If this source of contributions was eliminated, it would be more difficult for candidates without personal wealth to make a credible try for Congress. Finally, proponents believe that restrictions on PACs would amount to restrictions on the freedom of political expression.

LOBBYING TACTICS

When an interest group decides to try to influence government on an issue, its staff and officers must develop a strategy, which may include a number of tactics aimed at various officials or offices. Together, these tactics should use the group's resources as effectively as possible.

Keep in mind that lobbying extends beyond the legislative branch. Groups can seek help from the courts and administrative agencies as well as from Congress. Moreover, interest groups may have to shift their focus from one branch of government to another. After a bill becomes a law, for example, a group that lobbied for the legislation will probably try to influence the administrative agency responsible for implementing the new law. Some policy decisions are left unresolved by legislation and are settled through regulations. The lobby wants to make sure regulatory decisions are as close as possible to the group's preferences.

We discuss three types of lobbying tactics here: those aimed at policymakers and implemented through interest group representatives (direct lobbying); those that involve group members (grassroots lobbying); and those directed toward the public (information campaigns). We also examine the cooperative efforts of interest groups to influence government through coalitions.

Direct Lobbying

Direct lobbying relies on personal contact with policymakers. A recent survey of Washington lobbyists showed that 98 percent use direct contact with government officials to express their groups' views.²⁴ This interaction takes place when a lobbyist meets with a member of Congress, an agency official, or a staff member (see Feature 9.3). In these meetings, lobbyists usually convey their arguments in the form of data about a specific issue. If a lobbyist from, for example, the Chamber of Commerce meets with a member of Congress about a bill the organization backs, the lobbyist does not say (or even suggest), "Vote for this bill, or our people in the district will vote against you in the next election." Instead, the lobbyist might say, "If this bill is passed, we're going to see hundreds of new jobs created back home." The representative has no trouble at all figuring out that a vote for the bill can help in the next election.

Personal lobbying is a day in, day out process. It is not enough simply to meet with policymakers just before a vote or a regulatory decision. Lobbyists must maintain contact with congressional and agency staffers, constantly providing them with pertinent data. Lobbyists for the American Gas Association, for instance, keep a list of 1,200 agency personnel who are "called frequently to share informally in association intelligence." The director of the group's lobbying efforts has a shorter list of 104 key administrators with whom he has met personally and who can "be counted on to provide information on agency decisionmaking."²⁵

A tactic related to direct lobbying is *testifying* at committee hearings when a bill is before Congress. This tactic allows the interest group to put its views on record and to make them widely known when the hearing testimony is published. Although testifying is one of the most visible parts of lobbying, it is generally considered window dressing. Most lobbyists believe that testimony usually does little by itself to persuade members of Congress.

Another direct but somewhat different approach is *legal advocacy*. Using this tactic, a group tries to achieve its policy goals through liti-

FEATURE 9.3

These Soldiers May Be Old, but They Still Know How to Fight

The primary objective of the 1986 tax reform was to eliminate provisions and exceptions that entitled certain groups or industries to preferential treatment. By reducing such preferences (like the investment tax credit for industry), revenue would be gained and could be redistributed to taxpayers through lower tax brackets for all. Not all tax breaks and special benefits were removed though. One of the ones that remained was the tax-exempt status of veterans' disability payments.

When the Reagan administration's initial proposal (Treasury I) was released, it in fact did call for the elimination of the veterans' tax preference. Leaders of veterans' lobbies in Washington were beside themselves when they found this out, and they demanded a meeting with Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Ronald Pearlman, one of the principals overseeing the reform drive. The leaders of these groups felt that disabled veterans deserve concern and respect from the government, and that forcing veterans to pay taxes on their benefits was an insult. When the leaders confronted Pearlman in his office, he stated the philosophy behind Treasury I in rhetorical fashion: "Why should veterans' disability payments be treated differently than any other income?"

The heads of the veterans' organizations left Pearlman's office with no concessions on his part. But the battle was far from over. They requested a meeting with Pearlman's boss, Secretary of the Treasury James Baker, and came prepared with some pretty heavy ammunition. They showed Baker a full-page ad they were planning to run in the *Washington Post* and other newspapers. In the ad was a large photograph of Chad Colley, the head of the Disabled American Veterans and one of the leaders who had earlier met with Pearlman. Colley is a triple amputee (he lost both legs and an arm in Vietnam), and the photograph of him in a wheelchair made that absolutely clear. At the top of the ad, in large letters, was the question "What's So Special About Disabled Veterans?" Below, in smaller type, the ad read, "That's what a top Treasury official said to Chad Colley . . ." After the veterans left Baker's office, he called Pearlman in and told him, "I think we'll have to drop this one."

Source: Adapted from Jeffrey H. Birnbaum and Alan S. Murray, *Showdown at Gucci Gulch* (New York: Random House, 1987), pp. 79–80.

gation. For many years, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) brought suits to overturn laws that allowed racial segregation. The courts were a better target than Congress because many members of Congress were strong segregationists from the South. This tactic eventually led to many favorable Supreme Court decisions, most notably, the decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which overturned school segregation.²⁶

Grassroots Lobbying

Grassroots lobbying involves an interest group's rank-and-file members and may also include people outside the organization who sympa-

The Postman Rings More Than Twice

It's often said that the best lobbyists are the lobbyists back home. These letter carriers traveled to Washington to persuade their members of Congress to support legislation backed by the letter carriers' union. The union's Washington lobbyists don't cast a single ballot back home, but these letter carriers do. They can also tell their families and colleagues how responsive their elected representatives were to their concerns.



thize with its goals. Grassroots tactics, such as letter-writing campaigns and protests, are often used in conjunction with direct lobbying by Washington representatives. Letters, telegrams, and phone calls from a group's members to their representatives in Congress or agency administrators add to a lobbyist's credibility in talks with these officials. Policymakers are more concerned about what a lobbyist says when they know that constituents are really watching their decisions.

Group members—especially influential members (corporation presidents, local civic leaders)—occasionally go to Washington themselves to lobby. But the most common grassroots tactic is *letterwriting*. "Write your representative" is not just a slogan out of a civics text. Legislators are highly sensitive to the content of their mail.

Interest groups often launch letter-writing campaigns through their regular publications or special alerts. They may even provide sample letters and the name and address of specific policymakers. When time is of the essence, phone calls serve the same purpose as letters. When a vote on a veto of a civil rights bill by President Reagan was imminent, groups opposing the bill asked members to call their legislators and leave a message voicing their opposition. On a single day, over a hundred thousand people called the Capitol to express their unhappiness with the bill. There was strong support on the other side too, and the veto was subsequently overturned.²⁷

If people in government seem unresponsive to conventional lobbying tactics, a group might resort to some form of *political protest*. A protest or demonstration, such as picketing or marching, is designed to attract media attention to an issue. Protesters hope that television and newspaper coverage will help change public opinion and make policymakers more receptive to the group's demands. When three thousand farmers from the American Agriculture Movement drove tractors from their homes into Washington to show their disappointment with Carter ad-

ministration farm policies, the spectacle attracted considerable publicity. Their unconventional approach increased the public's awareness of falling produce prices and stimulated the government to take some limited action.²⁸

The main drawback to protest activity is that policymaking is a long-term incremental process, whereas a demonstration is short-lived. It is difficult to sustain the anger and activism of group supporters—to keep large numbers of people involved in protest after protest—simply to keep the group's demands in the public eye. A notable exception were the civil rights demonstrations of the 1960s, which were sustained over a long period. National attention focused not only on the widespread demonstrations, but also on the sometimes violent confrontations between blacks and white law enforcement officers. For example, the use of police dogs and high-power fire hoses against blacks marching in Alabama in the early 1960s angered millions of Americans who saw films of the confrontations on television programs. The protests were a major factor in public opinion, which in turn hastened the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.²⁹

Information Campaigns

As the strategy of the civil rights movement shows, interest groups generally feel that public backing adds strength to their lobbying efforts. And because all interest groups believe they are absolutely right in their policy orientations, they believe that they will get that backing if they make the public aware of their positions and the evidence that supports them. To this end, interest groups launch **information campaigns**, organized efforts to gain public backing by bringing group views to the public's attention. The underlying assumption is that public ignorance and apathy are as much a problem as the views of competing interest groups. Various means are used to combat this apathy. Some are directed at the larger public, others at smaller audiences with long-standing interest in an issue.

Public relations is one information tactic. A public relations campaign might involve sending speakers to meetings in various parts of the country or producing pamphlets and handouts. A highly visible form of political public relations is newspaper and magazine advertising. Mobil Oil Corporation is well known for the way it uses print advertising to argue its point of view. The National Rifle Association uses advertising to try to show people that it is a responsible organization rather than a group that cares more about guns than stopping crime. It has run a series of profiles of members, such as the head of a police organization, who belie the image of irresponsibility. Newspaper and magazine advertising has one major drawback, however. It is extremely expensive. Consequently, few groups rely on it as their primary weapon.

Sponsoring *research* is another way interest groups press their cases. When a group believes that evidence has not been fully developed in a certain area, it may commission research on the subject. Groups working for the rights of the disabled have protected programs from would-be

budget cutters by providing "lawmakers with abundant research findings demonstrating that it costs much more to keep people in institutions . . . than it does to utilize home and community living programs."³⁰

Some groups believe that publicizing *voting records* of members of Congress is an effective means of influencing public opinion. These interest groups simply publish in their newsletters a record of how all members of Congress voted on issues of particular concern to the organization. Other groups prepare statistical indexes that compare the voting records of all members of Congress on selected key issues. Each member is graded (from 0 to 100 percent) according to how often he or she voted in agreement with the group's views. Thus the owners of small businesses who belong to the National Federation of Independent Business can assume that those lawmakers who scored well on the group's "scorecard" have usually voted in sympathy with their interests.

Coalitions

The final aspect of lobbying strategy is **coalition building**, in which several organizations band together for the purpose of lobbying. This joint effort conserves or makes more effective use of the resources of groups with similar views. Coalitions form most often among groups that work in the same policy area and are similar in their political outlook.³¹ On feminist issues, for example, the National Organization for Women, the National Women's Political Caucus, the League of Women Voters, the American Association of University Women, and the Women's Equity Action League usually work with one another.³²

Most coalitions are informal, ad hoc arrangements. Groups have limited resources and prefer not to commit those resources to long-term coalitions. Also, they do not always share an equal degree of enthusiasm for all issues; sometimes even old friends end up on different sides of an issue. Government solutions to the acid rain problem, for instance, set coal producers from the West against coal producers from the East. In the West (where coal is low in sulfur), producers wanted a policy promoting the use of low-sulfur coal; eastern coal producers wanted scrubbers to reduce sulfur dioxide emissions.³² Ad hoc coalitions that center around one immediate issue allow a group to keep its resource commitments flexible, while broadening its resources to increase the chances of influencing policymakers at key times.

THE GROWTH OF INTEREST GROUP POLITICS

The growing number of active interest groups is one of the most important trends in American politics. One survey of Washington-based lobbies showed that fully 30 percent of existing groups were formed between 1960 and 1980.³⁴ The greatest growth occurred in three types of interest groups: PACs (which we discussed earlier), citizen groups, and business lobbies.

Lobbyists Sans Guccis

When we think of Washington lobbyists, we may picture suave, well-paid business representatives who wear expensive suits and shoes. But other kinds of people toil at this work, too. These people are volunteers for the public interest group *Common Cause*. They tried to spur grass-roots activity on behalf of the Boren-Byrd bill, which would have reduced the role of political action committees in congressional elections. In this case, the Guccis won: A filibuster kept the bill from a vote in the Senate.



The Public Interest Movement

Many recently formed citizen groups are commonly known as public interest groups. A **public interest group** is generally considered to have no economic self-interest in the policies it pursues.³⁵ For example, the members of an environmental group fighting for stricter clean-air standards receive no financial gain from the institution of such standards. The benefits to its members are largely ideological and aesthetic. In contrast, a corporation fighting against the same stringent standards is trying to protect its profits. A law that requires it to install expensive antipollution devices can reduce stockholders' dividends, depress salaries, and postpone expansion. Although both the environmental group and the corporation have valid reasons for their stands on the issue, their motives are different. The environmental lobby is a public interest group; the corporation is not.

Many public interest groups have become major players in national politics. *Common Cause*, one of the best-known "good government" groups, works for campaign finance reform, codes of ethics in government, and open congressional and administrative proceedings.³⁶

The best-known public interest activist is Ralph Nader. He first came to the public's attention in 1966, when he exposed serious safety flaws in the Corvair. So damning was his indictment of the car that sales dropped significantly, and General Motors soon stopped producing the Corvair.³⁷ Nader now heads a small empire of public interest groups, among them the Aviation Consumer Action Project, the Public Citizen Litigation Group, and the Health Research Group.

Nader has a reputation as a relentless, driven lobbyist for consumer protection. He mercilessly criticizes politicians who disagree with him, treating them as "enemies of the people," not as individuals who simply happen to hold different views. Nader's self-righteousness is tempered by his dedication, zeal, and ascetic lifestyle. These have made him a highly effective and credible spokesman for consumers.

Origins of the movement. Traditionally, public interest lobbies have not been a major factor in Washington politics. Yet the upsurge of these groups that began in the late 1960s did not prove to be as short-lived a phenomenon as many had expected. At first, most new groups were on the liberal side of the political spectrum. As discussed below, however, many new conservative groups have formed recently. Groups on both the Left and the Right have become more politically prominent. The public interest movement has been impressive in its collective scope and strength; many groups have been able to support themselves through the contributions of concerned citizens.

Why have so many public interest groups formed in the last two decades? The movement grew from the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War activism of the 1960s.³⁸ In both cases, citizens with passionate beliefs about a cause felt they had no choice but to take aggressive, even abrasive, action. Dependence on political parties and the electoral process was not producing change; collective citizen action had to be used instead.

An Image That Angered a Nation

Demonstrations by blacks during the early 1960s played a critical role in pushing Congress to pass civil rights legislation. This photo of vicious police dogs attacking demonstrators in Birmingham, Alabama, is typical of the scenes that were shown in network news broadcasts and newspapers. Pictures like this helped build public support for civil rights legislation.



The legacy of the civil rights and antiwar movements was the belief that individuals acting together can influence the direction of public policy. From the success of these groups, Americans learned that ordinary citizens could have an impact on government if they organized. (Most contemporary citizen groups no longer rely on the demonstrations that characterized these earlier movements. Instead, they channel the energy, resources, and outrage of their constituents into more conventional tactics, such as legislative lobbying and litigation.)

The late 1960s and early 1970s were also a time when Americans were becoming increasingly cynical about government. Loyalty to political parties was declining, too, as greater proportions of citizens told pollsters that they did not identify with either national party. If neither government nor political parties could be trusted to provide adequate representation in the nation's capital on such issues as preserving the environment or protecting consumers, the obvious alternative was membership in an ideological interest group.

Conservative reaction. Why conservatives were slower than liberals to mobilize is not altogether clear, but the new right-of-center groups appear in part to be a reaction to the perceived success of liberal groups. Like their liberal counterparts, conservative groups cover a wide variety of policy areas. Most stand in direct opposition to causes espoused by liberal organizations. Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum, for example, fought long and hard against the Equal Rights Amendment and other positions favored by feminist groups.

But conservative groups are not merely mirror images of liberal citizen lobbies. A distinctive feature of the "New Right" is the active participation of religious organizations. Groups like the Religious Roundtable and Christian Voice actively promote policies that they feel are in line with Christian teachings, such as permitting prayer in school and restricting abortions.³⁹ The most visible fundamentalist Christian lobby has been the Moral Majority. In 1987, however, the group's leader, Reverend Jerry Falwell, announced he was leaving the political world to return full time to the spiritual one. It's unclear if the group will be able to maintain its visibility without its controversial founder. Some Americans who believe that the country is best served by a complete separation of church and state strongly criticize the lobbying of the Religious Right. But the religious Right believes that its moral duty is to see that Christian principles are embodied in government policy. The conflict between liberal critics and conservative religious lobbies is more than a difference of opinion over specific policies. It is a struggle to define the fundamental values that shape our society. And, as a spokesman for the American Coalition for Traditional Values notes, "Somebody's values will prevail."⁴⁰

During the Reagan presidency, conservative citizen groups enjoyed substantial access to the White House, their lobbyists meeting frequently with White House aides.⁴¹ They did not have the same degree of success with Congress, however, where many of their most cherished goals—including a constitutional amendment allowing school prayer—were not

met. Still, the emergence of these groups and the resurgence of the Republican party have enhanced conservative influence in America.

Business Lobbies

The number of business lobbies in Washington has also increased. Offices of individual corporations and of business trade associations are more in evidence than ever before. A **trade association**, such as the Mortgage Bankers Association or the National Electrical Manufacturers Association, is an organization that represents companies within the same industry. At one point during the 1970s, when the boom in business lobbying began, trade associations were moving their headquarters to Washington at an average of one every week.⁴² A 1981 survey of corporations revealed that more than half of the organizations with a government relations office in Washington had set up that office during the previous decade.⁴³ Corporations that already had offices in Washington typically upgraded them by adding staff.

The vast increase in business representation in Washington was in large part a response to the expanded scope of national government activities during the 1960s and 1970s. As the Environmental Protection Agency, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and other regulatory agencies were created, many more companies found themselves affected by federal regulations. And those located outside of Washington often found themselves *reacting* to policies already made rather than *participating* in their making. They saw a move to Washington—where the policymakers are—as necessary if they were to obtain information on pending government actions in enough time to act on it.

Ironically, the increase in government activity and in business lobbying followed directly from the success of liberal public interest groups, strong supporters of regulation to protect the environment and consumers. By the early 1970s, many businesspeople felt that the government was reacting to an agenda set primarily by citizen groups. This belief contributed to the founding of the Business Roundtable, a lobbying group with membership made up of about two hundred of the nation's largest companies. The Business Roundtable has become both a leading proponent of the business point of view and a symbol of business strength in Washington.

The increase in business advocacy in Washington was also fueled by the competitive nature of business lobbying. The reason for competition is that legislation and regulatory decisions never seem to apply uniformly to all businesses; rather, they affect one type of business or one industry more than others. Financial services is one area where growing competition and limited steps toward deregulation have transformed the lobbying scene. Insurance companies, brokerage houses, investment banks, and retail banks have all made efforts to encroach on one another's turf. So many new players have entered the picture that policymaking has become even more complex. A member of the House Banking Committee said of the change, "When I first came to Congress there were five major financial trade groups, but now there are at least five times that.

The Tax Lobbyist

Charles Walker is one of the most skilled business lobbyists in Washington. He holds a Ph.D. in economics and was a high-ranking official in the U.S. Treasury Department. Because of Walker's expertise and political skills, many large corporations hire him to lobby Congress on tax policy.



Now if you're trying to satisfy all the trade groups, it's pretty hard to do."⁴⁴

The growth of business lobbies has reinforced and possibly expanded the overrepresentation of business in national politics. As Figure 9.3 shows, approximately half of all interest groups with a Washington office are either corporations or business trade associations. If organizations with a Washington lawyer or other kind of lobbyist on retainer are added to the total, the dominance of business in the lobbying population is even greater. But the number of organizations or lobbyists is far from a perfect indicator of interest group strength. The AFL-CIO, which represents millions of union members, is more influential than a two-person corporate listening post in Washington. Still, business has an advantage in terms of Washington representation. And because business lobbies are able to draw on the institutional resources of corporations, they can fund their lobbying operations more easily than can groups that depend on the voluntary contributions of individuals.

