

AMERICAN POLITICAL CULTURE

AP US GOVERNMENT & POLITICS



POLITICAL CULTURE

- **POLITICAL CULTURE: A DISTINCTIVE AND PATTERNED WAY OF THINKING ABOUT HOW POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE OUGHT TO BE CARRIED OUT**



MODERN DEMOCRACIES WITH DIFFERENT POLITICAL CULTURES

- **MOST MODERN DEMOCRACIES HAVE VASTLY DIFFERENT POLITICAL CULTURES--WHY?**
 - **DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES (RELIGION, ETHNICITY, POPULATION, ETC.)**
 - **HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES PLAYS A LARGE ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS**
 - **DIFFERING IDEAS OF THE PROPER ROLE OF GOVERNMENT**





AMERICAN POLITICAL VALUES

- **LIBERTY – RIGHTS**
- **EQUALITY – EQUAL VOTE; EQUAL CHANCE TO PARTICIPATE AND SUCCEED**
- **DEMOCRACY – GOVERNMENT IS ACCOUNTABLE TO THE PEOPLE**
- **CIVIC DUTY – TAKE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS SERIOUSLY AND BECOME INVOLVED WHEN POSSIBLE**
- **INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY – INDIVIDUALS RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR OWN ACTIONS AND WELL-BEING**

QUESTIONS ABOUT POLITICAL CULTURE

- HOW DO WE KNOW PEOPLE SHARE THESE BELIEFS?
- HOW DO WE EXPLAIN BEHAVIOR INCONSISTENT WITH THESE BELIEFS?
- WHY IS THERE SO MUCH POLITICAL CONFLICT IN U.S. HISTORY?





BELIEFS ABOUT ECONOMICS

- AMERICANS SUPPORT FREE ENTERPRISE, BUT SUPPORT SOME LIMITS ON MARKETPLACE FREEDOM
- AMERICANS BELIEVE IN EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY BUT NOT EQUALITY OF RESULT
- AMERICANS HAVE A WIDELY SHARED COMMITMENT TO ECONOMIC INDIVIDUALISM

THE CIVIC ROLE OF RELIGION

- **AMERICANS ARE MORE RELIGIOUS THAN MOST CITIZENS IN EUROPEAN DEMOCRACIES**
- **BOTH LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES HAVE USED THE PULPIT TO PROMOTE POLITICAL CHANGE**
 - **CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT WAS LED BY BLACK RELIGIOUS LEADERS**
 - **IN THE 1980S AND 1990S, CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIANS BECAME A STRONG POLITICAL FORCE IN ALL LEVELS OF POLITICS**



AMERICAN POLITICAL CULTURE

- **AMERICANS TEND TO ASSERT THEIR RIGHTS**
- **EMPHASIZE INDIVIDUALISM, COMPETITION, EQUALITY, FOLLOWING RULES, TREATING OTHERS FAIRLY BUT IMPERSONALLY**
- **SOME OTHER COUNTRIES PUT MORE EMPHASIS ON HARMONY AND EQUALITY**



CIVIC DUTY AND COMPETENCE

- **CIVIC DUTY: A BELIEF THAT ONE HAS AN OBLIGATION TO PARTICIPATE IN CIVIC AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS**
- **CIVIC COMPETENCE: A BELIEF THAT ONE CAN AFFECT GOVERNMENT POLICIES**



SOURCES OF POLITICAL CULTURE

- **AMERICAN REVOLUTION WAS ESSENTIALLY OVER LIBERTY—
ASSERTING RIGHTS**
- **WIDESPREAD (NOT UNIVERSAL) PARTICIPATION PERMITTED BY
CONSTITUTION**
- **ABSENCE OF AN ESTABLISHED NATIONAL RELIGION MADE
RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY INEVITABLE**
- **FAMILY INSTILLS HOW WE THINK ABOUT WORLD AND POLITICS**
- **NOT A HIGH DEGREE OF CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS**

SOCIAL MOBILITY:

