

AMERICAN CULTURE

American Culture PRISMs

- 1. Is American culture “exceptional”?**
- 2. Is the U.S. a Christian nation?**
- 3. Is America a self-sufficient nation?**
- 4. Is Social Darwinism good?**



- 5. Do people have a right to personal happiness?**
- 6. To what extent should society reward successful people more than unsuccessful?**
- 7. Is “caveat emptor” inevitable in a capitalist society?**
- 8. Should business be the business of America?**

- ✓ **Individualism**
Extended family
Community
- ✓ **Monochronic**
Poychronic
- ✓ **Low Context**
High Context
- ✓ **Social Ambiguity**
Social Certainty

- ✓ **Low Power Distance**
High power Distance
- ✓ **Mastery**
Adaptation
- ✓ **Emotionally Neutral**
Emotionally
Expressive
- ✓ **Quantity of Life**
Quality of life

AMERICA'S CULTURAL LEGACY

HOW AMERICA IS UNIQUE

- 1. The only nation that was a “melting pot” of people from all corners of the world**
- 2. The only “pure” middle class nation**
- 3. The only nation to have systematically dealt with racism**
- 4. The only nation that views business to be its main business**
- 5. America has taken the development of commercialism & business as far as possible.**

AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

Historically, many Americans have believed they are an “exceptional” people, specially blessed by God for greatness and affluence. Many religious Americans have seen America primarily as a Christian nation, uniquely chosen in history to be God’s beacon of freedom to to the nations. Political and business leaders claimed it was America’s “manifest destiny” to expand from “sea to shining sea,” building an unparalleled commercial and global military empire in the process.

ANGLO-SAXON AMERICA

- 1. Institutionalism (Anglo)**
- 2. Impersonal professionalism (Anglo-Saxon)**
- 3. Commercially-applied thinking (Saxon)**
- 4. Technology (Saxon)**

THE AMERICAN CULTURAL LEGACY

- 1. "Free to be me"**
- 2. Institutionalized freedoms**
- 3. Middle class culture**
- 4. Commercialism**
- 5. Mass media driven culture**
- 6. Entrepreneurship**

- 1. America's greatness stems more for what America is (a haven of freedom) than from what it has done.**
- 2. The biggest challenge faced by Americans is to use freedom responsibly rather than to abuse it for self-gain.**

BRIGHT MOMENTS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

- 1. The idealistic 13 colonies established for religious freedom & economic opportunity**
- 2. The Constitution & Bill of Rights**
- 3. America as a haven for persecuted immigrants**
- 4. The Emancipation Proclamation & the Civil Rights Act**
- 5. Sacrifices for Europe in 2 world wars**
- 6. Cold War bulwark against Communism**

DARK MOMENTS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

- 1. Born in revolt & revolution**
- 2. Extermination of indigenous populations during 19th century “Manifest Destiny”**
- 3. Slavery & racism**
- 4. The Civil War (1 million Americans killed or wounded by Americans)**
- 5. Gangland corruption during the “Roaring Twenties”**
- 6. The Great Depression**
- 7. The Vietnam war & political assassinations during the 1960s**
- 8. Watergate**
- 9. 7/11 & the ensuing longest war in U.S.. history**

THE BEST OF AMERICANA

- **Individualism**
- **Melting pot diversity**
- **Judeo-Christian work ethic**
- **Social system structured for success**
- **Business**
- **Grass roots power & the common man**
- **Pragmatism**
- **Technology**
- **Urban & country heritages**
- **Access to higher education**
- **Pop culture, jazz
Hollywood, Walt Disney**
- **Space program**
- **Sports**
- **Fast food**
- **Harley-Davidson**

THE UGLY AMERICA

- **Endless commercials & PR**
- **On-line porno, 1-900 porno calls**
- **The F-word comedians, binge drinking**
- **Slasher movies, reality TV, electronic religionists**
- **Fat burners, silicone, liposuction**
- **All-you-can-eat buffets, talk radio, mass murderers, NCAA athletic scandals**
- **Professional wrassling, \$90 million shoe endorsements & sports trash talk**
- **Recreational Viagra & the National Enquirer**
- **Serial killers collector cards & cults**
- **Lotteries, casino grannies, point spreads for college games, computer viruses & spam**