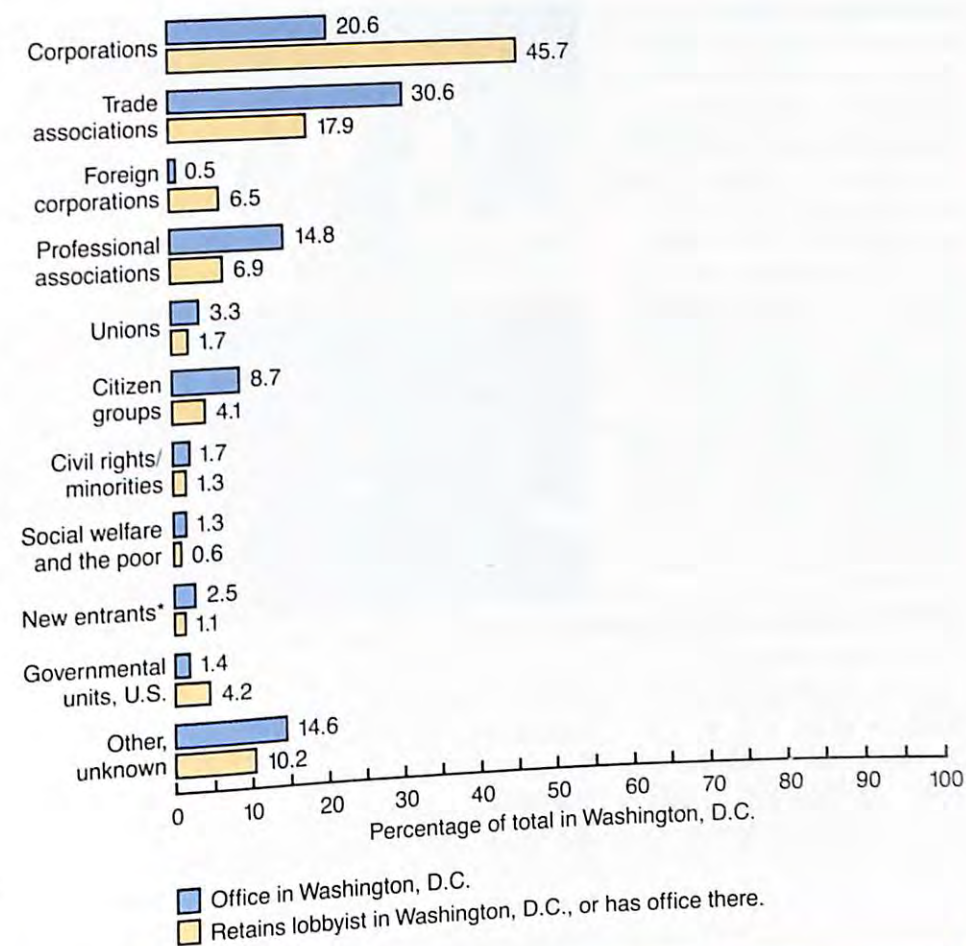
INTEREST GROUPS: AN EVALUATION

The pluralists who wrote during the 1950s and 1960s were right on one important point, but wrong on another. They argued that interest groups are at the center of the policymaking process. Certainly, the growing number of groups in recent years seem to reflect a broad acceptance of this view by various sectors of American society. Although pluralist scholars never predicted perfect representation of affected interests, they

The Washington Interest Group Community

Although the interest group community is highly diverse, business organizations form the biggest part of that community. Corporations and trade associations are the most prevalent interest group actors in terms of having an office in Washington or, at the very least, employing a lobbyist there. (Source: Kay Lehman Schlozman and John T. Tierney, *Organized Interests and American Democracy* [New York: Harper & Row, 1986], p. 67. Copyright © 1986 by Kay Lehman Schlozman and John T. Tierney. Reprinted by permission of Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc. Adapted from the *Encyclopedia of Associations*, ed. Denise S. Akey. Gale Research.)

Figure 9.3



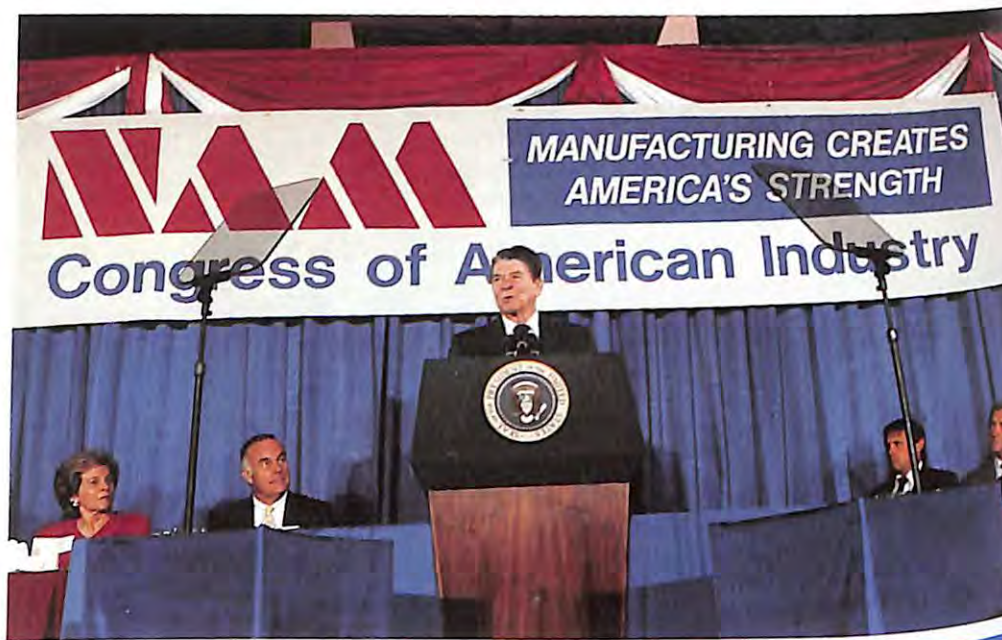
did assume that representation would be more balanced than it is. What we have instead is a political system increasingly centered around interest group advocacy, but one in which some interests—most notably, those of business—are much better represented than others. What are the consequences of this?

One consequence is that the large and growing number of interest groups works against a strengthening of our party system. Many activists find narrowly based interest groups more appealing than parties. The lobbies that these activists support work intensely on the few issues they care about most; parties often dilute issue stands to appeal to as broad a segment of the electorate as possible. Thus, many people who care deeply about public policy questions work to influence government through particular lobbies rather than through political parties. Interest in party reform has waned in the past few years. The satisfaction people feel with the work of their interest groups surely contributes to Americans' lack of concern for revitalizing the parties, for making them more responsive policymaking bodies.

This lack of concern is unfortunate. Interest groups can do no more than supplement the functions of parties. Most interest groups are small

Lobbying the Lobby

We usually think of lobbying as a process that takes place when an interest group tries to influence government officials. But sometimes government officials approach a lobbying organization to ask for its help. The president may actively court interest groups to try to build support for his policies. A presidential speech, like this one by Ronald Reagan before a conference sponsored by the Washington-based National Association of Manufacturers, is one way the White House reaches out to interest groups.



bodies concerned with only a few issues. Parties, however, can be instruments of majoritarian democracy. They can bring together broad coalitions of people and translate their concerns into large-scale social and economic change. Parties are particularly important because they can represent those who are not well represented by interest groups. As political scientist Walter Dean Burnham puts it, parties "can generate countervailing collective power on behalf of the many individually powerless against the relatively few who are individually—or organizationally—powerful."⁴⁵

Most observers agree that stronger parties, which would provide a more majoritarian mechanism for influencing policy, are good. But few seem interested in reviving the parties at the cost of their own interest group's influence. If our party system is revitalized, then, it will be because of what the parties do to make themselves more appealing, not because people turn away from their interest groups.

Regulation

Interest groups contribute to democratic government by representing their supporters' interests. However, concern that individual groups have too much influence or that interest group representation is biased in favor of certain segments of society has prompted frequent calls for reform. Yet, little has been done to weaken the influence of interest groups. The problem, as Madison foresaw, is that it is difficult to limit interest group activity without limiting fundamental freedoms. The First Amendment guarantees Americans the right to petition their government, and lobbying, at its most basic level, is a form of organized petitioning.

One effort to reform lobbying was the Federal Regulation of Lobbying Act, passed in 1946. This law was intended to require all lobbyists to

register and file expenditure reports with Congress. In practice, the law has been ineffective. A Supreme Court ruling held that it applies only to people or organizations whose "principal purpose" is influencing legislation.⁴⁶ This exempts many, if not most, of those who lobby. Periodic calls for stricter reform continue, but it is difficult to see how such legislation would alter interest group behavior.

Campaign Financing

Much of the debate over interest groups and political reform centers around the role PACs play in financing congressional campaigns. As the costs of political campaigning escalate sharply, politicians have to raise larger and larger sums. During the 1970s, Congress took some important steps to reform campaign-financing practices. Strong disclosure requirements now exist, so that the source of all significant contributions to candidates for national office is part of the public record. Public financing of presidential campaigns is also provided for; taxpayer money is given in equal amounts to the major parties' presidential nominees.

Reformers have also called for public financing of congressional elections, to reduce the alleged influence of PACs in Congress. Public financing and other schemes designed to reduce the percentage of campaign funds supplied by PACs are meant to reduce the advantage of certain groups in gaining access to and sympathy from members of Congress and their staffers. But incumbents usually find it easier to raise money from PACs than their electoral challengers do, so they have been



reluctant to change this part of the law. It is often said that "money is the mother's milk of politics," and Congress doesn't want to turn off the flow.

The debate over PACs is another manifestation of the sharp tension between the principles of freedom and equality. For many, restrictions on PACs represent restrictions on their personal freedom. Shouldn't people have the right to join others who think as they do and contribute to the candidates of their choice? For others, though, PAC contributions seem less a matter of freedom of political expression than of some people's freedom to use their wealth to further their own special interests. They believe that certain groups are buying influence on Capitol Hill, pointing to sixteen groups, each of which contributed over \$1 million to candidates for national office during the 1986 elections.⁴⁷ And they argue that the consequence of PAC giving is to reinforce, if not expand, the inequities between rich and poor.

SUMMARY

Interest groups play many important roles in our political process. They are a means by which citizens can participate in politics, and they communicate their members' views to those in government. Interest groups differ greatly in the resources at their disposal and in the tactics they use to influence government. The numbers of interest groups has grown sharply in recent years, including an upsurge in political action committees.

Despite the growth and change in the nature of interest groups, the fundamental problem identified by Madison over two hundred years ago endures. In a free and open society, groups form to pursue policies that favor themselves at the expense of the broader national interest. Madison hoped that the solution to this problem would come through the diversity of the population and the structure of our government.

To a certain extent, Madison's expectations have been borne out. The natural differences between groups has kept us from the tyranny of any one faction. Yet the interest group system remains unbalanced, with some segments of society (particularly business, the wealthy, the educated) considerably better organized than others. The growth of citizen groups has reduced this disparity somewhat, but there are still significant inequities in how well different interests are represented in Washington.

These inequities have led most contemporary scholars to reject two key propositions of the early pluralists: that the freedom to form lobbies produces a healthy competition among opposing groups and that the compromises emerging from that competition lead to policies that fairly represent the divisions in society. Instead, business and professional groups

have an advantage because of their ability to organize more readily and their greater resources. The interest group system clearly compromises the principle of political equality as stated in the maxim "one person, one vote." Formal political equality is certainly more likely to occur outside of interest group politics, in elections between candidates from competing political parties—which better fits the majoritarian model of democracy.

Despite the inequities of the interest group system, little general effort has been made to restrict interest group activity. Madison's dictum that suppressing political freedoms must be avoided, even at the expense of permitting interest group activity that promotes the selfish interests of narrow segments of the population, has generally guided public policy. Yet, as the problem of PACs demonstrates, government has had to set some restrictions on interest groups. PACs' giving unlimited contributions to political candidates would undermine confidence in the system. Where to draw the limit on PAC activity remains a thorny problem, since there is little consensus on how to balance the conflicting needs of our society.

Key Terms

interest group
lobby
lobbyist
agenda building
program monitoring
interest group entrepreneur
citizen group
direct mail

free-rider problem
political action committee (PAC)
direct lobbying
grassroots lobbying
information campaign
coalition building
public interest group
trade association

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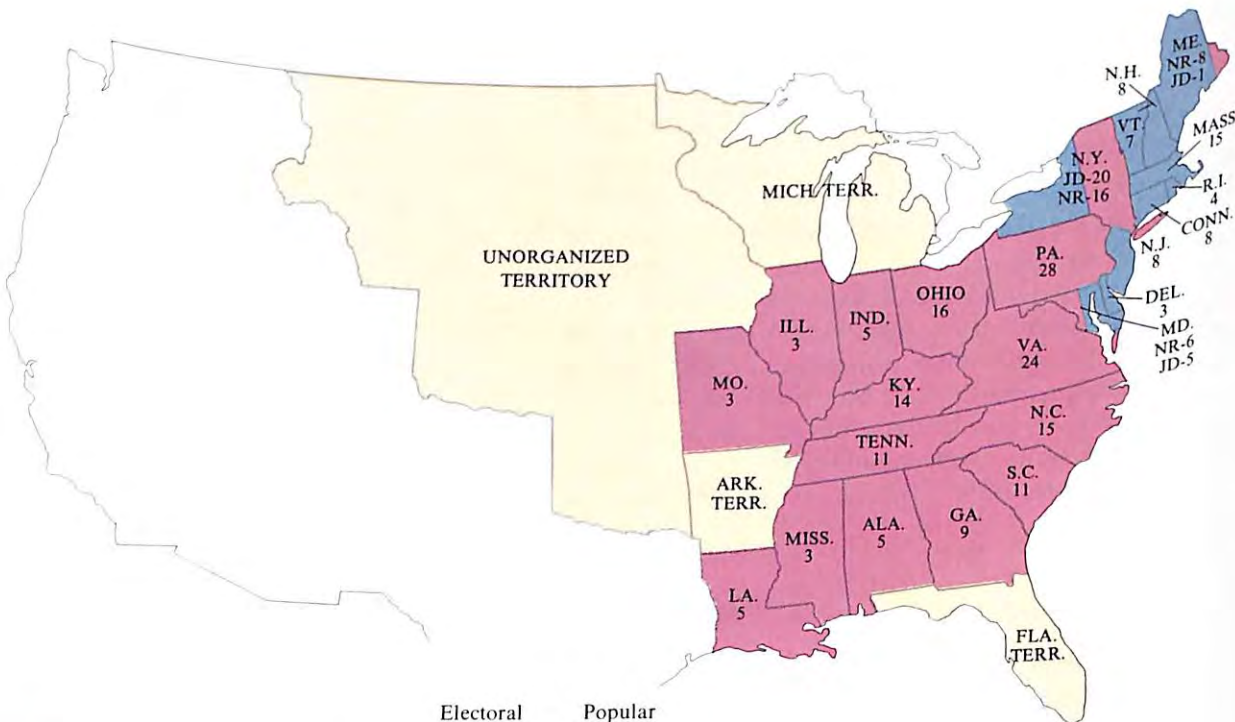
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Essay C

The Transformation of Party Politics

Over time, the American party system has undergone a series of wrenching transformations. "Two-Party Systems in U.S. History" details those changes. During the nation's infancy, when George Washington was unanimously elected and re-elected president, there were no parties. But beginning in 1796, Federalist and Democratic-Republican candidates vied for the presidency under the nation's first party system. For a brief time in the early 1820s, partisan ties lapsed in an "Era of Good Feeling," but they reawakened in 1828 with the election of Andrew Jackson, and the second party system was launched. That system crumbled over the slavery issue, and a third

party system began in 1856. Since then, the Democrats and the Republicans have alternated irregularly in power, each party enjoying a long period of dominance. Presidential elections can decide more than which candidate becomes president; they can determine which coalition of voters dominates elections for national office. For example, the election of 1828—the nation's first election with more than a million voters—not only chose Andrew Jackson of Tennessee over John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts but also established the voting power of western and southern farm states over the previously dominant northeastern manufacturing states.



	Electoral Vote	Popular Vote
Jackson (Jacksonian Democrat)	178 68%	647,286 56%
J.Q. Adams (National Republican)	83 32%	508,064 44%

The Presidential Election of 1828

1789	Washington unanimously elected President			PRE-PARTY PERIOD		
1792	Washington unanimously reelected					
1796	Federalist	Adams	Democratic-Republican	FIRST PARTY SYSTEM		
1800		—				
1804		—				
1808		—				
1812		—				
1816	—	—	Monroe			
1820	Monroe			"ERA OF GOOD FEELING"		
1824	J.Q. Adams					
1828	SECOND PARTY SYSTEM		Democratic	Jackson	National-Republican	
1832				Jackson		Whig
1836				Van Buren	—	
1840				—	Harrison	
1844				Polk	—	
1848	—	Taylor				
1852	—	Pierce	—			
1856	THIRD PARTY SYSTEM	Constitutional Union	Southern Democrat	Buchanan	Republican	
1860				—		Lincoln
1864		—	Lincoln			
1868		—	Grant			
1872		—	Grant			
1876		—	Hayes			
1880		—	Garfield			
1884		—	Harrison			
1888		Rough Balance	—	McKinley		
1892		—	Cleveland	—		
1896	—	Cleveland	Populist	—		
1900	Republican Dominance		Democratic	—	Progressive	
1904				—		McKinley
1908				—		T. Roosevelt
1912				Wilson		Taft
1916				Wilson		—
1920	—	Harding				
1924	—	Coolidge				
1928	—	Hoover				
1932	Democratic Dominance		Democratic	F.D. Roosevelt	States' Rights	
1936				F.D. Roosevelt		—
1940				F.D. Roosevelt		—
1944				F.D. Roosevelt		—
1948				Truman		—
1952	—	Eisenhower				
1956	—	Eisenhower				
1960	Kennedy	—				
1964	Johnson	—	American Independent	Nixon		
1968	—	—		Nixon		
1972	—	—	Independent	—		
1976	Carter	—		Reagan		
1980	—	—		Reagan		
1984	—	—		—		

Two-Party Systems in U.S. History

A presidential election that marks a long-term change of existing patterns of party loyalties among groups of voters across the nation is called a *critical election*. Scholars have identified only three elections—1860, 1896, and 1932—that showed significant changes in voting patterns and that “also began periods of unified party control of the presidency and both houses of Congress for as long as fourteen years” (J. Clubb, W. Flanigan, and N. Zingale, *Partisan Realignment*, 1980).