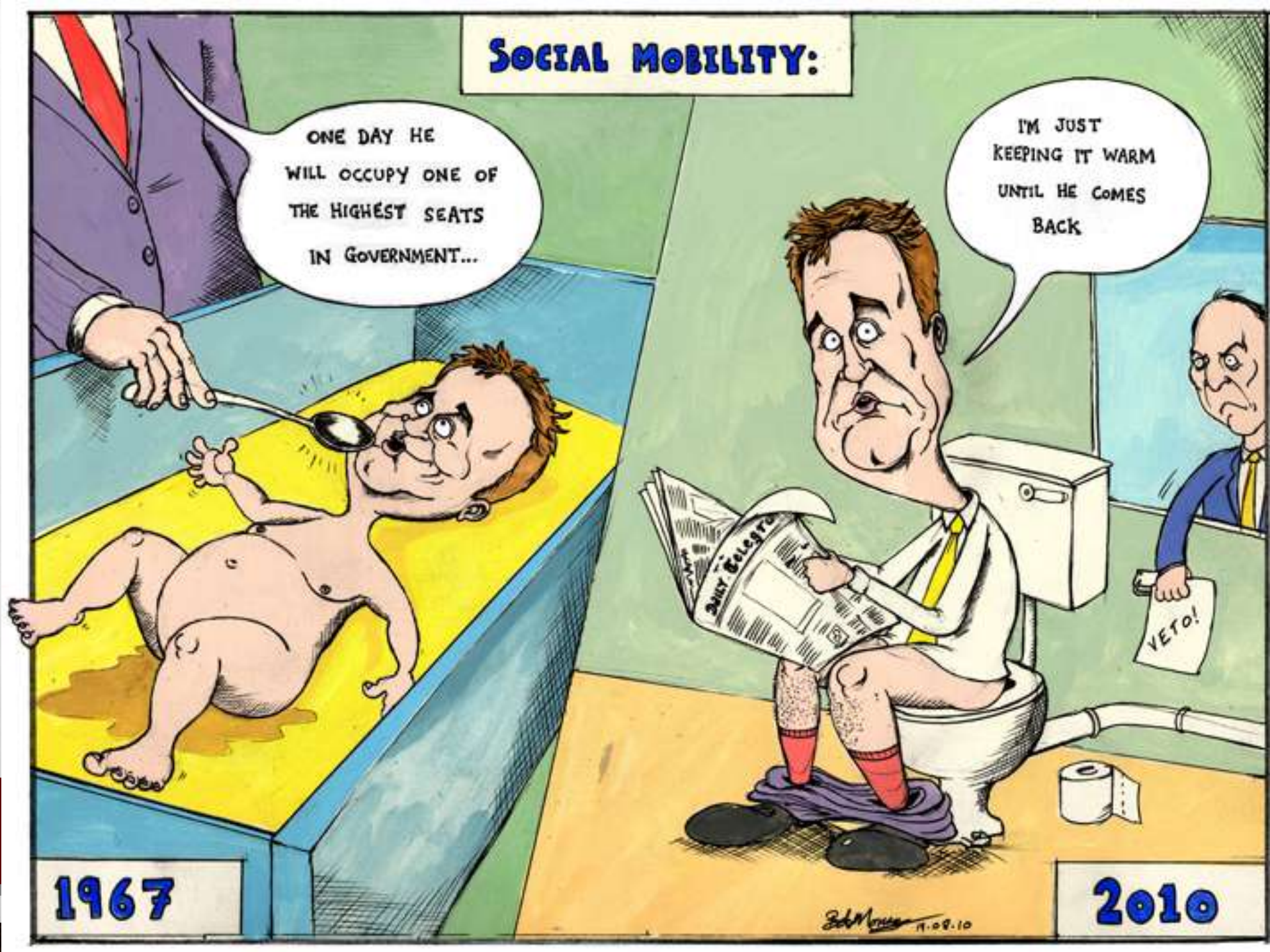
ONE DAY HE
WILL OCCUPY ONE OF
THE HIGHEST SEATS
IN GOVERNMENT...

I'M JUST
KEEPING IT WARM
UNTIL HE COMES
BACK

1967

2010

John M... 11.08.10





THE CULTURE WAR

- **THE CULTURAL CLASH IN AMERICA IS A BATTLE OVER VALUES**
- **THE CULTURE WAR DIFFERS FROM POLITICAL DISPUTES**
- **THE CULTURE CONFLICT IS ANIMATED BY DEEP DIFFERENCES IN PEOPLE'S BELIEFS ABOUT MORALITY**

TWO CULTURAL “CAMPS”

- **ORTHODOX: MORALITY IS AS, OR MORE, IMPORTANT THAN SELF-EXPRESSION; MORALITY DERIVES FROM FIXED RULES FROM GOD**
- **PROGRESSIVE: PERSONAL FREEDOM IS AS, OR MORE, IMPORTANT THAN TRADITION; RULES CHANGE BASED ON CIRCUMSTANCES OF MODERN LIFE AND INDIVIDUAL PREFERENCES**