AMERICAN FADS & POP CULTURE

- **Ant farms**
- **Artificial Christmas trees**
- **Barbie dolls**
- **Baton twirling**
- **Bobble head dolls**
- **Body building**
- **Bowling**
- **Bumper stickers**
- **Car tail fins**
- **Chewing gum**
- **Comic books**
- **Credit cards**
- **Disco**
- **Drive-in movies**
- **Electric guitar**
- **Elvisiana**
- **Fad diets**



AMERICAN FADS & POP CULTURE

- **Fast/junk food**
- **FM radio**
- **Footlong hot dogs**
- **Girly magazines**
- **Hamburger helper**
- **Harley-Davidson motorcycles**
- **Heavy metal**
- **Home shopping network**
- **Hoola hoops**
- **Jell-O**
- **Las Vegas**
- **Late night TV**
- **Low riders**
- **Malls**
- **Miniature golf**
- **Mobile homes**
- **Monster trucks**
- **Motels**



AMERICAN FADS & POP CULTURE

- **Motor homes & campers**
- **Muscle cars**
- **Muzak**
- **Newspaper comics**
- **Nudist camps**
- **Plastic flamingos**
- **Polyester**
- **Poodles**
- **Pop Tarts**
- **Professional sports**
- **Professional wrestling**
- **Reality TV**
- **Rearview mirror decorations**
- **Roller derby**
- **Ronco TV products**



AMERICAN FADS & POP CULTURE

- **Silly Putty**
- **Skateboarding**
- **Sno-cones**
- **Soap operas**
- **Spam**
- **Stand-up comedians**
- **Tattoos**
- **Television game shows**
- **T-shirts**
- **Tupperware**
- **TV dinners**
- **TV religion**
- **Twinkies**
- **Vanity license plates**
- **Vans, minivans, SUVs**
- **Waterbeds**
- **Whoopee cushions**
- **Wolfman Jack**
- **Wonderbread**
- **Zoot suits**

AMERICAN WARS OF TERRITORIAL EXPANSION

- 1. The War of 1812 to secure northern borders from British interference**
- 2. The "Manifest Destiny" ("God wills it") Wars: against American Indian tribes in the 19th century; the Spanish-American War, taking "protectorates" Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, & the Philippines from Spain**
- 3. The Mexican-American War: Acquiring most of the American Southwest states from Mexico is a series of American military aggressions**

AMERICA'S GLOBAL IMPACT

- 1. America's main impact on the world has been its commercial culture: business, pop culture, entrepreneurial spirit, & middle class materialism.**
- 2. American foreign policy has always been cautious about global adventurism & imperialistic empire building.**
- 3. However, America has occasionally followed in Great Britain's footsteps transplanting its institutions on foreign soil (the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Guam, & more recently Middle Eastern military incursions).**

GUESS WHO?

- 1. The vast majority of the nation's public school students never study a foreign language at any grade level**
- 2. Less than 8% of undergrad college students are taking a foreign language in a given year & only 2% are studying abroad.**
- 3. Business, engineering & science majors never have to take a foreign language**



- 4. “Without speaking a second language, it’s not possible to have any sophisticated understanding of another culture.”**
- 5. “Many students in other nations begin learning another language before the age of 10. They will have an edge over monolingual Americans in developing business relationships & connections outside their home turf.”**
- 6. A special commission of the U.S. Department of Education has called for a sweeping overhaul of the core curriculum of all public schools & in higher education to prepare American students for the global world of the 21st century.**

AMERICA'S #1 EXPORT

America's greatest legacy is exporting our "free to be me" culture to the rest of the world: pop culture (fast food, commercial entertainment, informal dress and consumerism). American rebelliousness shows up in our dress- down informal clothing, which brings everyone down to the lowest fashion level.

