Chapter 5

The American Political Landscape
The American Political Landscape

- A Land of Diversity
- Where We Live
- Who We Are
- Unity in a Land of Diversity
A Land of Diversity

- Most nations consist of groups of people who have lived together for centuries and who speak the same language, embrace the same religious beliefs, and share a common history.

- Several elements of our diversity have political significance.
A Land of Diversity

- The United States is a geographically large and historically isolated country.
- Size also confers an advantage.
- The United States is also a land of abundant natural resources.
- Our isolation, relative wealth, prosperity, and sense of destiny have fostered a view that the United States is different from the world.
- Geography also helps explain our diversity.
Where We Live

- Regional Differences
- State and Local Identity
- Urban and Rural Populations
FIGURE 5-1 Republican Share of State Legislators in the Former Confederate States.


Which states saw the greatest shifts in population, and how might you account for some of those changes?

Sectional distinctions, which separate populations by geography and regions, less prominently distinguish us from one another in the United States today than they did a century or even a half-century ago.
Who We Are

Race and Ethnicity

- Native Americans
- African Americans
- Hispanics
- Asian Americans
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Population 2008</th>
<th>Percent African American 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Detroit, Mich.</td>
<td>808,398</td>
<td>83.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memphis, Tenn.</td>
<td>643,329</td>
<td>62.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore, Md.</td>
<td>639,343</td>
<td>62.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
<td>588,373</td>
<td>54.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta, Ga.</td>
<td>445,709</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newark, N.J.</td>
<td>262,313</td>
<td>53.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Orleans, La.</td>
<td>270,245</td>
<td>60.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham, Ala.</td>
<td>209,639</td>
<td>74.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond, Va.</td>
<td>200,158</td>
<td>51.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackson, Miss.</td>
<td>175,731</td>
<td>76.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savannah, Ga.</td>
<td>127,840</td>
<td>57.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*How might having a high percentage of minority residents affect the kinds of public policies enacted in a city?

Who We Are

The Ties of Ethnicity

- Except for Native Americans and the descendants of slaves, all U.S. citizens have immigrant ancestors who chose to come to the American continent.

- Large numbers of immigrants can pose challenges to any political and social system.
Who We Are

- Religion
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation

L.O. 5.3 Figure 5-4 Gender and the Vote for President.

FIGURE 5–3 Religious Groups in the United States.
Three-fourths of Americans describe themselves as Christian.

In what areas of public policy do we see this playing a role?
How important should religion be as a factor in making political decisions?

Who We Are

- Family Structure
- Education
- Wealth and Income
- Occupation
- Social Class
- Age
FIGURE 5-5 Educational Attainment in the United States.

Based on the percentages of Americans who are high school graduates in each age bracket, what assumptions might you make about how the educational system and culture in America has changed?


In 2008–2009, a poor economy and high unemployment contributed to a rise in the poverty rate. □ What other factors could influence the percentage of Americans classified as living in poverty at any given time?


Figure 5-8 Percentage of Population Over the Age of 65, 1900-2050.

- How will the population 30 years from now compare to that of today? In what areas of politics and society might that difference have an impact?

Unity in a Land of Diversity

- We are united by our shared commitment to democratic values, economic opportunity, work ethic, and the American dream.