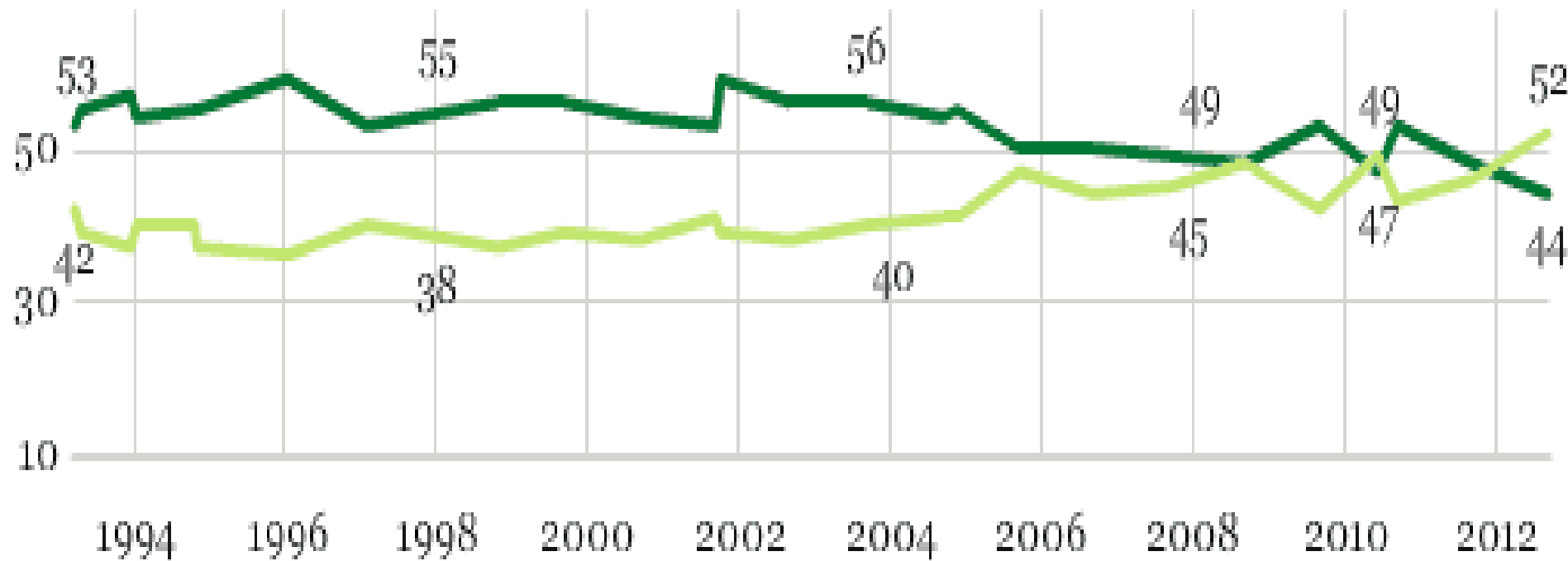
MISTRUST OF GOVERNMENT

- **THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT MISTRUST HAS INCREASED SINCE THE LATE 1950S**
- **CAUSES: WATERGATE, THE VIETNAM WAR AND CLINTON IMPEACHMENT**
- **PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IS LIKELY TO EBB AND FLOW WITH CIRCUMSTANCES**



Some people think the government should promote traditional values in our society. Others think the government should not favor any particular set of values. Which comes closer to your own view?

■ % Promote traditional ■ % Not favor any set



POLITICAL EFFICACY

- **POLITICAL EFFICACY: CITIZEN'S CAPACITY TO UNDERSTAND AND INFLUENCE POLITICAL EVENTS**
- **INTERNAL EFFICACY: CONFIDENCE IN ONE'S ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND AND INFLUENCE EVENTS**
- **EXTERNAL EFFICACY: BELIEF THAT SYSTEM WILL RESPOND TO CITIZENS**

"Your relentless political Facebook posts finally turned me around to your way of thinking."

Said nobody, ever.



som^{ee}cards
user card

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

- **A MINIMAL LEVEL OF TOLERANCE IS CRUCIAL TO DEMOCRATIC POLITICS**
- **MOST AMERICANS SUPPORT TOLERANCE IN THE ABSTRACT; HOWEVER, MOST AMERICANS WOULD ALSO DENY THESE RIGHTS IN SPECIFIC CASES**



HOW VERY UNPOPULAR GROUPS SURVIVE

- **MOST PEOPLE DO NOT ACT ON THEIR BELIEFS**
- **OFFICEHOLDERS AND ACTIVISTS ARE MORE TOLERANT THAN THE GENERAL PUBLIC**
- **USUALLY THERE IS NO CONSENSUS ON WHOM TO PERSECUTE**
- **COURTS ARE SUFFICIENTLY INSULATED FROM PUBLIC OPINION TO ENFORCE CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTIONS**