YANKEE

CHARACTER

- 1. "America has always been a society of plain, ordinary people all busy pursuing their own private interests."**
- 2. "America is a country that specializes in re-inventing itself, sucking in new arrivals and hurling them around the world's most dynamic economy. Somewhere between Ellis Island and the car factories of Detroit, the newcomers are Americanized."**
- 3. "America's backbone is made of mobility, immigration, meritocracy, and volunteerism."**
- 4. "America has always been free and enterprising, but not without its costs—vulgarity, materialism, rootlessness, and anti-intellectualism."**

TWO MEN WHO SHAPED THE AMERICAN CHARACTER

- 1. John Winthrop (leader of the American Pilgrims in 1620): Popularized the belief that Americans are “new Israelites” (chosen people) led by God to the Promised Land of America to become a light to the world. Winthrop thus planted the spiritual seed of American culture.**
- 2. Ben Franklin: Pragmatic, opportunistic, nationalistic visionary who stressed the classic theme of entrepreneurial Americans driven by personal success/progress and ceaseless personal improvement. Franklin envisioned America as the bastion of economic progress and personal wealth.**
- 3. Thus Winthrop and Franklin saw America as the best of both worlds: happiness in this mortal worldly life, and a culture linked to salvation in the next life.**

ALEXIS TOCQUEVILLE'S IMPRESSIONS OF AMERICAN CULTURE

- 1. French sociologist Alexis De Tocqueville visited America in the early 1800s to observe & absorb this bustling nation's energetic ways. Some of his most quotable observations include:**
- 2. "As one digs deeper into the national character of the Americans, one sees that they have sought the value of everything in this world only in the answer to this single question: how much money will it bring in?"**
- 3. "Consider any individual at any period of his life, and you will always find him preoccupied with fresh plans to increase his comfort."**



- 4. "In no other country in the world is the love of property keener or more alert than in the United States, and nowhere else does the majority display less inclination toward doctrines which in any way threaten the way property is owned."**
- 5. "In the United States, the majority undertakes to supply a multitude of ready-made opinions for the use of individuals, who are thus relieved from the necessity of forming opinions of their own."**
- 6. "Two things in America are astonishing: the changeableness of most human behavior and the strange stability of certain principles. Men are constantly on the move, but the spirit of humanity seems almost unmoved."**

AMERICAN VOLUNTEERISM

- 1. Americans have always shown a strong spirit of volunteerism, whether in civic organizations, religious organizations, or philanthropy.**
- 2. In frontier America, people helped their neighbors survive through barn raisings, co-op schools, etc. In industrialized America, volunteerism has been organizational: public school systems, Big Brother programs, political party campaigns, etc.**

AMERICAN SOCIAL DARWINISM

SOCIAL DARWINISM

Social Darwinism takes survival of the fittest out of the jungle & into human affairs-the strongest, most talented, & aggressive people make it to the top where money, fame, & power await: reality show contestants; coaches; the stock market; top 40 music; sports & college rankings; movie blockbusters; class action suits; Oscars, Emmys, & Nobels; halls of fame; Who's Who; valedictorians; New York Times bestsellers, etc.

The philosophy of Social Darwinism was developed in large part by Britain's Herbert Spencer 2 years before the publication of Darwin's theory of evolution in 1860. Spenser applied the "survival of the fittest" element of Darwin's theory to society, emphasizing that only the brightest, most capable, & aggressive people can make it to the top, & society should favor these who are most fit. Life is tough, competitive, and "dog eat dog."

EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL DARWINISM IN AMERICAN CULTURE

- 1. Emphasis on success, winning, & personal achievement—"We're #1!"**
- 2. Mania for athletic competition**
- 3. Ranking everything: movies, books, sports teams, politicians, Dean's list, grad schools, halls of fame, etc.**
- 4. The more money you make, the more "successful" you are.**
- 5. Bad neighborhoods are the fault of the "lazy" people who live there & can't "make it" in life.**

In American politics, conservatives and libertarians generally favor Social Darwinism, while liberals do not. Social Darwinists strive to support those who achieve the most and have the most, believing this makes the nation stronger and more competitive. Thus, they generally favor big business and the social status quo to help those who are “fittest” stay strong. Those who oppose Social Darwinism champion government-led social change as a way of empowering the less wealthy to gain a greater share of society’s wealth and power.