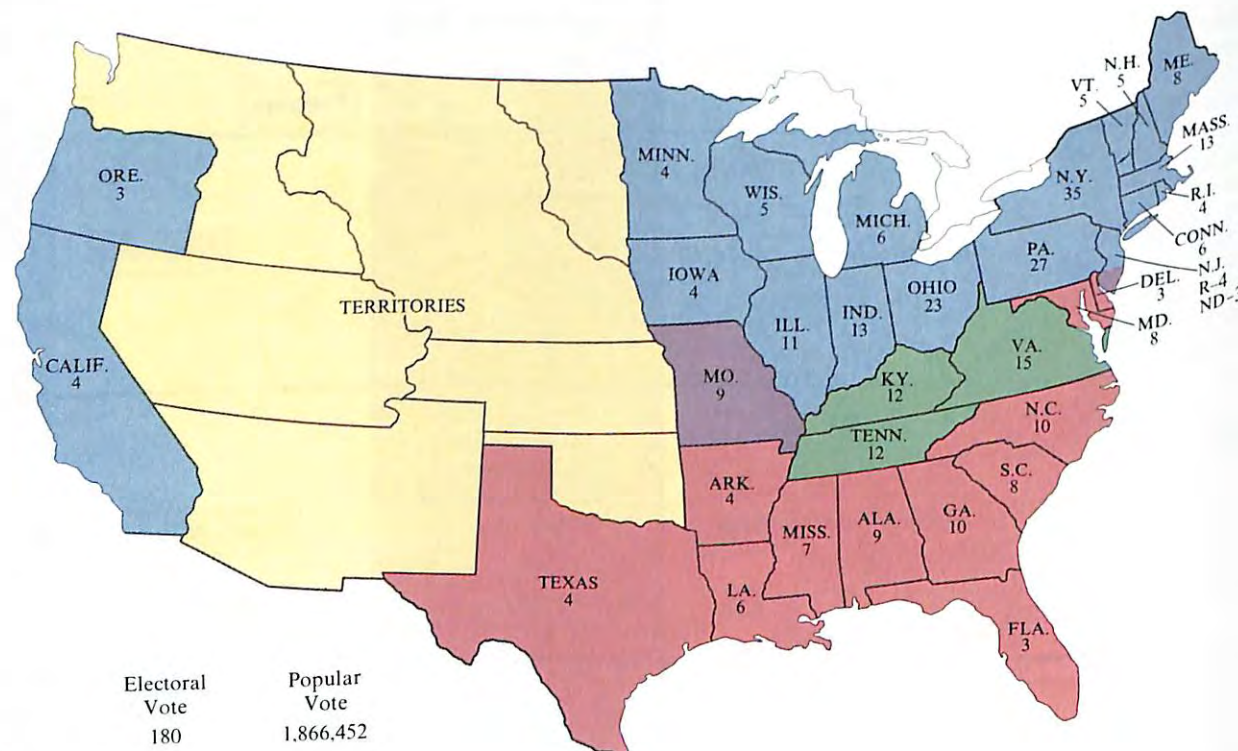
The election of 1860, in which Republican Abraham Lincoln won over three other candidates, set a pattern of regional voting, pitting northern Republicans against southern Democrats.

In 1896, the populous and industrial east and midwest elected Republican William McKinley

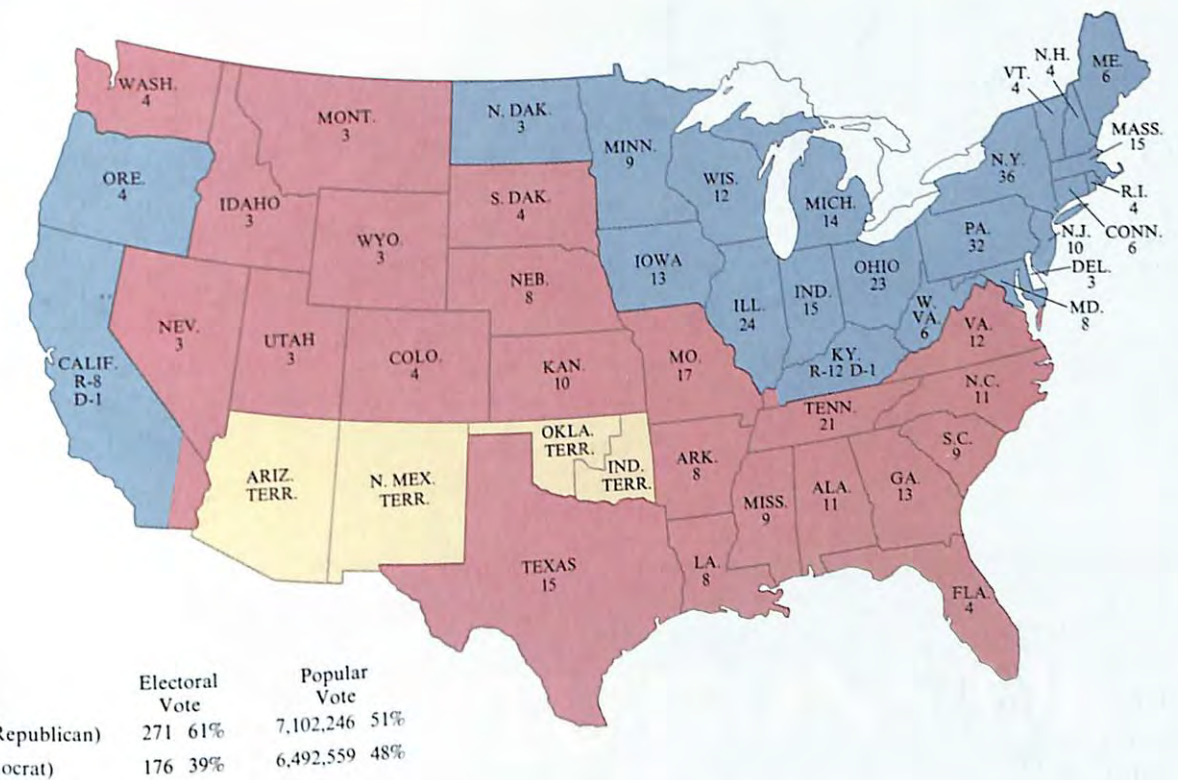
(who was probusiness) over Democrat William Jennings Bryan (spokesman for the rural west and south). The Republicans emerged as the majority party.

In 1932, Democrat Franklin Roosevelt won the election with a coalition of southerners, northern urban workers, and religious and ethnic minorities that transformed the Democrats into the majority party.

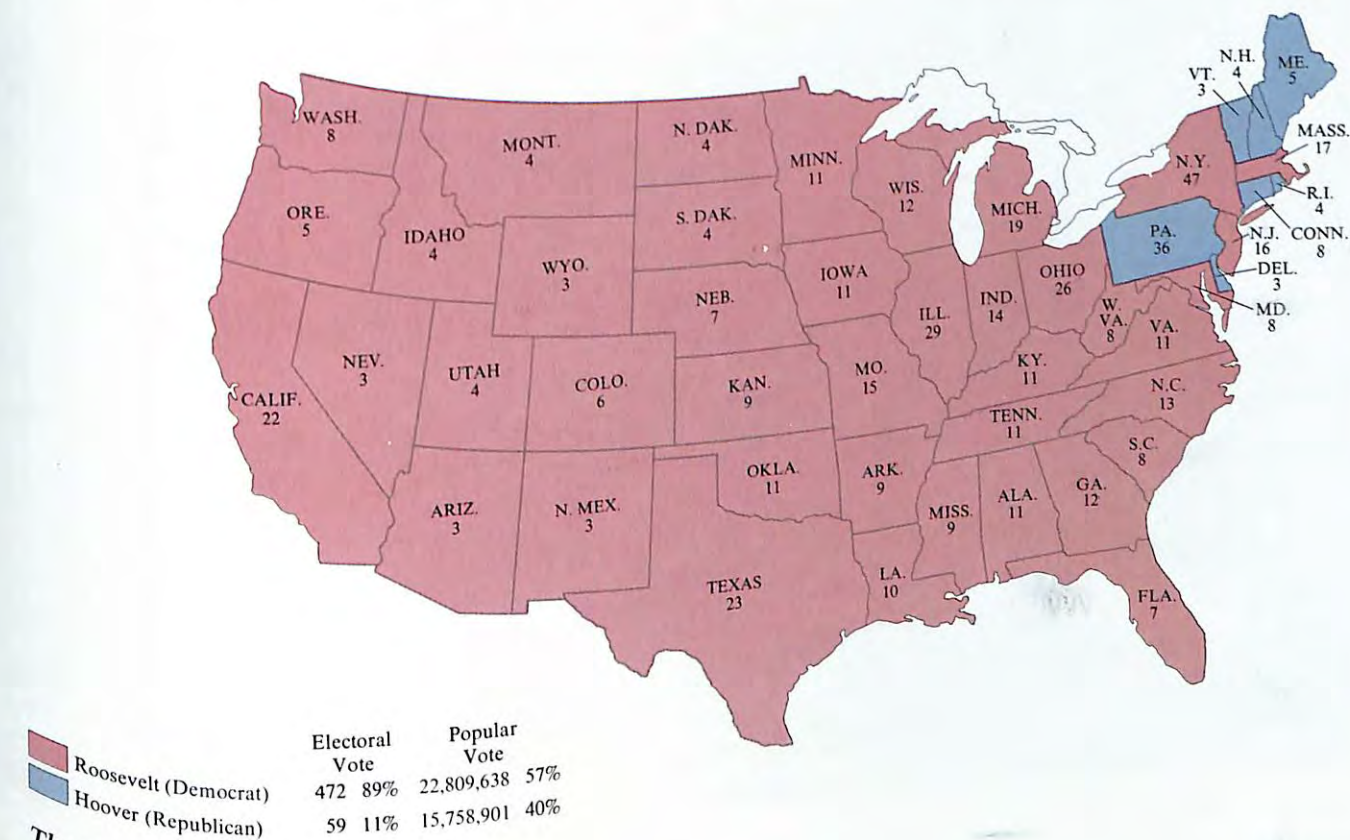
Ronald Reagan’s election in 1984 was even more sweeping than Roosevelt’s in 1932, but 1984 was not a critical election because Republicans did not win control of the House. Nevertheless, the proportion of Republican voters nationwide has been increasing recently, and the era of Democratic dominance, launched by Roosevelt, may be coming to a close.



The Presidential Election of 1860



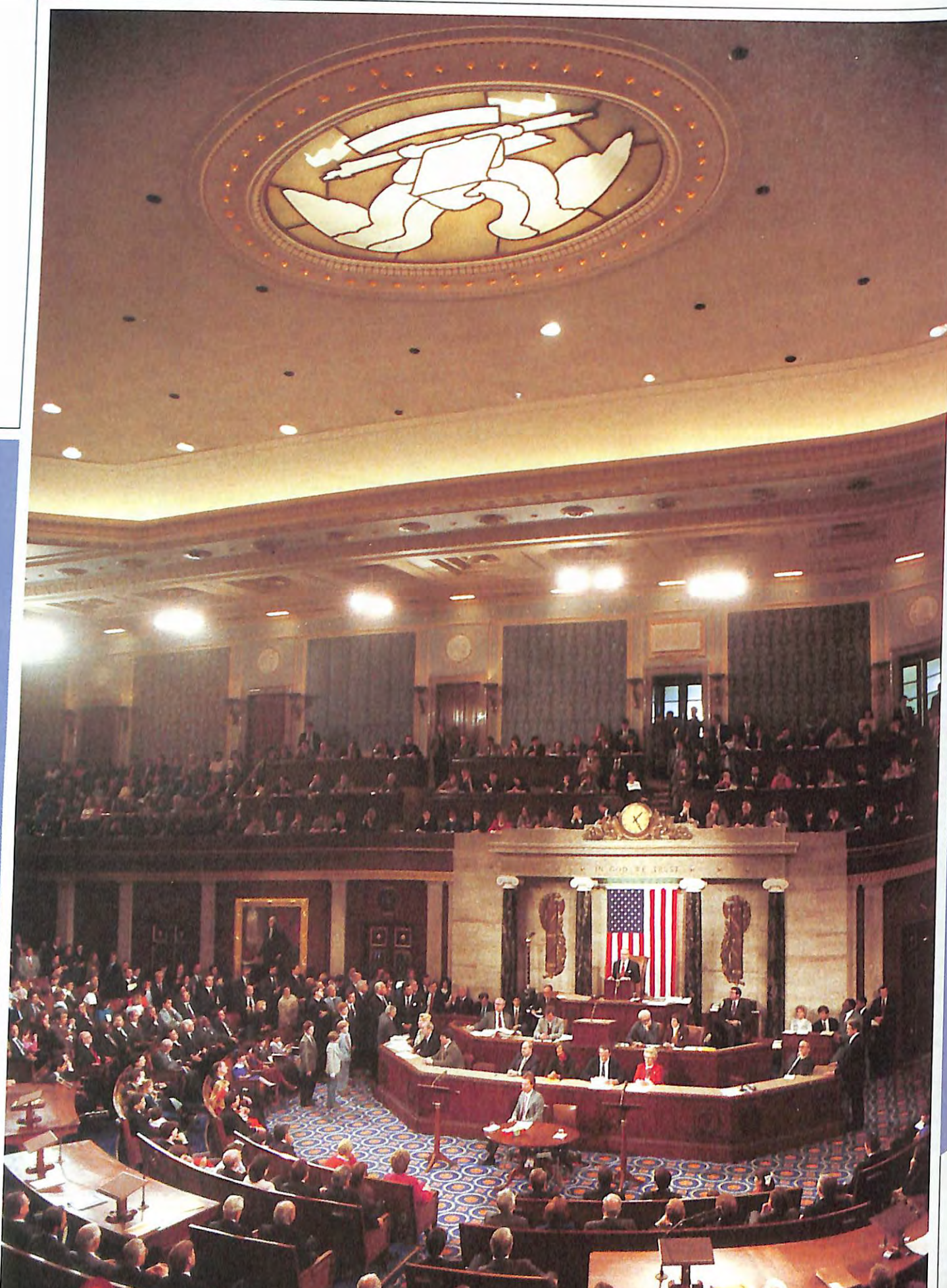
The Presidential Election of 1896



The Presidential Election of 1932

PART *IV*

INSTITUTIONS OF
GOVERNMENT



10

Congress

The Origin and Powers of Congress
The Great Compromise • Duties of the House and Senate

Electing the Congress
The Incumbency Effect • Who Do We Elect?

How Issues Get on the Congressional Agenda

The Dance of Legislation: An Overview

Committees: The Workhorses of Congress

The Division of Labor Among Committees • Congressional Expertise and Seniority • Committee Reform • Drafting Legislation • Committees: The Majoritarian and Pluralist Views

Leaders and Followers in Congress
The Leadership Task • Rules of Procedure • Norms of Behavior

The Legislative Environment
Political Parties • Interest Groups • Colleagues • Staff • The President • Constituents

Oversight: Following Through on Legislation

The Dilemma of Representation
Presidents and Shopping Bags • Trustees or Delegates?

Pluralism, Majoritarianism, and Democracy

Parliamentary Government • Pluralism Versus Majoritarianism in the Congress

Jimmy Carter learned the hard way. In writing about his term as president, he complained that "whenever tax measures were considered, we found ourselves fortunate if we left Congress with the same hide we wore in." Why this difficulty with tax legislation? To Carter, the answer was simple. Congress did not have the fortitude to stand up to the "powerful and ravenous wolves"—the special interests—who were "determined to secure for themselves additional benefits at the expense of other Americans."¹

Several years after Carter left office, Congress again found itself facing interest groups that stood in the way of tax reform. In 1985, the Reagan administration proposed a sweeping tax bill that would lower tax rates for most individuals and corporations. The revenue lost by these lower rates would be made up by eliminating certain tax deductions and tax credits—both of which had the effect of lowering the tax burden for particular firms, industries, and individuals.

But one person's tax loophole is another's (in Washington jargon) "incentive to benefit the public interest." For example, one provision targeted for elimination was the investment tax credit, which offered a sizable reduction in federal taxes to companies that bought new machinery and equipment. One of the original reasons for the investment tax credit was to help the decaying "smokestack" industries, among them, the steel industry, which had to invest heavily in new, more efficient machinery to compete effectively with foreign manufacturers. Isn't it good public policy to have a tax code that helps industries in trouble, particularly when lots of jobs are at stake? And why should the steel industry lose its tax benefits when substantial tax breaks for other industries were left largely in place?

Those who backed the tax reform had an answer to these questions: By eliminating tax benefits that helped selected industries, Congress could lower the highest corporate tax rate for all businesses from 48 percent of earnings to 34 percent. In effect, other industries had been subsidizing the steel industry by paying a higher share of the nation's taxes.

The Reagan tax plan led to a classic confrontation between the majoritarian and pluralist views of democratic government. A majority of the public wanted simpler tax laws that would eliminate a maze of special deductions and credits and would lower tax rates. In opposition stood interest groups that represented narrow segments of the population. These groups wanted to preserve the deductions that benefited their members. They worked furiously to block different parts of the bill (remember the efforts of the veterans' organizations, discussed in Feature 9.4).

To achieve a tax code more in line with majoritarian interests, proponents bowed to pluralist politics when it suited their needs. Tax breaks for the timber industry were retained, not because of any compelling economic reason to treat that industry differently, but because Senator Bob Packwood came from Oregon, a big timber-producing state. Packwood, a Republican, was chairman of the Senate Finance Committee at the time the bill was being considered, and no bill taking substantial tax breaks away from an important industry back home was ever going to

get out of his committee. "I don't think parochial interests are a bad thing at all," rationalized Packwood.² And other concessions were made to keep key legislators on the tax reform bandwagon. Although the tax rate reductions were significant, the legislation that finally passed was filled with compromises that limited those reductions.

Democratic government needs institutional mechanisms that can translate public opinion into government policy (see Chapter 2). The five chapters in this part of the book cover Congress, the president, the bureaucracy, the courts, and the Washington community. In studying how these institutions operate in American government, we focus on their contributions to the majoritarian and pluralist versions of democracy. We are less concerned in these chapters with the concepts of freedom, order, and equality, which are more central to our discussion of public policy (in Part V).

In every democratic country, the main institution for representing citizens' interests in government is an elected legislature. Two central questions emerge in studying Congress. First, when members of Congress vote on policy issues, who do they *actually* represent? And second, Who *should* they represent? We try to answer the first question here, leaving you to think about the second.

THE ORIGIN AND POWERS OF CONGRESS

The framers of the Constitution wanted to keep power from being concentrated in the hands of a few, but they were also concerned with creating a union strong enough to overcome the weaknesses of the government that operated under the Articles of Confederation. They argued passionately about the structure of the new government. In the end, they produced a legislative body that was as much an experiment as was the nation's new democracy.

The Great Compromise

The U.S. Congress has two separate and powerful chambers: the House of Representatives and the Senate. A bill cannot become law unless it is passed in identical form by both chambers. The two-house, or **bicameral**, congress has its origins in the negotiations that shaped the Constitution. When the Constitution was being drafted during the summer of 1787, "the fiercest struggle for power" centered on representation in the legislature.³ The small states wanted all states to have equal representation. The more populous states wanted representation based on population; they did not want their power diluted. The Great Compromise broke the deadlock. The small states received equal representation in the Senate, but the House, where the number of each state's representatives would be based on population, retained the sole right to originate money bills.