**RESTLESS &
ENERGETIC
AMERICANS**

Strong, energetic risk-taking immigrants



- 1. Restless**
- 2. On the move**
- 3. Impatient**
- 4. Short-term outlook
(immediate results)**
- 5. "Ride the horse hard
and put him up wet."**

- 1. “Americans keep on moving, looking for the next big thing, a better job, a mate, or just an easier commute. The greatest asset of Americans is their belief in progress.”**
- 2. “America is a cult of speed: fast food, fast banking, fast everything.”**
- 3. Every year, 40M Americans move, including 30% of those in their twenties.**
- 4. 34M Americans were born abroad.
“America’s capacity to absorb newcomers is the envy of other nations.”**
- 5. Americans work 300 hours a year more than Europeans & switch jobs more often (once every 7 years vs. 11 years for Europeans.)**



- 6. Fifty years ago, half of Americans over 65 were still working vs. 20% today.**
- 7. American life expectancy has increased from 68.2 years in 1950 to 74.1 years for men & 79.1 years for women in 2000.**
- 8. More than a third of seniors lived below the poverty level in 1950 vs. 10% in 2000.**
- 9. Only 20% of Americans now smoke, a 55-year low. In 1998, 35% of high school seniors smoked vs. 23% today.**

**INDEPENDENT
AMERICANS**

INDEPENDENCE STREAK

- 1. Revolutionary & civil wars**
- 2. Hippies**
- 3. Pro sports free agents**
- 4. The drug culture**
- 5. Socially-isolated mass murderers**
- 6. Bigamists in Utah**
- 7. Harley-Davidson**
- 8. National Rifle Association**



10.Remember the Alamo!

11.Cars & highways

12.Lawyers, suits & litigation

13.Rock n Roll

14.Career mobility

15.Careers for women

16.Free speech

17.Taming the wild frontier

18.Nondenominational churches

19.Immigration

**Americans are
independent because
they can be. All
people want to be
independent, but
American culture
delivers the most
freedom—for better or
worse.**

WHY DO AMERICANS HAVE SO FEW LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS?

- 1. Lack of extended family structure**
- 2. Career (mobility) comes first**
- 3. The "1-no-rule:" On-the-move professionals can get away with turning down a corporate promotion only once before their career in that company is permanently side-tracked**
- 4. The prevalence of careers for American women only speeds up the short-term relationship syndrome**

BOWLING ALONE

“We’re networking on Face Book sharing photos & text messaging on our cellphones, & blogging at all hours, but Americans are becoming increasingly isolated.” A 2006 study revealed that even as Americans are more technologically connected, the number of people they discuss important matters with has dropped from 3 to 2 over the last 20 years. One-quarter of Americans reported that they had no one to discuss their most important personal concerns with. We’ve got less of an emotional safety net than ever before.”

- 1. Americans want their children to be independent as soon as possible: walking at 1; potty trained at 2; get their own room at 6; driving at 15; away to school at 18.**
- 2. Most Americans disdain bilingual education in public schools not out of racism, but because they want immigrants to become economically self-sufficient as soon as possible & contributing to the economy.**

WHO'S MARRIED?

There were 111M American married couple households in 2005, down 52% from 2000. A growing number of American adults are spending more of their lives single or living unmarried with partners. Five % of American households consist of unmarried opposite-sex partners (413,000 male couples & 363,000 female couples). One of every 20 American households consists of singles. Over the next 40 years, America will add 100M people to the population; half will be immigrants or their children.

**RUGGED
INDIVIDUALIST
AMERICANS**

**I won't be wronged, I
won't be insulted, I
won't be laid a hand
upon. I don't do these
things to other people,
and I require the same
from them.**

(John Wayne in *The Shootist*)

TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN INDIVIDUALISM

- 1. Immigrant rags-to-riches success stories**
- 2. Entrepreneurs who changed the world**
- 3. Pioneering pop music & entertainment**
- 4. Bumper harvest of churches & religious groups**
- 5. Climbing to the top by talent & hard work**
- 6. Opportunity for ethnic minorities to overcome discrimination**

WHY AMERICANS HAD TO BE TOUGH INDIVIDUALISTS

- 1. Moving from slavery to the Emancipation Proclamation to the Civil Rights Act**
- 2. Taming the prairies with the railroads & then automobiles**
- 3. Surviving the "Great Depression"**
- 4. Fighting in both world wars & rebuilding war-torn nations**
- 5. Leading the West in the struggle against 20th century Communism**
- 6. Getting a man on the moon**
- 7. Overcoming the assassination of several presidents & public officials**
- 8. Counteracting crime, drugs, & terrorism (both by Americans & other nations)**

BOOMING AMERICAN CRIME

- 1. In 2005, 1 out of every 136 Americans spent time in jail or prison.**
- 2. 1000 Americans went to jail or prison each week.**
- 3. 2.2M Americans are currently in jail or prison.**
- 4. The incarceration growth rate for women has surpassed that of men for the first time.**

VIOLENT AMERICA

1. Assassinated American Presidents:

Abraham Lincoln: 1865

James Garfield: 1881

William McKinley: 1901

John F. Kennedy: 1963

2. Attempted assassinations:

Andrew Jackson: 1835

Theodore Roosevelt: 1912

Franklin Roosevelt: 1933

Harry Truman: 1950

Gerald Ford: 1975

Ronald Reagan: 1981



Assassinated American Political Leaders:

- 1. Robert F. Kennedy (U.S. Attorney General): 1968**
- 2. Successful or attempted assassinations: 8 governors, 7 Senators, 9 Congressmen, 17 state legislators, 11 judges, 8 mayors, 3 presidential candidates**
- 3. Assassinations of civil rights leaders or segregationists: Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Medgar Edwards, Gov. George Wallace**

To two young men, one of whom tossed a glass container at my car as I was on Highway 77 near the circle: I figured your life was probably worth more than the cost of a broken windshield. However, I have been wrong before. I would have liked to have held you accountable for your actions, but at the time I was more concerned with calming my girlfriend and keeping my truck out of the way of oncoming traffic. You got away with it this time but be advised, the next time you assault a concealed handgun license holder I doubt you will be left with the option of running away. LETTER TO THE EDITOR

**SELF-
SUFFICIENT
AMERICANS**

THE AMERICAN COMMUNAL MINDSET

- 1. By a 6 to 1 margin, Americans believe that people's lack of success is due to their own shortcomings rather than due to social inequalities (discrimination, unequal opportunity, etc.). 64% of Americans say that the main reason people become wealthy is due to their personal drive & hard work (rather than being in a privileged social situation).**
- 2. 71% of Americans (vs. 40% of Europeans) believe the poor can escape their poverty if they really want to.**



- 3. The U.S. devotes 11% (vs. 26% in Europe) of its GDP to redistributing income via social welfare programs**
- 4. The U.S. minimum wage is 39% of the average wage; the European minimum wage is 53% of the average Euro wage.**
- 5. The U.S. is one of only 3 industrialized nations that does not mandate maternity or paternity leave.**

AMERICA'S MELTING POT CRUCIBLE

- 1. The only thing America doesn't melt down is the immigrant's skin color.**
- 2. Americans are expected to live like other Americans as soon as possible (certainly by the second generation of the immigrant family).**
- 3. Most Americans are uncomfortable about bi-lingual education in public schools.**
- 4. Canada prides itself on being a "patched quilt blanket" that accommodates cultural diversity.**

**INFORMAL
AMERICANS**

INFORMALITY

Always primed for action



“Let’s do a deal right here, right now!”

**OPTIMISTIC
AMERICANS...**

**In a 2006 national
poll, 4/5 of
Americans described
themselves as very
happy (34%) or
pretty happy (50%).**

Optimistic: Every day is a new opportunity



**Can do attitude, we're #1,
great infrastructure, material
wealth, self reliance**

- 1. American optimism has always been fueled by America's rapid rise to success: "We did it before and we can do it again."**
- 2. America's world-class materialism after WWII buoyed American optimism, as did technological achievements (space program, affordable middle class homes & cars, etc.)**
- 3. 9/11 interrupted Americans comfortable isolationism & terrorism may have permanently dented national optimism.**

YOU'RE MIGHTY OPTIMISTIC WHEN YOU...