According to the Constitution, each state is represented by two senators, each of whom serves for six years. Terms of office are staggered, so that one-third of the Senate is elected every two years. When it was

Table 10.1
Qualifications for Congressional Office

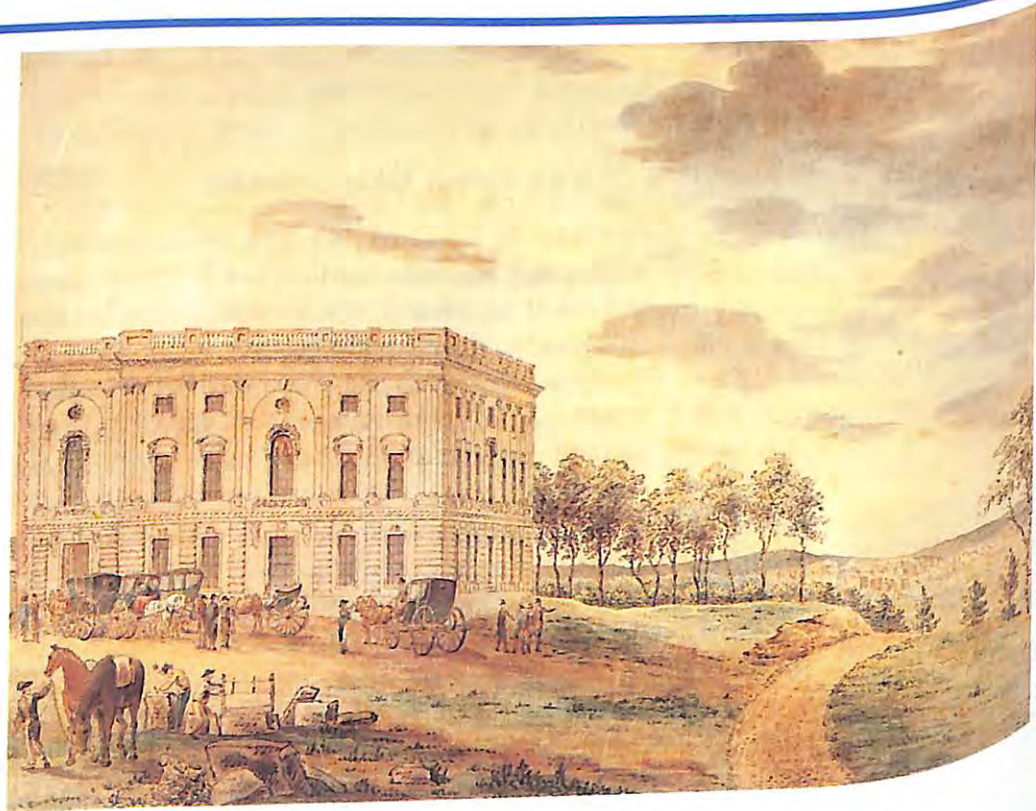
	Senator	Representative
Minimum age	30	25
Minimum years of citizenship	9	7
Requirement	Must be an inhabitant of the state he or she represents.	
Prohibition	Cannot hold any other national office.	

ratified, the Constitution directed that senators should be chosen by the state legislatures. However, the Seventeenth Amendment, adopted in 1913, provided for the election of senators by popular vote. From the beginning, members of the House of Representatives have been elected by the people. They serve two-year terms, and all House seats are up for election at the same time. As Table 10.1 shows, there are few formal qualifications for congressional office.

Because each state's representation in the House is in proportion to its population, the Constitution provides for a national census every ten years. Until the first census, the Constitution fixed the number of representatives at 65. As the nation's population grew and new states joined the Union, new seats were added to the House. (There were already 213 representatives after the census of 1820.)⁴ At some point, however, a legislative body becomes too unwieldy to be efficient, and in 1929, the House decided to fix its membership at 435. Population shifts are handled

The Construction of the Capitol

This watercolor recorded the first stage of the building's construction. Only the North Wing (shown here) was complete in 1801, when Thomas Jefferson became president.



by the **reapportionment** (redistribution) of representatives among the states after each census is taken. In the reshuffling after the 1980 census, for example, Florida gained 4 seats and New York lost 5. California, the nation's most populous state, has 45 representatives; six states have just a single representative, the constitutional minimum.

Representatives are elected from a particular congressional district within their state. The number of districts in a state is equal to the number of representatives the state sends to the House. Before a series of Supreme Court rulings in the 1960s, the states were not required to draw the boundaries of their districts in such a way that districts had approximately equal populations. As a result, some states' sparsely populated rural districts had more representation in Congress than their number of residents warranted. The Court ruled that House districts, and all districts in state legislatures, had to be drawn so as to be reasonably equal in population.⁵

Duties of the House and Senate

Although the Great Compromise provided considerably different schemes of representation for the House and Senate, the Constitution gives them essentially similar legislative tasks. They share many important powers, among them the powers to declare war, raise an army and navy, borrow and coin money, regulate interstate commerce, create federal courts, and establish rules for the naturalization of immigrants, and to "make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers."

Of course, there are at least a few important differences in the constitutional duties of the two chambers. The House alone has the right to originate revenue bills, which apparently was coveted at the Constitutional Convention. In practice, this function is of limited consequence because all bills—including revenue bills—must be approved by both the House and Senate. The House also has the power of **impeachment**, the power to formally charge the president, vice president, or other "civil Officers" of the national government with "Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors." The Senate is empowered to act as a court to try impeachments; a two-thirds vote of the senators present is necessary for conviction. Only one president—Andrew Johnson—has ever been impeached, and in 1868 the Senate came within a single vote of finding him guilty. More recently, the House Judiciary Committee voted to impeach President Richard Nixon for his role in the Watergate scandal, but he resigned in August 1974, before the full House could vote. In 1986, the House voted a rare bill of impeachment against Harry E. Claiborne, a federal judge convicted of income tax evasion. Claiborne refused to resign his life-term office, so an impeachment trial was initiated in the Senate. After reviewing the evidence, the Senate voted to convict Claiborne on three of the four articles of impeachment brought by the House and removed him from office. He was the first judge in fifty years to be convicted by the Senate of impeachable offenses.⁶ In 1988, federal judge Alcee Hastings was impeached by the House after he was acquitted of income tax evasion and bribery charges.

The Constitution gives the Senate the power to approve major presidential appointments (such as to federal judgeships, ambassadorships, and Cabinet posts) and treaties with foreign nations. The president is empowered to *make* treaties, but then they must be submitted to the Senate for approval by a two-thirds majority. Because of this requirement, the executive branch generally considers the Senate's sentiments when it negotiates a treaty. At times, however, a president must try to convince a doubting Senate of a particular treaty's worth. Shortly after World War I, President Woodrow Wilson submitted to the Senate the Treaty of Versailles, which contained the charter for the proposed League of Nations. Wilson had attempted to convince the Senate that the treaty deserved its support; when the Senate refused to approve the treaty, it was a severe setback for Wilson.

Despite the long list of Congressional powers in the Constitution, the question of what powers are appropriate to the Congress has generated substantial controversy. For example, although the Constitution gives Congress the sole power to declare war, many presidents have initiated military action on their own. And at times, the courts have found that congressional actions have usurped the rights of the states.

ELECTING THE CONGRESS

If Americans are not happy with the job Congress is doing, they can use their votes to say so. With a congressional election every two years, the voters have frequent opportunities to express themselves.

The Incumbency Effect

Congressional elections offer voters a chance to show their approval of Congress's performance by re-electing **incumbents** (sitting legislators) or "throwing the rascals out." The voters seem to do more re-electing than throwing out. When House incumbents run for re-election, their "success rate is spectacular."⁷ In the majority of elections since 1950, more than 90 percent of all House incumbents have held their seats (see Figure 10.1). In the 1986 general election, only six incumbent representatives were defeated. And incumbents are winning re-election by increasingly greater margins.⁸

These findings may seem surprising. Congress as a whole is not held in particularly high esteem. When people are polled on the amount of confidence they have in major institutions, Congress scores much lower than the Supreme Court, the military, banks, and public schools.⁹ People appear to distinguish between the *institution* of Congress and their own representatives and senators. But this still does not explain why incumbents do so well within their own districts and states. (Because most research on the incumbency effect has focused on House elections, our discussion concentrates on that body.)

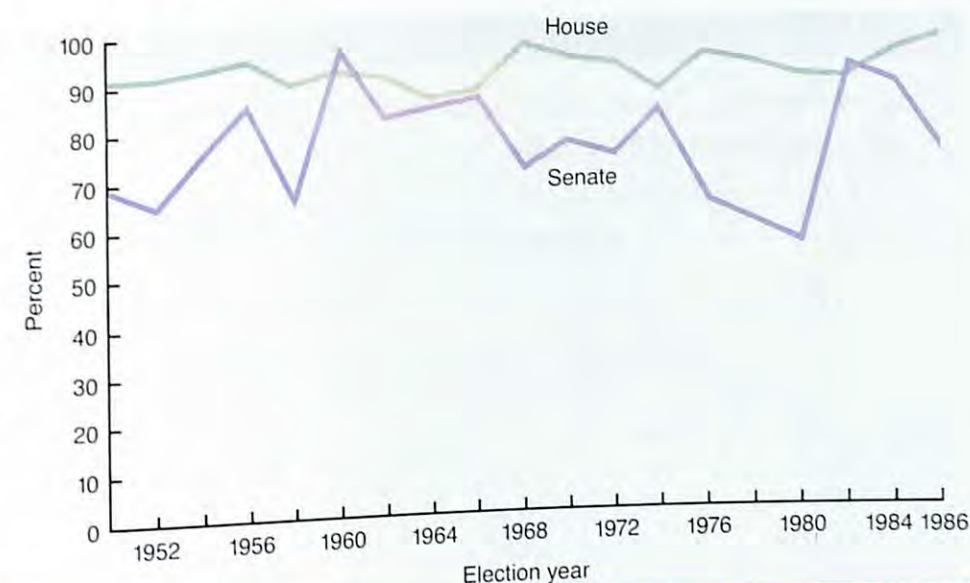
Redistricting. One explanation of the incumbency effect centers on **redistricting**, the way House districts are redrawn after a census-based

The Advantage of Incumbency

The graph shows the percentage of representatives and senators seeking re-election who won. The data include primary and general election defeats.

(Sources: Barbara Hinckley, *Congressional Elections*. [Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1981], p. 39; and Norman J. Orstein et al., *Vital Statistics on Congress, 1987-1988* [Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1987], pp. 56-57.)

Figure 10.1



reapportionment. It is entirely possible for state legislatures to draw new districts to benefit the incumbents of one or both parties. Altering district lines for partisan advantage is commonly called **gerrymandering**.

But redistricting does not explain the incumbency effect in the House as a whole. Statistics show that after a reapportionment, redistricted and unredistricted seats end up approximately the same in terms of competitiveness.¹⁰ Redistricting may be very helpful for an occasional incumbent, but it doesn't explain why more than 90 percent of House incumbents are re-elected.

Name and recognition. Holding office brings with it important advantages. First, incumbents develop significant name recognition among voters simply by being members of Congress. Their activities and speeches are fully reported in the local media, a process helped in good part by congressional staffs adept at maximizing press coverage. And many incumbents are more than happy to meet the media's demands for stories. Representative Dan Glickman, a Democrat from Kansas, appears on Wichita's KAKE-TV an average of three times a week. He also is interviewed frequently on KWCH-TV's five o'clock news. And he has his own monthly television show, "Window on Washington," on KSAS-TV.¹¹ Members of Congress are in high demand to speak before local groups; and, thanks to generous travel allowances and easy air travel, they can make frequent trips between their districts and Washington, D.C.

Another resource available to members of Congress is the **franking privilege**—the right to send mail free of charge. Mailings see to it that constituents are aware of legislators' names, activities, and accomplishments. Periodic newsletters, for example, almost always highlight success at winning funds and projects for the district, such as money to construct a highway or a new federal building. Newsletters also "advertise for business," encouraging voters to phone or visit legislators' district

COMPARED WITH WHAT? 10.1

Manchester, New Hampshire, or Manchester, England, There Are Constituents to Be Served

Although there are some important differences in the structure of the U.S. Congress and that of the British Parliament, there are many similarities in the way members of both bodies do their jobs. One similarity is that U.S. representatives and members of Parliament (MPs) work extremely hard at cultivating the grassroots. They frequently travel back to their districts to hear what's on their constituents' minds and to offer assistance. In both the United States and Britain, voters believe that legislators have a responsibility to help individuals and promote the economic welfare of their districts. Yet there is a difference in emphasis here. The figure below charts the results of a poll of American and British citizens, who were asked to choose which legislative role is most important.

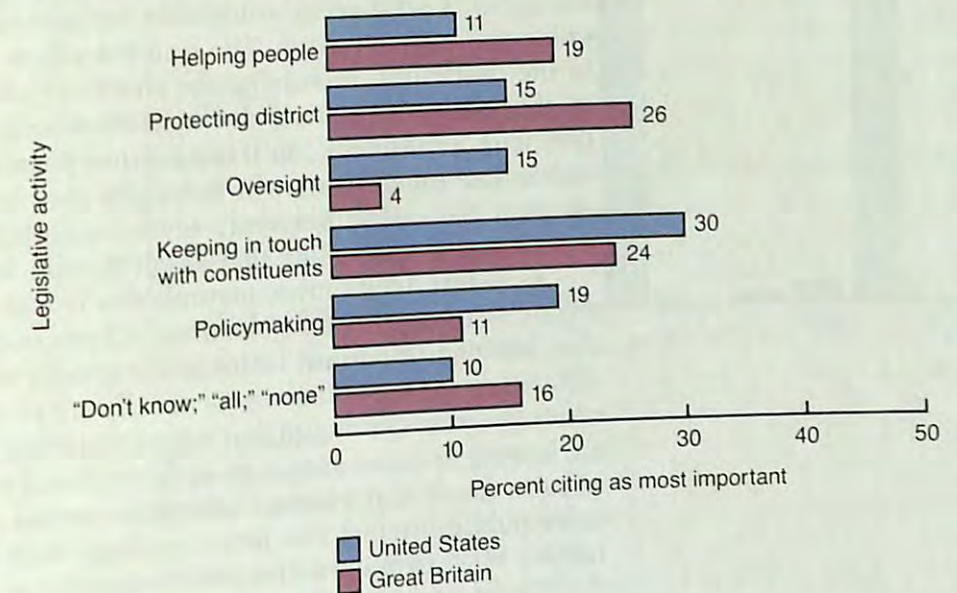
In Britain, local concerns seem paramount. Americans, on the other hand, were more likely to cite policy concerns ("policymaking" and "oversight"). The weaker committee system and stronger party system in Britain make it more difficult for rank-and-file legislators to influence policy outcomes. The British responses to the interview questions may be reflecting this reality.

Legislators place such importance on their work in the constituency because they want to be re-elected and they believe that the help they offer constituents wins them loyal voters. This is not wishful thinking. Research shows that American and British legislators who more actively promote service to constituents are better known, more highly rated, and more successful at the ballot box than legislators who do not work as hard in the constituency. It's also important to note that American representatives have large staffs—typically, four or five full-time caseworkers—to tackle constituents' problems. British MPs have little or no help handling casework; they have to do it the old-fashioned way, by themselves.

offices if they need help with a problem. When he first ran in 1986, Maryland Democrat Tom McMillan won his House seat by a tiny margin, just 428 votes. In the next two years, he blanketed the district (about 230,000 homes) three times with mailings, spending \$1 million of the taxpayers' money in the process. McMillan made himself such an overwhelming presence in the district that no credible Republican candidate came forward to challenge him in 1988.¹²

The large staff that works for a member of Congress is able to do **casework**, providing services for constituents—perhaps tracking down a social security check or directing the owner of a small business to the appropriate federal agency. Constituents who are helped in this way usually remember who assisted them (see Compared With What? 10.1). McMillan keeps ten of his twenty staffers in three district offices, to make it easier for constituents to get the help they need.¹³

In a race between an incumbent and a relatively unknown challenger, the incumbent's advantages (name recognition, staff resources, record of achievement) translate directly into votes. This is often enough to dissuade a potentially strong challenger from an election battle, opting



Source: Adapted by permission of the publishers from Bruce Cain, John Ferejohn, and Morris Fiorina, *The Personal Vote* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), especially pp. 38, 60–61, and 213. Copyright © 1987 by The President and Fellows of Harvard College.

instead to wait for a more opportune time to run—perhaps when the incumbent retires or when his or her party seems headed for a fall.¹⁴

Campaign financing. It should be clear that anyone who wants to challenge an incumbent needs solid financial backing. Challengers must spend large sums of money to run a strong campaign, with an emphasis on advertising—an expensive but effective way to bring their names and records to the voters' attention. But here too, the incumbent has the advantage. It is very difficult for challengers to raise campaign funds because they have to overcome contributors' doubts about whether they can win. Political action committees (PACs) show a strong preference for incumbents (see Chapter 9). They tend not to want to risk offending an incumbent by giving money to a long-shot challenger. During the 1985–1986 election cycle, PACs contributed \$89.5 million to incumbents but only slightly more than \$19.2 million to challengers.¹⁵ The attitude of the American Medical Association's PAC is fairly typical. "We have a friendly incumbent policy," says its director. "We always stick with the incumbent if we agree with both candidates."¹⁶

Successful challengers. Although it is very difficult for a challenger to defeat an incumbent (particularly a member of the House), it is not impossible. The opposing party and unsympathetic PACs may target incumbents who seem vulnerable because of age, lack of seniority, or unfavorable redistricting. The result is a flow of campaign contributions to the challenger, increasing the chance of victory. Incumbents can also be the victims of general dissatisfaction with their party. Poor disaffection with a president can translate into popular disaffection with House and Senate incumbents who belong to the president's party. In the 1980 election, for example, twenty-seven incumbent House Democrats were defeated in the landslide that swept Ronald Reagan into office.¹⁷

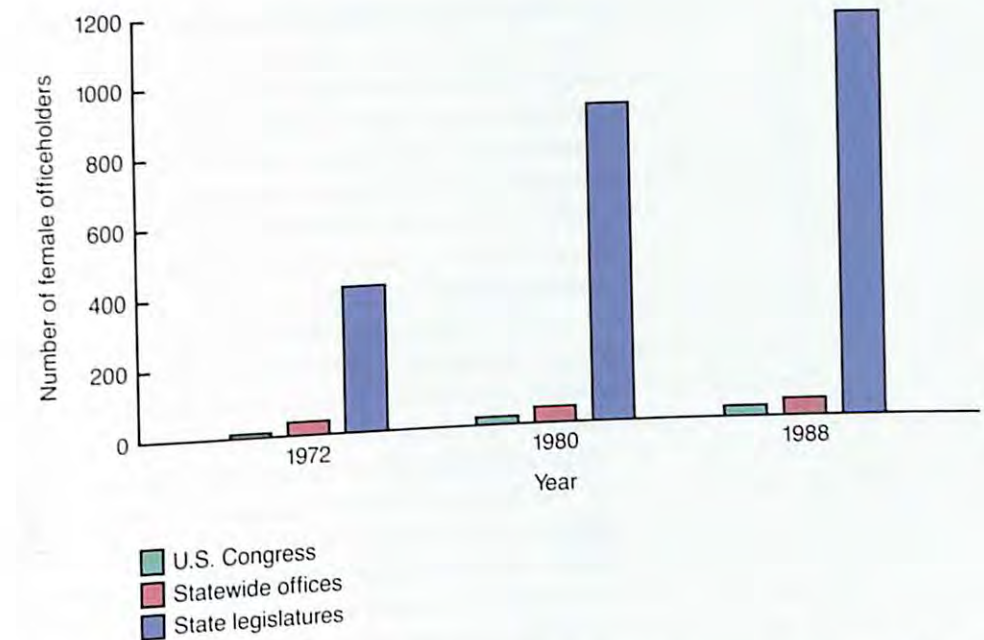
As Figure 10.1 shows, incumbency is less of an advantage in Senate elections than in House elections. There is no simple explanation for this, but one important factor is the greater visibility of challengers for Senate seats. These challengers usually are prominent individuals (sometimes governors or incumbent representatives), whose names and records are known to many voters. In addition, Senate challengers often are able to raise funds that House challengers cannot. And Senate races attract more public interest and press coverage than House races. All of these factors tend to reduce the identification gap between incumbent and challenger, resulting in more competitive races for the Senate.

Who Do We Elect?

The people we elect (then re-elect) to Congress are not a cross-section of American society. Most members of Congress are professionals—primarily lawyers and businesspeople. Although nearly a third of the American labor force works in blue-collar jobs, there are few former blue-collar workers in Congress.¹⁸ And although the typical American does not have a college degree, the typical member of Congress holds both undergraduate and graduate degrees.

The number of blacks in the House has grown modestly, but blacks are still underrepresented in terms of their number in the general population, as are Hispanics. And women, who make up half the population of the United States, hold only 5 percent of seats in the House and only 2 percent of seats in the Senate (see Figure 10.2). This is not to say that Congress discriminates against minorities or women. After all, the voters elect the members of Congress. But the underrepresentation of minorities and women in Congress reflects historical patterns of opportunity—or lack of it—in American society. And the predominance of white-collar professionals in Congress reflects the advantages of wealth and education that make it easier for upper-middle-class people to enter politics.

If a representative legislative body is supposed to mirror the electorate, then Congress certainly doesn't qualify. Yet the correspondence between the social characteristics of the population and the membership of Congress is only one way to look at the question of representation. A more crucial measure may be how well the members of Congress represent their constituents' views as they make policy decisions. In the



Congress: Still the Men's Club

Although women have made great strides in building careers in many fields that were at one time dominated by men, national political office is not one of them. Only twenty-three women are now serving in the House of Representatives. The number of women elected to the state legislatures has increased significantly, though. And because many congressional candidates first serve in state legislatures, there is reason to hope that as women gain experience and recognition they will be winning more congressional nominations and seats. (Source: "Women in Power," Ms., April 1988, p. 79.)

Figure 10.2

next several sections, we examine the legislative process. Then we return to the subject of representation.

HOW ISSUES GET ON THE CONGRESSIONAL AGENDA

The formal legislative process begins when a member of Congress introduces a **bill**, a proposal for a new law. In the House, members drop new bills in the "hopper," a mahogany box near the rostrum where the Speaker presides. Senators give their bills to one of the Senate clerks or introduce them from the floor.¹⁹ But before a bill can be introduced to solve a problem, someone must perceive that a problem exists or that an issue needs to be resolved. In other words, the problem or issue somehow must find its way onto the congressional agenda. *Agenda* actually has two meanings in the vocabulary of political scientists. The first is that of a narrow, formal agenda, such as a calendar of bills to be voted on. The second meaning refers to the broad, imprecise, and unwritten agenda that consists of all the issues an institution is considering. Here we use the term in the second, broader sense.

Many of the issues Congress is working on at any one time seem to have been around forever. Foreign aid, the national debt, and social security have come up in just about every recent session of Congress. Yet all issues begin at some point in time. For example, for a long time, commercial banks have wanted the reversal of a provision in the Glass-Steagall Act (1932) that generally prohibits them from underwriting the sales of securities, a lucrative part of business along Wall Street. But only recently has Congress given serious consideration to a change in the banking laws.²⁰

What moves an issue onto the congressional agenda? Commercial banks are profiting from deregulation, a general movement in the last couple of decades away from government intervention in the marketplace.²¹ As the walls of regulation have come down in certain industries (communications, airlines), they are harder to justify in many others.

Some new issues reach the congressional agenda as a response to a highly visible event. When an explosion in a West Virginia mine in 1968 killed seventy-eight miners, Congress promptly went to work on laws to promote miners' safety.²² Presidential support can also move an issue onto the agenda quickly. This was certainly the case for the *flat tax*, which was promoted energetically by two Republicans—Representative Jack Kemp of New York and Senator Robert Kasten of Wisconsin—and two Democrats—Representative Richard Gephardt of Missouri and Senator Bill Bradley of New Jersey. The basic idea of the flat tax was to simplify the tax code, reduce people's tax rates, and eliminate tax loopholes. The flat tax seemed to be a good idea that was going nowhere until President Reagan embraced a modified version of it and asked Congress to pass the bill described at the opening of this chapter. Only then was tax reform given active consideration by Congress.

Within Congress, party leaders and committee chairs have the best opportunity to influence the political agenda. National insurance for catastrophic illness is a case in point. According to surveys, only a minority of leaders (14 percent in 1977 and 33 percent in 1978) in the national health field believed that catastrophic illness insurance was a prominent issue. But when Russell Long, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, announced in 1979 that his committee would work up a bill on catastrophic illness insurance, the figure jumped to 92 percent. "In other words, a key congressional committee chairman single-handedly set a major portion of the policy agenda in health by his intention to move on health insurance."²³

Although party leaders and committee chairs have the opportunity to move issues onto the agenda, they rarely act capriciously, seizing upon issues without rhyme or reason. They often bide their time, waiting for other members of Congress to learn about an issue, as they attempt to gauge the level of support. At times the efforts of an interest group spark support, or at least an awareness, of an issue. When congressional leaders—or, for that matter, rank-and-file members—sense that the time is ripe for action on a new issue, they often are spurred on by the knowledge that sponsoring an important bill can enhance their own image. In the words of one observer, "Congress exists to do things. There isn't much mileage in doing nothing."²⁴

THE DANCE OF LEGISLATION: AN OVERVIEW

The process of writing bills and getting them passed is relatively simple, in the sense that it follows a series of specific steps. What complicates the process is the many different ways legislation can be treated at each step. Here, we examine the straightforward process by which laws are made. In the next few sections, we discuss some of the complexities of that process.

After a bill is introduced in either house, it is assigned to the appropriate committee of that chamber for study (see Figure 10.3). A banking bill, for example, would be assigned to the Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs Committee in the House or to the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee in the Senate, depending on where it was introduced. When a committee actively considers a piece of legislation assigned to it, the bill is usually referred to a specialized subcommittee. The subcommittee may hold hearings, and legislative staffers may do research on the bill. The original bill usually is modified or revised, then, if passed in some form, it is sent back to the full committee. A bill that is approved by the full committee is *reported* (that is, sent) to the entire membership of the chamber, where it may be debated, amended, and either passed or defeated.

Bills coming out of House committees go to the Rules Committee before going before the full House membership. The Rules Committee attaches a "rule" to the bill that governs the coming floor debate, typically specifying the length of the debate and the types of amendments that can be offered. The Senate does not have a comparable committee, although restrictions on the length of floor debate can be reached through unanimous consent agreements (see page 375).

Even if a bill on the same subject is passed by both houses of Congress, the Senate and House versions are typically different from each other. In that case, a conference committee, composed of legislators from both houses, works out the differences and develops a compromise version. This version is sent back to both houses for another floor vote. If the bill passes in both chambers, it is then sent to the president for his signature or veto.

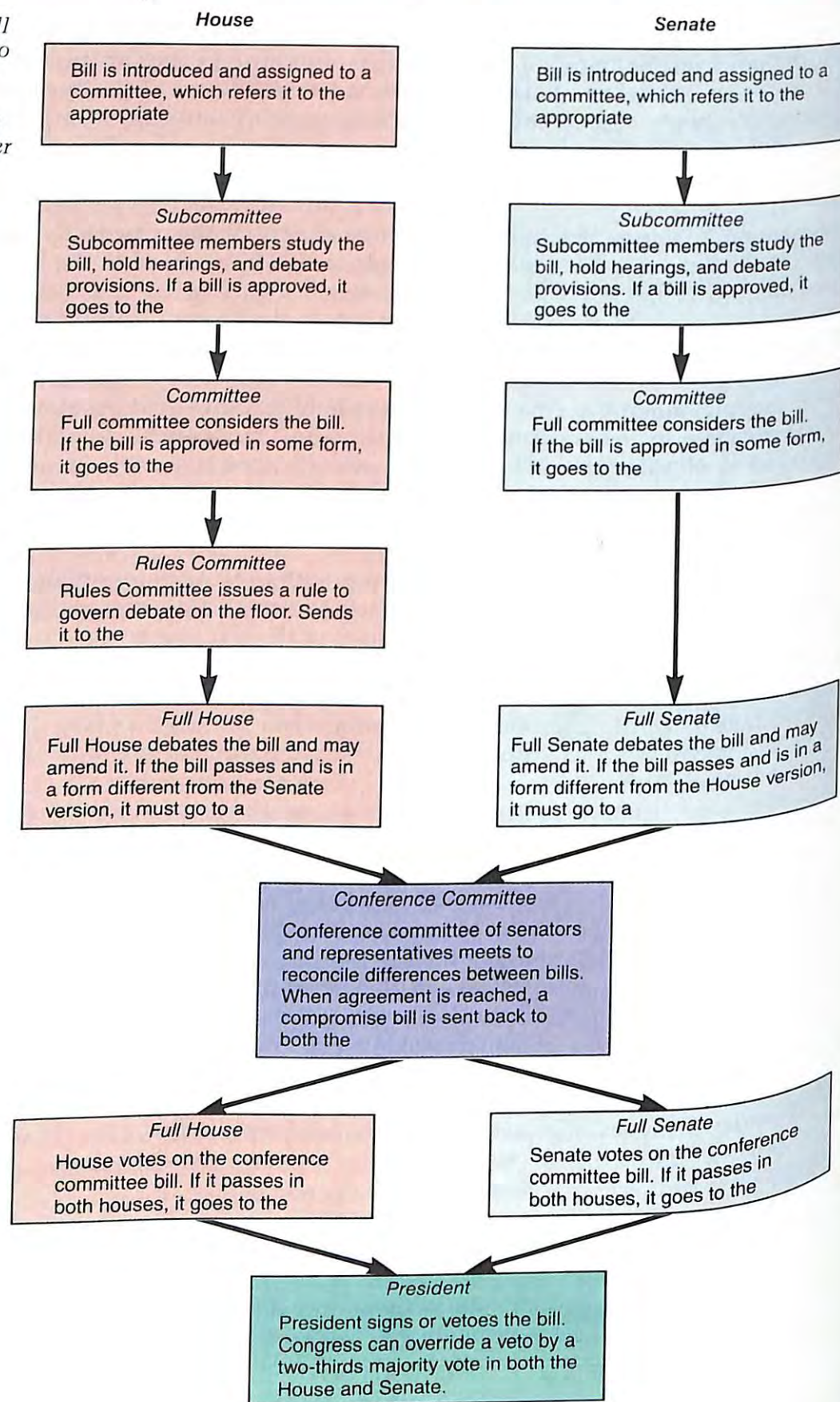
When the president signs a bill, it becomes law. If the president **veto**es (disapproves) the bill, it is sent back to Congress with his reasons for rejecting it. The bill then becomes law only if Congress overrides the president's veto by a two-thirds vote of each house. If the president neither signs nor vetoes the bill within ten days (Sundays excepted) of receiving it, the bill becomes law. There is an exception here: If Congress adjourns within the ten days, the president can let the bill die through a **pocket veto**, by not signing it.

The content of a bill can be changed at any stage of the process, in either house. Lawmaking (and thus policymaking) in Congress has many access points for those who want to influence legislation. This openness tends to fit within the pluralist model of democracy. As a bill moves through the dance of legislation, it is amended again and again, in a search for a consensus that will get it passed and signed into law. The process can be tortuously slow and often fruitless. Derailing legislation

Figure 10.3

The Legislative Process

The process by which a bill becomes a law is subject to much variation. This diagram depicts the typical process a bill might follow. It is important to remember that a bill can fail at any stage because of lack of support.



is much easier than enacting it. The process gives groups frequent opportunities to voice their preferences and, if necessary, to thwart their opponents. One foreign ambassador stationed in Washington aptly described the twists and turns of our legislative process: "In the Congress of the U.S., it's never over until it's over. And when it's over, it's still not over."²⁵

COMMITTEES: THE WORKHORSES OF CONGRESS

Woodrow Wilson once observed that "Congress in session is Congress on public exhibition, whilst Congress in its committee-rooms is Congress at work."²⁶ His words are as true today as when he wrote them over one hundred years ago. A speech given on the Senate floor, for example, may convince the average citizen, but it is less likely to influence other senators. Indeed, few of them may even hear it. The real nuts and bolts of lawmaking goes on in the congressional committees.

The Division of Labor Among Committees

The House and Senate are divided into committees for the same reason that other large organizations are broken into departments or divisions—to develop and use expertise in specific areas. At IBM, for example, different groups of people design computers, write software, assemble hardware, and sell the company's products. Each of these tasks requires an expertise that may have little to do with the other tasks that the company performs. Likewise, in Congress, decisions on weapons systems require a special knowledge that is of little relevance to decisions on reimbursement formulas for health insurance, for example. It makes sense for some members of Congress to spend more time examining defense issues, becoming increasingly expert as they do so, while others concentrate on health matters.

Eventually, though, all members of Congress have to vote on each bill that emerges from the committees. Those who are not on a particular committee depend on committee members to examine the issues thoroughly, to make compromises as necessary, and to bring forward a sound piece of legislation that has a good chance of being passed. Each member decides individually on the bill's merits. But once it reaches the House or Senate floor, members may get to vote on only a handful of amendments (if any at all) before they must cast their yeas and nays for the entire bill.

Standing committees. There are several different kinds of congressional committees, but the standing committee is predominant. **Standing committees** are permanent committees that specialize in a particular area of legislation—for example, the House Judiciary Committee or the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (see Table 10.2). Most of the day-to-day work of drafting legislation takes place in the sixteen standing Senate committees and twenty-two standing House committees.

Table 10.2
Standing Committees of Congress

Standing Committees of the Senate

Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry	Finance
Appropriations	Foreign Relations
Armed Services	Governmental Affairs
Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs	Judiciary
Budget	Labor and Human Resources
Commerce, Science, and Transportation	Rules and Administration
Energy and Natural Resources	Small Business
Environment and Public Works	Veterans' Affairs

Standing Committees of the House

Agriculture	Interior and Insular Affairs
Appropriations	Judiciary
Armed Services	Merchant Marine and Fisheries
Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs	Post Office and Civil Service
Budget	Public Works and Transportation
District of Columbia	Rules
Education and Labor	Science, Space, and Technology
Energy and Commerce	Small Business
Foreign Affairs	Standards of Official Conduct
Government Operations	Veterans' Affairs
House Administration	Ways and Means

Source: *Committees and Subcommittees of the 99th Congress*, supplement to *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, 2 May 1987. Copyrighted material reprinted with permission, Congressional Quarterly Inc.

tees. There are typically fifteen to twenty senators on each standing Senate committee, and thirty to forty members on each standing committee in the House. The proportions of Democrats and Republicans on a standing committee generally reflect party proportions in the full Senate or House, and each member of Congress serves on only a small number of committees.

With a few exceptions, standing committees are further broken down into subcommittees. The House Agriculture Committee, for example, has eight separate subcommittees, among them one on wheat, soybeans, and feed grains and another on livestock, dairy, and poultry. Subcommittees exist for the same reason parent committees exist: Members acquire expertise by continually working within the same fairly narrow policy area.

Other congressional committees. Members of Congress can also serve on joint, select, and conference committees. **Joint committees** are made up of members of both the House and the Senate. Like standing committees, the small number of joint committees are concerned with particular policy areas. The Joint Economic Committee, for instance, analyzes the country's economic policies. Joint committees operate in

Can We Split the Difference?

For members of Congress, conference committees represent another opportunity to negotiate policy during the legislative process. These conferees from the House and Senate budget committees are trying to reconcile different budget resolutions passed by the two chambers.



much the same way as standing committees, but they are almost always restricted from reporting bills to the House or Senate.

A **select committee** is a temporary committee, created for a specific purpose. Select committees are established to deal with special circumstances or with issues that either overlap or are not included in the areas of expertise of standing committees. The Senate committee that investigated the Watergate scandal was a select committee, created for that purpose only.

A **conference committee** is also a temporary committee, created to work out differences between the House and Senate versions of a specific piece of legislation. Its members are appointed from the standing committees or subcommittees that originally handled and reported the legislation to each house. Depending on the nature of the differences and the importance of the legislation, a conference committee may meet for hours or for weeks on end. When the conference committee agrees on a compromise, the bill is reported to both houses of Congress. Each house may either approve or disapprove the compromise; they cannot amend or change it in any way.

Congressional Expertise and Seniority

Once appointed to a committee, a representative or senator has great incentive to remain on it and to gain increasing expertise over the years. That incentive can be translated as influence in Congress, and that influence increases as a member's level of expertise grows. Influence also grows in a more formal way, with **seniority**, or years of consecutive service on a committee. In the quest for expertise and seniority, members



Sam Nunn: Defense Specialist

The cerebral Democrat from Georgia, extremely knowledgeable on defense policy, exerts a great deal of influence as chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

tend to stay on the same committees. Sometimes, however, they switch places when they are offered the opportunity to move to one of the high-prestige committees (like Ways and Means or Appropriations in the House) or to a committee that handles legislation of vital importance to their constituents.

In a committee, the member of the majority party with the most seniority usually becomes the committee chair. (The majority party in each house controls committee leadership.) Other high-seniority members of the majority party become subcommittee chairs, while their counterparts from the minority party gain influence as *ranking minority members*. With about 140 subcommittees in the House and 90 in the Senate, there is a great deal of power and status available to the members of Congress.

Unlike seniority, expertise does not follow simply from length of service. Ability and effort are critical factors too. Democratic Representative Les Aspin from Wisconsin is influential on military matters not simply because he is chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. Aspin, who has a Ph.D. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is widely respected for his incisive knowledge of weapons systems and military matters. Other House members often look to him before committing themselves one way or the other on important defense votes.

Committee Reform

The committee system and the seniority system that determines the leadership of committees was sharply attacked during the 1970s. The push for reform came primarily from liberal and junior members of the House who "chafed under the restrictions on their participation and policy influence that the old, committee-dominated regime imposed. The committee chair, often in collaboration with the ranking minority member, dominated the panel."²⁷

A number of select committees were established to study the organization of the House and Senate. Although not all of their reforms were adopted, many significant changes were made. The power of the subcommittees in relation to their parent committees and their number were increased; and House Democrats (the majority party) prohibited their members from serving as chairs of more than one subcommittee. Also in the House, the seniority system was weakened by new rules that held that seniority did not have to be followed in the selection of committee chairs. In 1975, House Democrats voted out three aging unpopular committee chairmen, serving notice on all committee chairs that autocratic rule would not be tolerated. An earlier change by House Democrats had eliminated the committee chairs' power to appoint subcommittee chairs. These changes decentralized influence in the House. Although some changes also strengthened the position of the Speaker of the House, their general thrust was to make subcommittees more autonomous and powerful.²⁸

There was considerably less reform in the Senate. The smaller number of members in that body guarantees virtually all senators in the



Bill Gray: Rising Star

This Democrat from Philadelphia has built an impressive career since entering the House in 1979. Especially noteworthy was his effective leadership of the House Budget Committee during a four-year tenure as chairman.

majority party at least one subcommittee chair. Moreover, the Senate's greater national visibility makes its members less dependent on their committee activities or seniority to gain recognition and influence. As one study concluded, "Committees are simply less crucial to the pursuit of personal goals in the Senate than in the House."²⁹

Drafting Legislation

The way in which committees and subcommittees are organized within Congress is ultimately significant because much public policy decision making takes place there. The first step in drafting legislation is to collect information on the issue. Committee staffers research the problem and hearings may be held to take testimony from witnesses who have some special knowledge on the subject.

At times, committee hearings are more theatrical than informational, to draw public attention to them. When the House judiciary subcommittee on administrative law held hearings on alleged malpractice in military hospitals, it did not restrict its list of witnesses to the experts who had done relevant research. Instead, it called witnesses like Dawn Lambert, a former member of the navy, who sobbed as she told the subcommittee that she had been left sterile by a misdiagnosis and a botched operation that had left a sponge and a green marker inside her. It was an irresistible story for the network news, and brought the malpractice problem to light.³⁰

The meetings at which subcommittees or committees actually debate and amend legislation are called **markup sessions**. The process by which committees reach decisions varies. In many committees, there is a strong tradition of decision by consensus. The chair, the ranking minority member, and others in these committees work hard, in formal committee sessions and in informal meetings, to find a middle ground on issues that divide committee members. In other committees, members exhibit strong ideological and partisan sentiments. One House member on Education and Labor said there was so much division on the committee that "you can't get a resolution praising God . . . without having a three-day battle over it."³¹

The skill of an individual committee or subcommittee chair can strongly influence the way a committee handles its drafting of legislation. Some chairs are gifted at understanding what makes other committee members tick and have the patience and diligence to lead the bargaining between those holding different views until a consensus decision is reached. The legendary Wilbur Mills, an Arkansas Democrat and former chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee (which writes tax laws), was brilliant at helping his committee reach agreement on the complex and controversial issues before it. He was described as "a shaper of decisions, not a dictator . . . an extremely skillful leader who responds to [committee members] in such a way that his conclusions, drawn from their discussions, become their conclusions."³² Mills, like all other committee chairs, wanted to develop a reasonable bill that would pass when the entire chamber voted on it.

Committees: The Majoritarian and Pluralist Views

It makes sense to bring as much expertise as possible to the policy-making process, and the committee system does just that. But government by committee vests a tremendous amount of power in the committees and subcommittees of Congress—especially in their leaders. This is particularly true of the House, which is more decentralized in its patterns of influence and is more restrictive in the degree to which legislation can be amended on the floor. Committee members can bury a bill by not reporting it to the full House or Senate. The influence of committee members extends even further, to the floor debate. And many of them make up the conference committee that is charged with developing a compromise version of the bill.

This vesting of policy-area power in many committees and subcommittees tends to remove that power from the majority party and thus to operate against majoritarianism. At the same time, the committee system enhances the force of pluralism in American politics. Representatives and senators are elected by the voters in particular districts and states, and they tend to seek membership on the committees whose decisions are most important to their constituents. Members from farm areas, for example, want membership on the House and Senate Agriculture Committees. Westerners like to serve on the committees that deal with public lands and water rights. Urban liberals like the committees that handle social programs. As a result, the various committees are predisposed to writing legislation favorable to those who are most affected by their actions.

de la Garza Delivers

When a devastating drought hit the Midwest in the summer of 1988, the House Agriculture Committee, chaired by Democrat Kika de la Garza of Texas, swung into action to fashion a relief measure. Both the House and the Senate completed work on the farm legislation quickly, and the bill was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan before the summer was over.



This is not to say that committee members care only about being re-elected and simply pass legislation that will win them votes back home. They are genuinely sympathetic to their constituents and can usually rationalize that good policy for their constituents is good policy for the nation as a whole.

A meeting of the whole House or Senate, to vote a bill up or down, may seem to be an example of majoritarianism at work. The views of the collective membership of each body may reasonably approximate the diverse mix of interests in the United States.³³ Committee decision making also anticipates what is acceptable to the entire membership. Still, by the time the broader membership begins to debate legislation on the floor, many crucial decisions have already been made in committees with a much narrower constituency in mind. Clearly, the internal structure of Congress gives small groups of members, with intense interests in particular policy areas, a disproportionate amount of influence over those areas.

LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS IN CONGRESS

Above the committee chairs is another layer of authority in the organization of the House and Senate. The Democratic and Republican leaders in each house work to maximize the influence of their own party, at the same time trying to keep their chamber functioning smoothly and efficiently. The operation of the two houses is also influenced by the rules and norms that each chamber has developed over the years.

The Leadership Task

Each of the two parties in each of the two houses elect leaders. In the House of Representatives, the majority-party leader is the **Speaker of the House**, who, gavel in hand, chairs sessions from the ornate rostrum at the front of the chamber (see Figure 10.4). The counterpart in the opposing party is the *minority leader*. The majority party chooses the Speaker at its *caucus*, a closed-door meeting of the party. The majority and minority parties then "slate" their candidates for Speaker at the opening session of Congress. The official election follows strict party lines, affirming the majority party's caucus decision. The minority-party candidate becomes the minority leader. The Speaker is a constitutional officer, but the Constitution does not list the Speaker's duties. The minority leader is not mentioned in the Constitution, but that post has evolved into an important party position in the House.

The Constitution makes the vice president of the United States the president of the Senate. But the vice president usually does not come to the Senate chamber unless there is a possibility of a tie vote, in which case he can break the tie. The **president pro tempore** (president "for the time"), elected by the majority party, is supposed to chair the Senate in the vice president's absence, but by custom this constitutional position is entirely honorary.



Did Wright Do Wrong?
In 1988, Speaker of the House Jim Wright, a Democrat from Texas (shown here with Ronald Reagan), faced allegations of a number of ethical violations—among them, the charge that he had improperly aided some Texas oil ventures. In response, the House Ethics Committee launched the first formal inquiry of a Speaker since the nineteenth century.

The real power in the Senate resides in the **majority leader**. As in the House, the top position in the opposing party is that of *minority leader*. Technically, the majority leader does not preside (members rotate in the president pro tempore's chair); but the majority leader does schedule legislation in consultation with the minority leader. More broadly, the majority leader, the minority leader, and a handful of other party leaders below them play a critical role in getting bills through Congress. The most significant function that leaders play is steering the bargaining and negotiating over the content of legislation. When an issue divides their party, their house, the two houses, or their house and the White House, the leaders must take the initiative to work out a compromise solution.

Compromise was on the mind of Speaker of the House Jim Wright, a Democrat from Texas, when in 1987 he was called on to mediate a dispute between two committees working on legislation in the same area. Claude Pepper, head of the Rules Committee and the nation's foremost spokesman on behalf of the elderly, was angry that the House Ways and Means Committee had not included long-term home care for senior citizens in the bill it prepared to provide protection from the cost of catastrophic illness. Pepper wanted to amend the bill with a home-care provision. Members of the Ways and Means Committee argued that the costs were too high; if the home-care provision was added, President Reagan was sure to veto the whole bill. Wright got Pepper to agree not to try to amend the catastrophic costs bill by promising him he could do an end run around Ways and Means, which would normally have jurisdiction over such issues, and bring a bill of his own on long-term care directly to the floor. In exchange, Ways and Means got the bill it wanted without the killer amendment.³⁴

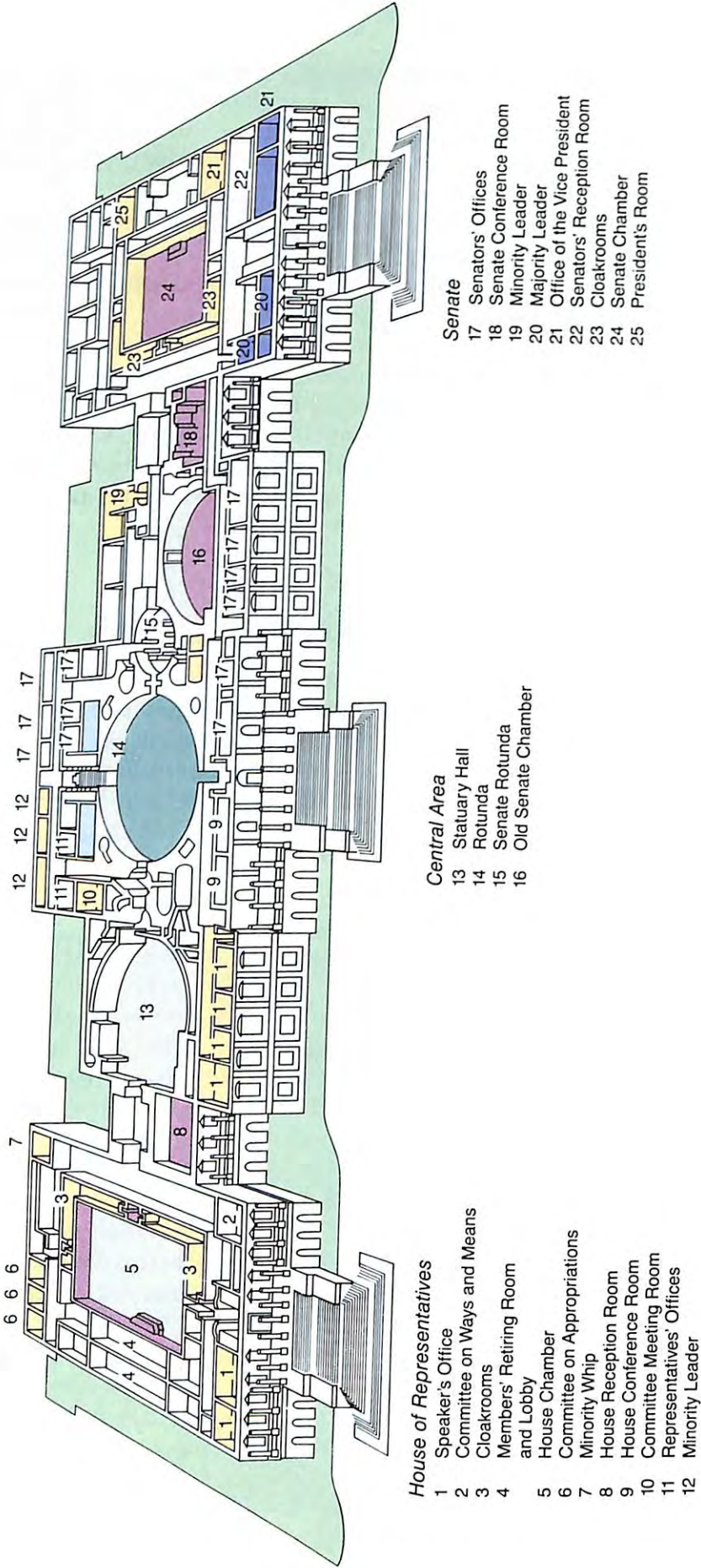


Figure 10.4
The United States Capitol

Day in, day out, this is much of what leaders do: meet with other members of their house to try to strike deals that will yield a majority on the floor. It is often a matter of finding out if one faction is willing to give up a policy preference in exchange for another concession. Beyond trying to engineer tradeoffs that will win votes, the party leaders must persuade others (often powerful committee chairs) that theirs is the best deal possible. Senator Robert Dole of Kansas aptly described himself as the "majority pleader" in his role as Senate majority leader.³⁵ (Dole later became the *minority* pleader when his party lost control of the Senate in the 1986 elections.)

Party leaders are coalition builders, not kingmakers. Gone are the days when leaders ruled the House and the Senate with iron fists. Even as recently as the 1950s, strong leaders dominated the legislative process. When he was Senate majority leader, Lyndon Johnson made full use of his intelligence, parliamentary skills, and forceful personality to direct the Senate. When he approached individual senators for one-on-one persuasion, "no one subjected to the 'Johnson treatment' ever forgot it."³⁶

The Johnson Treatment

When he was Senate majority leader in the 1950s, Lyndon Johnson was well known for his style of interaction with other members. In this unusual set of photographs, we see him applying the "Johnson treatment" to Democrat Theodore Francis Green of Rhode Island. Washington journalists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak offered the following description of the treatment: "Its tone could be supplication, accusation, cajolery, exuberance, scorn, tears, complaint, the hint of threat. It was all of these together. It ran the gamut of human emotions. Its velocity was breathtaking, and it was all in one direction. Interjections from the target were rare. Johnson anticipated them before they could be spoken. He moved in close, his face a scant millimeter from his target, his eyes widening and narrowing, his eyebrows rising and falling. From his pockets poured clippings, memos, statistics. Mimicry, humor, and the genius of analogy made The Treatment an almost hypnotic experience and rendered the target stunned and helpless." (Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, *Lyndon B. Johnson: The Exercise of Power*. New York: New American Library, 1966, p. 104.)



In today's Congress, rank-and-file representatives and senators would not stand for this kind of leadership. But there is no doubt that contemporary leaders have an impact on policy outcomes in Congress. As one expert concluded, "Although leadership contributions may be marginal, most important political choices are made at the margins."³⁷

Rules of Procedure

The operation of the House and Senate is structured by both formal *rules* and informal *norms of behavior*. Rules in each chamber are mostly matters of parliamentary procedure. For example, they govern the scheduling of legislation, outlining when and how certain types of legislation can be brought to the floor. There are rules, too, that govern the introduction of floor amendments. In the House, amendments must be directly germane (relevant) to the bill at hand; in the Senate, except in certain specified instances, amendments that are not germane to the bill at hand can be added.

As noted earlier, an important difference between the two chambers is the House's use of its Rules Committee to govern floor debate. Without a similar committee to act as a "traffic cop" for legislation approaching the floor, the Senate relies on *unanimous consent agreements* to set the starting time and length of debate. If one senator objects to an agreement, it does not take effect. Senators do not routinely object to unanimous consent agreements, however, because they need them when a bill of their own awaits scheduling by the leadership.

If a senator wants to stop a bill badly enough, he or she may start a **filibuster**, trying to talk the bill to death. By historical tradition, the

Three Men and a Cot

In an attempt to break a Republican-led filibuster over a campaign finance reform bill in 1988, the Democratic leadership decided not to adjourn the Senate. Republican Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky gets some help from two staffers as he prepares for a long night at the Capitol.



Senate gives its members the right of unlimited debate. During a 1947 debate, Idaho Democrat Glen Taylor "spoke for 8½ hours on fishing, baptism, Wall Street, and his children." The record for holding the floor belongs to Republican Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, for a twenty-four-hour, eighteen-minute marathon.³⁸ In the House, no member is allowed to speak for more than an hour without unanimous consent.

After a 1917 filibuster by a small group of senators killed President Wilson's bill to arm merchant ships—a bill favored by a majority of senators—the Senate finally adopted **cloture**, a means of limiting debate. A petition signed by sixteen senators initiates a cloture vote. It now takes the votes of sixty senators to invoke cloture.³⁹ Cloture was successfully invoked when a filibuster by southern senators threatened passage of the far-reaching Civil Rights Act of 1964. Three-quarters of senators recently surveyed professed some support for making it more difficult to filibuster, but apparently sentiment is not intense enough to propel reform forward because no changes are now being actively considered.⁴⁰

Norms of Behavior

Both houses have codes of behavior that help keep them running. These codes are largely unwritten norms, although some have been formally adopted as rules. Members of Congress recognize that personal conflict must be eliminated (or minimized), lest Congress dissolve into bickering factions unable to work together. One of the most celebrated norms is that members show respect for their colleagues in public deliberations. During floor debate, bitter opponents still refer to one another in such terms as "my good friend, the senior senator from . . ." or "my distinguished colleague."

Members of Congress are only human, of course, and tempers occasionally flare (see Compared With What? 10.2). For example, when Democrat Barney Frank of Massachusetts was angered by what he thought were unusually harsh charges against the Democratic party, made by Republican Robert Walker of Pennsylvania, Frank rose to ask the presiding officer if it was permissible to refer to Walker as a "cry-baby." When he was informed that it was not, Frank sat down, having made his point without technically violating the House's code of behavior.⁴¹

Probably the most important norm of behavior in Congress is that individual members should be willing to bargain with one another. Policymaking is a process of give and take; it demands compromise. And the cost of not compromising is high. When Republican Richard Armey of Texas first came to Congress in 1985, he was a strident conservative ideologue who enjoyed trying to disrupt the Democratic-controlled House to prevent it from passing legislation that it favored. Consequently, other representatives ignored him; he was never included in the bargaining over legislation and had no real impact on the lawmaking process. By his next term in office, Armey realized that if he was going to have any influence on public policy, he had to stop thinking of the

COMPARED WITH WHAT? 10.2

Maybe They Ought to Make Crocodile Dundee Speaker

We wouldn't expect a legislature with members named "Toecutter" Williams, "Dingo" Dawkins, and "Ironbar" Tuckey to be a quiet, formal, contemplative body. And the Australian Parliament is not. In fact, the Australian Parliament makes the boisterous British Parliament—after which it is modeled—seem almost subdued.

Name-calling has rarely reached the heights of imagination it has in the hallowed chambers of the Parliament Down Under. Cries of "harlot," "sleazebag," "mug," "boxhead," "fop," "sucker," and "thug" are hurled back and forth among members as they debate the bills before them. For the record, it's only fair to point out that the body's rules actually forbid such language. Indeed, the Senate's handbook explicitly states that it's wrong to call other senators names like "arrant humbug" or "yahoo from Tasmania." But when an Australian senator gets angry, no handbook is going to stop him from calling a yahoo from Tasmania a "yahoo from Tasmania."

The Australian Parliament does have a rich sense of tradition. Legislators are called to impend-

ing votes by bells that ring for two minutes. There is no clock on the wall of the chambers; time is measured with an hourglass. And attendants who work in the chambers are dressed in wigs and gowns.

Unfortunately, one of the traditions is freely speaking one's mind. When they have something to say, Australian legislators can be quite persistent. Unlike Representative Barney Frank, who was content to sit down after a single insult, Brian Howe, an Australian representative, was only warming up when he called a colleague "something of a grub if I could put it that way." When the Speaker told Howe no, that he couldn't put it that way, Howe responded, "I will withdraw that term and substitute the term parasite." Again, the Speaker objected. Howe then substituted the phrase "this leech over there," which led the Speaker to reprimand Howe.

Source: Adapted from Geraldine Brooks, "In This Parliament, Decorum Often Sinks Down Under Insults," *Wall Street Journal*, 14 November 1986, p. 1. Reprinted by permission of *The Wall Street Journal*, © Dow Jones Company, Inc. 1986. All rights reserved.

Democrats as liberal heathens and be willing to negotiate. Now, he's a "player" in the process.⁴²

Of course, if one side has all the votes it needs for passage, it has no need to bargain with those on the other side. Many issues, however, are complex, with many different provisions. Here, bargaining is essential if a bill is going to be passed. A recent trade bill, for example, was a thousand pages long; House and Senate differences had to be worked out by two hundred legislators working in seventeen subconferences.⁴³

It is important to point out that members of Congress are not expected to violate their consciences on policy issues simply to strike a deal. They are expected, however, to listen to what others have to say and to make every effort to reach a reasonable compromise. Obviously, if each of them sticks rigidly to his or her views, they will never agree on anything. Moreover, few policy matters are so clear-cut that compromise destroys one's position.

Consequently, members of Congress are willing bargainers, who enter the lawmaking process with a rough idea of which provisions they are willing to yield on, which they would give up entirely, and which they feel they cannot yield on. Most of this horse trading goes on in committee, with the chair usually playing a pivotal role in putting together a deal and coming up with a reportable bill. The norms for such

committee bargaining on the House Ways and Means Committee are instructive:

If a member asks a reasonable price, and Rostenkowski [the Democratic chairman, from Illinois] makes the deal, the agreement is clear: the member must then vote for the final package. If a member asks a price that the chairman cannot or will not pay, then there are no obligations on either side; the member is free to oppose the bill, and the chairman is free to follow his own advice and kick the member's brains in, making no concession to his special concerns.⁴⁴

One form of bargaining is **logrolling**, a kind of legislative back scratching, in which members of Congress drum up support for their own bills or amendments by promising to vote for others'. Logrolling played an important part in passage of the Food Stamp Act of 1964. The urban liberals in favor of the program were shy of a majority in the House. At around the same time, a bill providing cotton and wheat subsidies was also in trouble. There were urban liberals who cared more about getting a food stamp bill through than about voting against an agriculture bill. And there were southern Democrats and northern Republicans who were willing to vote for food stamps if that was the way to get the subsidy bill passed. In the end, logrolling ensured that both bills won approval on the House floor.⁴⁵

Lawmaking requires that leaders be attentive to their followers. Members of Congress have many opportunities to present and argue their claims. Although members can apply the brakes to the congressional process, the rules and norms encourage cooperation among competing interests in order for Congress to function. Compromise enables the leadership to forge majorities from these competing interests. This description of legislative leadership fits the pluralist model of democracy.

THE LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENT

After legislation emerges from committee, it is scheduled for floor debate. How do legislators make up their minds on how to vote? In this section, we examine the broader legislative environment that affects decision making in Congress. More specifically, we look at the influence of political parties, interest groups, colleagues, staff, the president, and constituents on legislators.⁴⁶

Political Parties

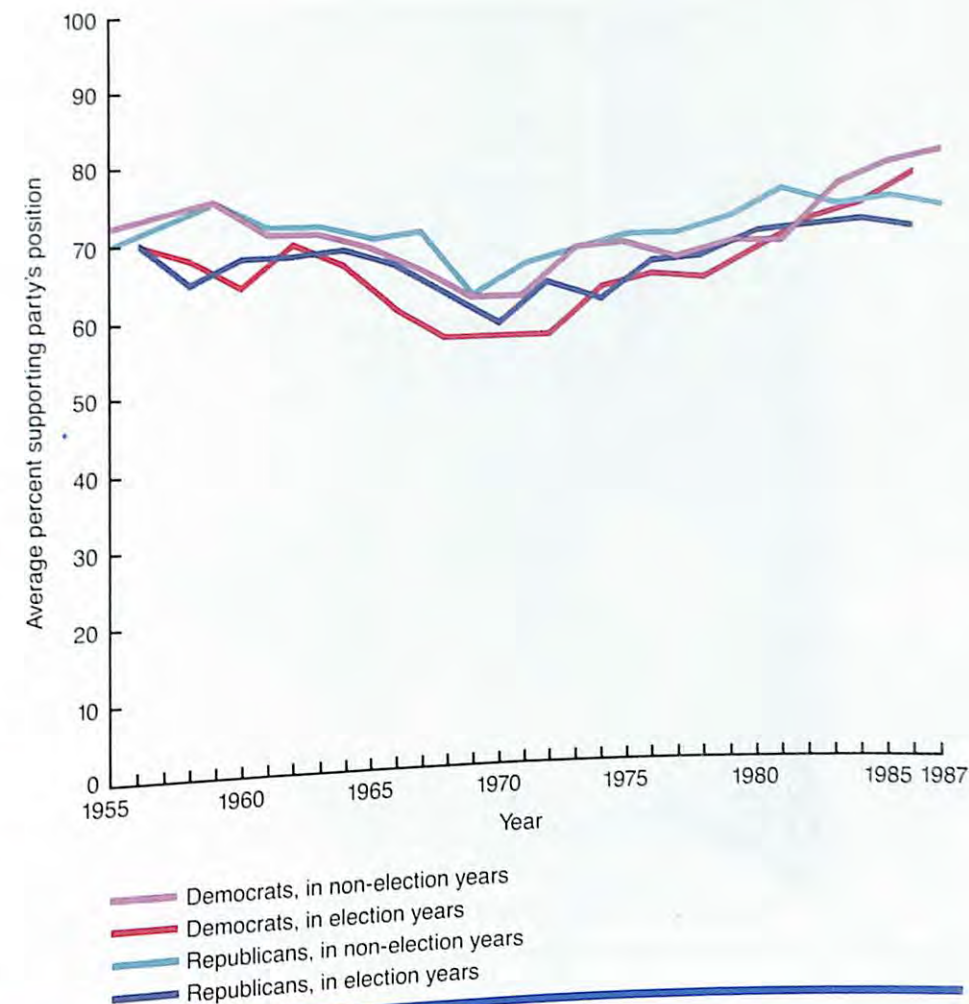
The national political parties have limited influence over lawmakers. They do not control the nominations of House and Senate candidates. Candidates receive the bulk of their funds from individual contributors and political action committees, not from the national parties. The party leadership in each house, however, does try to influence the rank and file. Individual members may, for example, need their party leaders' assistance on specific legislation; members therefore have an incentive to cooperate with those leaders. Although members rarely vote in solid party blocs when floor votes are called, in recent years we have witnessed an increase in party unity (see Figure 10.5).

Trends in Party Unity

Despite the talk in recent years about party decline, both parties have actually increased their unity in congressional roll call voting since 1969. This figure plots the percentage of times the average Democrat and Republican voted with his or her own party when majorities of the two parties opposed each other. Party unity tends to be slightly higher in non-election years than in election years; during election years, members seem more likely to defect from their party on issues that generate constituency pressures against their party's position.

(Source: Data from Congressional Quarterly Almanac, various editions; and Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, 16 January 1988, p. 104.)

Figure 10.5



One factor in this increase in party unity is the greater loyalty of southern democrats. Although they are still less likely to vote with fellow Democrats than are the party's northern members, their loyalty has risen significantly. A primary reason for this is that the issue of race no longer dominates southern politics or the national agenda the way it once did. Since the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed, blacks have registered in large numbers. They comprise a large share of the Democratic coalition in the South, and act as a moderating influence on the traditionally conservative southern Democratic party.⁴⁷ But there are times when a majority of southern Democrats join a majority of Republicans, forming the **conservative coalition**, to vote against a majority of northern Democrats. In 1986, the conservative coalition formed on 20 percent of the votes in the Senate and was victorious in 93 percent of them. In the House, the coalition formed in just 11 percent of the votes and won 78 percent of them.⁴⁸

Interest Groups

Lobbyists do more than tell legislators where a group stands on an issue. Their primary function is to provide lawmakers with useful and

reliable information. Legislators do not need to be told that the AFL-CIO favors an increase in the minimum wage. They need reports and research analyses describing why an increase in the minimum wage would not be inflationary, why it would not reduce competitiveness in world markets, how it would raise the working poor's standard of living, and why it would reduce welfare payments.

Critics often refer to lobbies as "pressure groups." Although political scientists would choose a more neutral term, interest groups *do* try to pressure Congress. One of the most effective forms of pressure is having constituents contact their legislators with their version of the facts. Members of Congress aren't re-elected by Washington lobbyists; it's the people back home who cast the ballots. One study calls this the "Utah plant manager theory" of lobbying. A Utah senator may not want to take time out of a hectic schedule to speak with a lobbyist from an industry trade group, but if the manager of a Utah plant in this same industry comes to Washington and wants to see the senator, the senator is more likely to agree to a meeting. That senator doesn't want the manager to go back home and tell all the workers (voters) in the plant that their elected representative was too busy to hear about the industry's problems.⁴⁹

Colleagues

Lobbyists and interest groups are a good source of information, but their facts and arguments support their own interests. For more objective information, a legislator may very well turn to a fellow representative or senator. One reason is the expertise that comes with committee specialization. It is easy for a member to find an extremely knowledgeable colleague, who can offer a quick analysis of the legislative choices. A second reason is that representatives and senators form a peer group, and strong bonds of trust, friendship, and professional respect develop over time within that peer group.

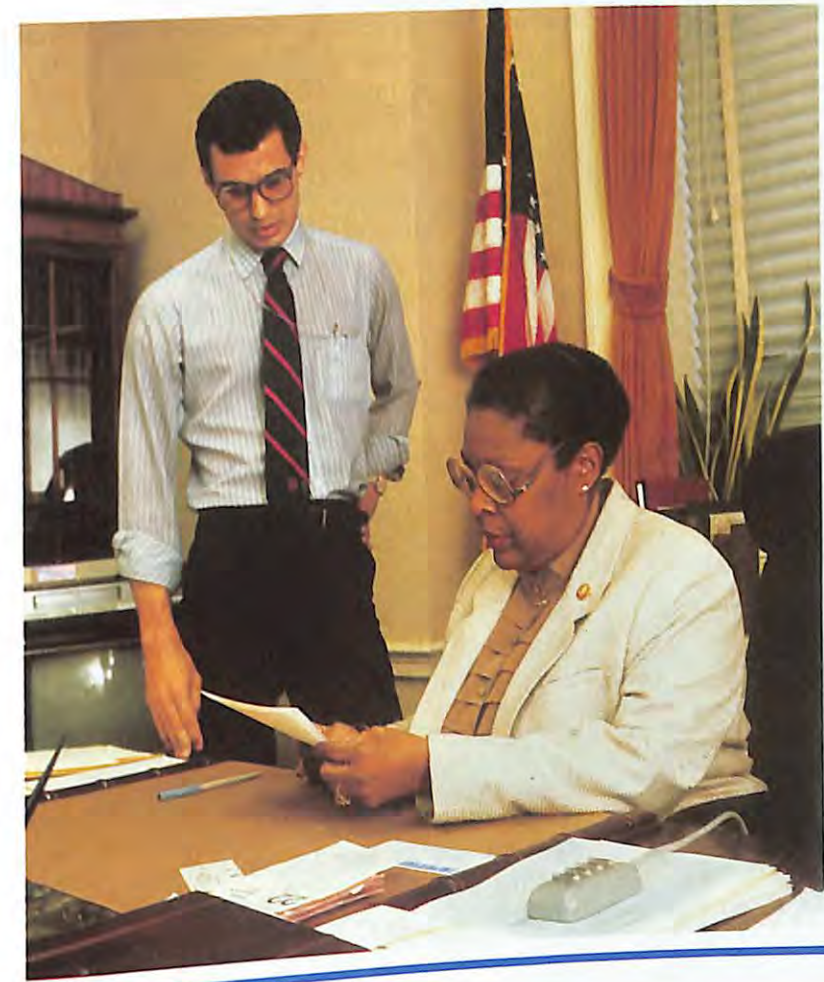
Consultation with colleagues comes not only through informal conversations, but also through various formal groupings of legislators. Half of the state delegations in the House meet regularly to discuss issues of mutual concern.⁵⁰ There are many other groups, or caucuses, that work together on issues that particularly concern them or their constituents. In the House, for example, there are bipartisan caucuses for steel, coal, and Irish affairs. One of the better-known groups is the Congressional Black Caucus, which is made up of the twenty or so blacks who serve in the House. Finally, there are partisan groups of legislators, like the Democratic Study Group and the Republican's Conservative Opportunity Society, both in the House.

Staff

The number of congressional staff members has risen dramatically in the last several decades, although it has now leveled off. In the mid-1950s, House members had about 2,500 personal staffers; by 1981, the figure had grown to about 7,500. Over the same period, Senate personal

Collins and Staffer

The staff in each legislator's office is responsible for a variety of tasks, including handling casework and press relations, doing research, monitoring legislation, writing speeches, and meeting with constituents and interest group representatives. Here, Democratic Representative Cardiss Collins of Illinois goes over some paperwork with one of her assistants.



staffs grew from around 1,000 to about 4,000 people. The number of staff members assigned to congressional committees grew significantly during this time as well.⁵¹

These larger staffs have helped members of Congress handle an increasing workload. Staffers reliably represent their bosses' interests during the day in, day out negotiations over legislation.⁵² Staffers are particularly helpful in involving their bosses in new issues that will increase their influence both with constituents and within Congress. More broadly, one scholar notes: "The increased use of personalized, entrepreneurial staffs has helped Congress retain its position as a key initiator of federal policy, despite the growing power of the executive branch."⁵³

The President

Unlike members of Congress, who are elected by voters in individual states and districts, the president is elected by voters across the entire nation. The president has a better claim, then, to representing the nation than does any single member of Congress. But it can also be argued that Congress *as a whole* has a better claim than the president to representing the majority of voters. In fact, when Congress and the president differ,

opinion surveys sometimes show that Congress's position on a given bill more closely resembles the majority view; at other times, these surveys show that the president's position accords with the majority. Nevertheless, presidents capitalize on their popular election and usually act as though they are speaking for the majority.

During the twentieth century, the public's expectations of what a president can accomplish in office have grown enormously. We now expect the president to be our chief legislator: to introduce legislation on major issues and to use his influence to push bills through Congress. This is much different from our early history, when presidents felt constrained by the constitutional doctrine of separation of powers and had to have members work confidentially for them during legislative sessions.⁵⁴

Today the White House is openly involved, not only in the writing of bills, but also in their development as they wind their way through the legislative process. If a bill is not to the White House's liking, it tries to work out a compromise with key legislators to have the legislation amended. On issues of the greatest importance, the president himself may meet with individual legislators to persuade them to vote a certain way. To monitor day-to-day congressional activities and lobby for the broad range of administration policies, there are hundreds of legislative liaison personnel working for the executive branch.

Although members of Congress grant presidents a leadership role in proposing legislation, they jealously guard their power to debate, shape, pass, or defeat any legislation the president proposes. Congress often clashes sharply with the president when his proposals are seen as ill advised.

Constituents

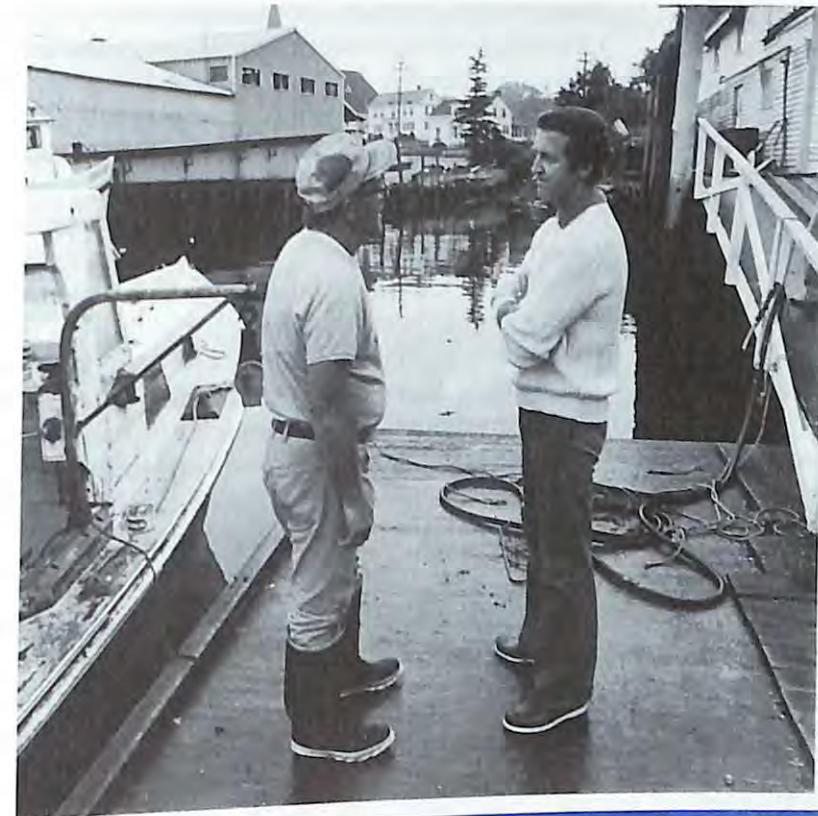
Constituents are the people who live and vote in the legislator's district or state. Their opinions on an issue are a crucial factor in the legislative decision-making process. As much as members of Congress want to please the party leadership or the president by going along with their preferences, legislators have to think about what the voters back home want. If they displease enough people with the way they vote, they might lose their seats in the next election.

In considering the influence of all these factors in the legislator's environment, it is important to keep in mind that legislators also have strong views of their own. They come to Congress deeply committed to working on some key issues and do not need to be pressured into acting on them or into voting a certain way. In fact, their strong views on certain policy questions can conflict with what their constituents want, a problem we discuss in detail later in this chapter.

Of all the possible sources of influence, which are the most important? Unfortunately, there is no one way of measuring. However, in an interesting and straightforward study, political scientist John Kingdon asked a sample of House members how they made up their minds on a variety of issues. He found that colleagues and constituency were more likely to have an impact than the other factors we've talked about.

Fishing for Votes

Republican Senator William Cohen of Maine talks to a voter, a lobsterman whose industry is an important part of the state's economy. Despite the emphasis on the use of the electronic media by legislators, one-on-one contact with constituents is still an effective, though painstaking, way for a legislator to build a reputation as one who cares deeply about the problems of the individuals he or she serves.



Kingdon cautioned, however, that the decision-making process in Congress is complex and that no single factor "is important enough that one could conclude that congressmen vote as they do" because of its influence.⁵⁵

OVERSIGHT: FOLLOWING THROUGH ON LEGISLATION

It is often said in Washington that "knowledge is power." For Congress to retain its influence over the programs it creates, it must be aware of how they are being administered by the agencies responsible for them. To that end, legislators and their committees engage in **oversight**, the process of reviewing agency operations to determine whether an agency is carrying out policies as Congress intended.

As the executive branch has grown and policies and programs have become increasingly complex, oversight has become more difficult. The sheer magnitude of executive branch operations is staggering. On a typical weekday, for example, agencies issue over a hundred pages of new regulations. Even with the division of labor in the committee system, it is no easy task to determine how good a job an agency is doing in implementing a program.

Congress performs its oversight function in a number of different ways. The most visible is the hearing. Hearings may be part of a routine

review or the by-product of information that reveals a major problem with a program or with an agency's administrative practices. After a U.S. Department of Energy investigation of drug dealing at a nuclear weapons facility in California was terminated, a subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee held a hearing to see if the department had actually finished the job. Accusations were made by plant security officials that they were pursuing leads on 127 suspects when the investigation (code name "Operation Snowstorm") ended. Some committee members felt that the Energy Department was trying to cover up the drug problem at the plant, to avoid embarrassment. After hearing the evidence, Representative Ron Wyden, a Democrat from Oregon, said that Operation Snowstorm "should be called 'Operation Snow Job.'"⁵⁶

Another way Congress keeps track of what departments and agencies are doing is to request reports on specific agency practices and operations. Two reporters for the *Washington Post* wrote about the volume of material that Congress had requested from just the U.S. Department of Defense:

Along with the Pentagon's wish list in the 1985 defense budget, Congress asked for a little paper work on the side.

First, the Defense Department had to supply more than 20,000 pages of detailed justifications for the money requested.

Piled atop that were 440 reports and 257 studies demanded by Congress.

Furthermore, before a dispirited Pentagon stopped counting in 1983, Defense Department witnesses in one year logged 1,453 hours of testimony before 91 congressional committees and subcommittees. During the same year, the military responded to 84,148 written queries from Capitol Hill and 592,150 telephone requests, numbers officials believe are on the rise.⁵⁷

Despite the onslaught of information, much escapes congressional attention. To deal with the breadth of executive branch activity, Congress has greatly expanded its staffing. In addition to increasing personal and committee staff sizes, Congress created two new specialized offices in the 1970s—the Congressional Budget Office and the Office of Technology Assessment—to do sophisticated analyses of agency operations and proposals. The longer-standing Government Accounting Office (GAO) and the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress also do in-depth studies for Congress.

Still, Congress is routinely criticized for not doing more in the way of oversight. Many argue that members of Congress have little reason to spend much time on oversight. It is seen as rather tedious, unglamorous work that wins few points from the voters back home. With so many pressing tasks competing for their time, members of Congress may push oversight aside for other, more compelling activities, such as talking to constituents in the home district.⁵⁸

Clearly, legislators are pulled in many different directions. But, they do not ignore their oversight responsibilities and may in fact do much more than is popularly perceived. Research has shown that the amount of time committees devote to oversight hearings has risen significantly.⁵⁹ One reason why members spend time on oversight, even though it might not always get their name in the newspapers back home, is that they

care about making good public policy. A study of the food stamp program found that, through most of the program's history, oversight has been conducted by a small band of legislators who "sought out the issue and worked on it with great energy, imagination, and fervor. Although their individual views differed, these members of Congress were moved to act because they believed current food stamp policy to be incompatible with their own prescription for a fair and just society."⁶⁰

THE DILEMMA OF REPRESENTATION

When candidates for the House and Senate campaign for office, they routinely promise to work hard for their district's or state's interests. When they get to Washington, though, they all face the troubling dilemma with which we began this chapter: What their constituents want may not be what the people across the nation want.

Presidents and Shopping Bags

In doing the research for his book *Home Style*, political scientist Richard Fenno accompanied several representatives on trips back to their home districts. On one trip, he was in an airport with a congressional aide, waiting for the representative's plane from Washington to land. When the congressman arrived, he said, "I spent fifteen minutes on the telephone with the president this afternoon. He had a plaintive tone in his voice and he pleaded with me." The congressman's side of the issue had prevailed over the president's, and he was elated by the victory. When the three men reached the aide's car, the congressman saw the back seat piled high with campaign paraphernalia: shopping bags printed with the representative's name and picture. "Back to this again," he sighed.⁶¹

Every member of Congress lives in two worlds: the world of presidents and the world of personalized shopping bags. A typical week in the life of a representative means working in Washington, then boarding a plane and flying back to the district. There the representative spends time meeting with individual constituents and talking to civic groups, church gatherings, business associations, labor unions, and the like (see Feature 10.1). A survey of House members during a nonelection year showed that each made an average of thirty-five trips back to the district, spending an average of 138 days there.⁶²

Members of Congress are often criticized for being out of touch with the people they are supposed to represent. This charge does not seem justified. Legislators work extraordinarily hard at keeping in touch with voters, at finding out what is on their constituents' minds. The difficult problem is how to act on that knowledge.

Trustees or Delegates?

Are members of Congress bound to vote the way their constituents want them to vote, even if it means voting against their conscience?

FEATURE 10.1

On the Road Again

John Hiler was first elected to the House in the landslide that swept Reagan into office in 1980. The Indiana Republican, a firm believer in Reagan's principles of small government, went to Washington with the intention of promoting sweeping changes in the scope of government. By his second year in office, he was "Housebroken." He realized that the people back home in South Bend cared less about broad principles of contemporary conservatism than they did about what he could do to get a loan guarantee for an ethanol plant. He also quickly recognized that members of the House who don't "bring home the bacon" to the district could have trouble getting their contracts renewed.

Hiler works slavishly, commuting back and forth between Indiana and Washington. In a given year, he might spend about 175 days in the district, including most weekends. On a typical trip home, he drove 50 miles to give a 9:00 A.M. speech at a high school in Elkhart, a thirty-minute interview at a television station, then a speech at a Lion's Club luncheon. He then drove to Warsaw, Indiana, where he visited a nursing home for the retarded, saw the mayor about a Commerce Department grant, and met with the president of the town's chamber of commerce. From there, he drove to South Bend and stopped in at his district office. The next stop was La Porte, for an interview with a local reporter and a speech at a Jaycees' dinner. He wasn't done until 10:00 P.M. that night. The next morning, Hiler was up again very early to make a 7:30 A.M. fund-raising breakfast 50 miles away.

Hiler's work style is not an exception; it's the rule. Being highly visible in the district and working hard on its behalf in Washington are seen as the keys to re-election. All of this takes a toll on family life. Even when he's in Washington, Hiler leaves his house at 7:00 A.M. and doesn't usually get home until 8:00 P.M., which is bedtime for his two small



Representative John Hiler

daughters, Alison and Caitlin. His wife, Catherine, says, "I have total responsibility for the children. . . . At times, I do wonder if it's worth it. That happens when Jack's gone a few weekends in a row." Sadly, the congressman's choice seems to be spending the weekend talking to the Jaycees and visiting nursing homes so he can get re-elected, or spending time with his children.

Source: Adapted from Fred Barnes, "The Unbearable Lightness of Being a Congressman," *New Republic*, 15 February 1988, pp. 18–22. Reprinted by permission.

Some say no. They argue that legislators must be free to vote in line with what they think is best. This view has long been associated with eighteenth-century English political philosopher Edmund Burke (1729–1797). Burke, who served in Parliament, told his constituents in Bristol that "you choose a member, indeed; but when you have chosen him, he is not a member of Bristol, but he is a member of *Parliament*."⁶³ Burke reasoned that representatives are sent by their constituents to vote as



Reasoned Discourse Is the Hallmark of a Civilized Society

Members of Congress love good floor debates, but a photo opportunity may bring them more publicity back home than the carefully crafted arguments they present to their colleagues. These four members of the House are smashing a Toshiba radio to demonstrate their anger at that Japanese corporation. A Toshiba subsidiary, in conjunction with a Norwegian business consortium, had sold submarine equipment illegally to the Soviet Union.

they think best. As **trustees**, representatives are obligated to consider the views of constituents, but they are not obligated to vote according to those views if they think they are misguided.

Others hold that legislators are duty bound to represent the majority view of their constituents, that they are **delegates** with instructions from the people at home on how to vote on critical issues. And delegates, unlike trustees, must be prepared to vote against their own policy preferences. Liberal Democrats from Massachusetts criticize excessive defense spending. Yet because of its highly educated workforce and many engineering firms, Massachusetts receives a disproportionate amount of defense contracts for weapons systems. Should liberal Democrats vote for a weapons system that brings jobs to their districts? Or should they vote according to their consciences, against the weapons system they believe is unnecessary?

Members of Congress are subject to two opposing forces, then. While the interests of the district push them toward the role of delegates, the larger national interest calls on them to be trustees. As one legislator put it, "There is a heavy responsibility to represent the people of the district and the country at large . . . both [to] make your own decisions and to represent [others]."⁶⁴ As a result, few lawmakers act consistently as either delegates or trustees.

Even if Congress is not clearly a body of delegates or of trustees, it is more apt to take the delegate role on issues that are of great concern to constituents.⁶⁵ Certainly, when jobs are at stake in the district, lawmakers know that there is considerable concern back home over how they vote. But much of the time, what the constituency really wants is not clear. Many issues are not highly visible back home or they cut across the constituency to affect it in different ways or they are only partially understood. One study of House congressional voting on the central tax and spending issues during the first year of the Reagan administration found that most members had voted with what they perceived to be the majority opinion in their districts. Yet opinion polls in those districts showed that many representatives who voted for Reaganomics came from districts that did not really favor the program. The problem was that the legislators received a great deal of mail that was strongly in favor of Reaganomics. But clearly, the sentiment of activists—those who took the time to write a letter—were not representative of the broader population in the districts.⁶⁶

PLURALISM, MAJORITARIANISM, AND DEMOCRACY

The dilemma that individual members of Congress face in adopting the role of either delegate or trustee has broad implications for the way our country is governed. If legislators tend to act as delegates, then congressional policymaking is more pluralistic. And policies reflect the bargaining that goes on among lawmakers who speak for different constituents. If, instead, legislators tend to act as trustees and vote their consciences, policymaking becomes less tied to the narrower interests of districts and states. But even here there is no guarantee that congressional decision making reflects majority interests.

We end this chapter with a short discussion of the pluralist nature of Congress. But first, to establish a frame of reference, we need to take a quick look at a more majoritarian type of legislature—the parliament.

Parliamentary Government

In our legislative system, the executive and legislative functions are divided between a president and a congress, each elected separately. Most other democracies—for example, Britain and Japan—have parliamentary governments. In a **parliamentary system**, the chief executive is the leader whose party holds the most seats in the legislature after an election or whose party forms a major part of the ruling coalition. For instance, Margaret Thatcher became prime minister of Great Britain because she was the leader of the Conservative party when it won a majority of seats in elections held in 1979, 1983, and 1987. She did not win her office directly in a national election. Although British voters knew that Thatcher would become prime minister if her party won the election, they actually cast their votes for candidates in over six hundred parlia-

mentary elections across the country. The only citizens who voted for Thatcher were those in her own district, Finchley. But voters across the nation put her in office by choosing Conservative candidates under her party leadership.

In a parliamentary system, government power is highly concentrated in the legislature because the leader of the majority party is also the head of government. Moreover, parliamentary legislatures are usually composed of only one house or have a second chamber that is much weaker than the other. (In the British Parliament, the House of Commons makes the decisions of government; the other chamber, the House of Lords, is little more than an honorary debating club for distinguished members of society.) And parliamentary governments usually do not have a court that can invalidate acts of the parliament. Under such a system, the government is usually in the hands of the party that controls the parliament. With no separation of government powers, there are few checks on government action. The net effect is that parliamentary governments fit the majoritarian model of democracy to a much greater extent than do congressional governments.

Pluralism Versus Majoritarianism in the Congress

Nowadays, the U.S. Congress is often criticized for being too pluralist and not majoritarian enough. The federal budget deficit is a case in point. Americans are deeply concerned about the large deficits that have plagued our national budgets in recent years. And both Democrats and Republicans in Congress repeatedly call for reductions in those deficits. But when spending bills come before Congress, legislators' concern turns to what the bills will or will not do for their districts or states. A \$604 million spending bill passed by Congress in 1988 included numerous examples of individual members winning some "pork barrel" project that benefitted their district or state and added further to the deficit. Senator James McClure, a Republican, won inclusion of a \$6.4 million grant to build a ski resort in Kellogg, Idaho. Democratic Representative Daniel Akaka got a \$250,000 appropriation for pig and plant control at the Haleakala National Park in Hawaii. And Republican Senator Ted Stevens delivered \$2.6 million to the Fisheries Promotional Fund in Alaska.⁶⁷

Projects such as these get into the budget through bargaining among members; as you saw earlier in the chapter, congressional norms encourage it. Members of Congress try to win projects and programs that will not only benefit their constituents, but will help them at election time. To win approval of something helpful to one's own constituents, a member must be willing to vote for other legislators' projects. This type of system obviously promotes pluralism.

Some feel that Congress has to be less pluralistic if it is going to attack such serious problems as the national deficit. Yet those who favor pluralism are quick to point out Congress's merits. For example, many different constituencies are well served by the spending deliberations

described above. For Alaska's fishermen, an appropriation to promote new markets for their industry is not frivolous spending. It is vital to their livelihood. They pay taxes to fund the government, and they have a right to expect the government to care about their problems and try to help them.

Proponents of pluralism also argue that the makeup of Congress generally reflects that of the nation, that different members of Congress represent farm areas, oil and gas areas, low-income inner cities, industrial areas. They point out that America itself is pluralistic, with a rich diversity of economic, social, religious, and racial groups, and that even if our own representatives and senators don't represent our particular viewpoint, it's likely that someone else in Congress does.⁶⁸

An alternative to our pluralistic legislature would operate on strictly majoritarian principles. For this kind of system to work, we would need strong parties—as described by the principles of responsible party government (see Chapter 8). That is, congressional candidates for each party would have to stand relatively united on the major issues. Then the majority party in Congress would act on a clear mandate from the voters—at least on the major issues discussed in the preceding election campaign. This would be very different from the pluralist system we now have, which furthers the influence of interest groups and local constituencies in national policymaking. But which is better?

SUMMARY

Congress plays a central role in our government through its lawmaking function. It writes the laws of the land and attempts to oversee their implementation. It helps to educate us about new issues as they appear on the political agenda. Most important, members of Congress represent us, working to see to it that interests from home and from around the country are heard throughout the policymaking process.

We count on Congress to do so much that criticism about how well it does some things is inevitable. But certain strengths are clear. The committee system fosters expertise; representatives and senators who know the most about particular issues have the most influence over them. And the structure of our electoral system keeps legislators in close touch with their constituents.

Bargaining and compromise play important roles in the congressional policymaking process. Some find this disquieting. They want less deal making and more adherence to principle. This thinking is in line with the desire for a more majoritarian democracy. Others defend the current system, arguing that this is a large complex nation and that the policies that govern it should be developed through bargaining among various interests.

There is no clear-cut answer on whether a majoritarian or a pluralist legislative system provides better representation for voters. Our system is pluralistic. It serves minority interests that might otherwise be neglected or even harmed by an unthinking or uncaring majority. But there is validity to the argument that responsiveness to special interests comes at the expense of the majority of Americans.

Key Terms

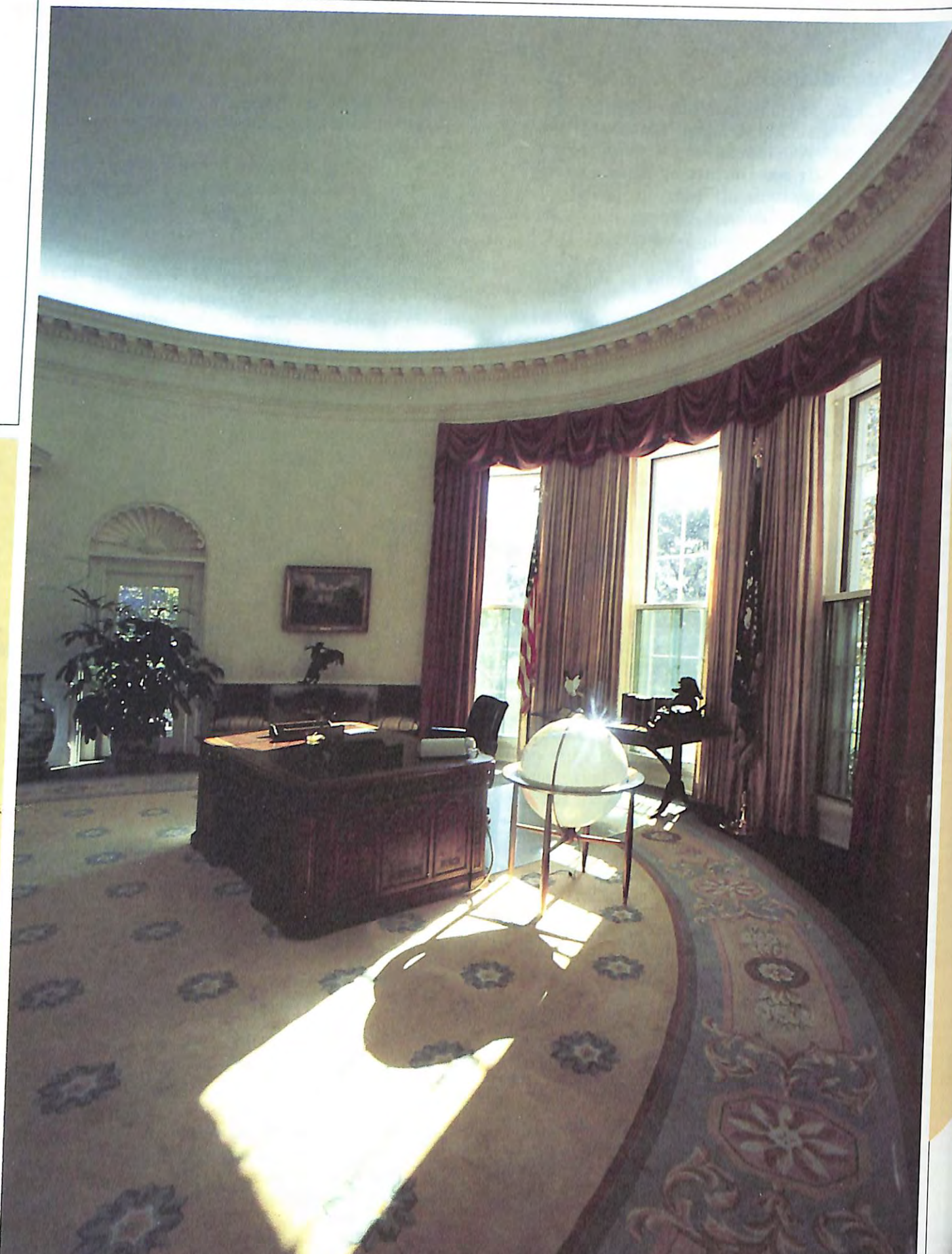
bicameral
reapportionment
impeachment
incumbent
redistricting
gerrymandering
franking privilege
casework
bill
veto
pocket veto
standing committee
joint committee
select committee
conference committee

seniority
markup session
Speaker of the House
president pro tempore
majority leader
filibuster
cloture
logrolling
conservative coalition
constituents
oversight
trustee
delegate
parliamentary system

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11

The Presidency

The Constitutional Basis of Presidential Power

Initial Conceptions of the Presidency
• *The Powers of the President*

The Expansion of Presidential Power

The Inherent Powers • *Congressional Delegation of Power* • *The President's Power to Persuade* • *The President and the Public* • *Great Expectations*

Presidential Elections: The Electoral Connection

The Electoral College • *Winning the Presidency* • ... *And Losing It*

The Executive Branch Establishment

The White House Staff • *The Vice President* • *The Cabinet*

The President as National Leader

From Political Values To Policy Agenda • *Chief Lobbyist* • *Party Leader*

The President as World Leader

Foreign Relations • *Crisis Management*

Presidential Character