- 1. Expect to win the lottery**
- 2. Start an Amway or EBAY business**
- 3. Get a real estate license**
- 4. Justify your trip to Las Vegas on the grounds that your hotel room was "comped"**
- 5. Expect companies in deregulated industries to behave ethically**
- 6. Buy commemorative plates & trinkets off a sunken wreck**
- 7. Rebuild New Orleans**

**...BUT
PESSIMISTIC
BABY
BOOMERS**

Recent mid-2008 opinion polls of “baby boomers” (44-70 year-olds) reflected strong pessimism about America’s future. “America’s baby boomers are in a collective funk.” Half of this large population category felt “America’s best days have come and gone.” One baby boomer summed his feelings this way: “I think we are in a war we shouldn’t be in. The economy has great problems. And the emphasis has been on helping the wrong people who don’t really need much help.”

% OF BABY BOOMER CONFIDENCE IN:

Congress: 9%

HMOs: 13%

Big business: 20%

Criminal justice system: 20%

Organized labor: 20%

Newspapers & television news: 24%

The presidency: 26%

Public schools: 32%

Churches & organized religion: 48%

Small business: 60%

The military: 70%

“These polls reflect the many challenges our nation faces today—a war with seemingly no end, a dependence on oil that threatens our future, schools where too many children aren’t learning, and families struggling paycheck to paycheck despite working as hard as they can.”

ENTERTAINED AMERICAS

- **Texting & social media**
- **Blogs**
- **Car sound systems**
- **Cell phone cameras**
- **Cell phone ring tones**
- **Cell phone video games**
- **Cheerleaders**
- **Christmas (football + presents)**
- **Chuck E Cheese**
- **Church youth group trips to Six Flags & skiing in Colorado**
- **Color photos in text books**
- **Comedy clubs**



- **Comic books**
- **Cruises**
- **Dress down Fridays**
- **Dumbed-down music in elevators, restaurants, airports, supermarkets, public restrooms, etc.**
- **Easter egg hunts**
- **Eating out**
- **ESPN television & radio**
- **Fantasy sports leagues**
- **Fast food kid's meals**
- **Football halftime spectacles**
- **Fortune cookies**
- **Gambling casinos**



- **Garage sales**
- **Hooters**
- **Horoscopes**
- **Hotdog eating contests**
- **Smart phones**
- **Lotteries**
- **Mixed martial arts leagues**
- **Movie rental**
- **Movies on digital devices, airplanes, airport terminals, theaters. dollar theaters, doctor's offices, school classes, etc.**
- **Music when holding the phone**
- **Muzac (elevator music)**



- **Nascar**
- **MySpace, Facebook, etc.**
- **Novels (reading)**
- **Office gambling pools**
- **Online poker**
- **Online radio**
- **Peer-to-peer MP3 file sharing**
- **Podcasts**
- **Internet pornography (sending & receiving)**
- **Product contests**
- **Raves**
- **Reality TV shows**



- **Recreational drinking & drug use**
- **Rodeos & bull riding**
- **Satellite radio (Sirius, & XM)**
- **Shopping & hanging out at malls**
- **Spas**
- **Sports, sports, sports**
- **Sports gambling & memorabilia**
- **Stadium luxury boxes**
- **Super Bowl commercials**
- **Supermarket tabloids**



- **Supersizing fast food**
- **Talk radio**
- **Text messaging on cell phones**
- **Theme parks**
- **Theme restaurants**
- **Traveling**
- **TV re-runs**
- **Video games**
- **Web surfing**
- **Wrestling**

**TEN
AMBIGUITIES
OF AMERICAN
CULTURE**

- 1. Americans admire individualism but lead conventional, conforming lives in American organizations.**
- 2. Americans profess a love for democracy but rarely vote.**
- 3. Americans cherish freedom & independence but are heavily in debt & dependent on Middle Eastern oil.**
- 4. Americans spout “family values” but spend only a few hours per week away from work or school.**
- 5. Americans love to consume but hate commercials.**



- 6. Americans feel culturally superior but know little about other cultures.**
- 7. Americans love to watch sports but not play them.**
- 8. Americans come from immigrant backgrounds but don't particularly like immigrants.**
- 9. Americans either eat too much (more than half are overweight) or not enough (families below the poverty line, anorexics, street people, etc.).**
- 10. Americans believe in God but not global warming.**

REBELLIOUS

AMERICANS

- 1. Revolutionary War against Britain**
- 2. The Civil War**
- 3. Rock n Roll**
- 4. The drug culture**
- 5. Harleys & Hell's Angels**
- 6. Prohibition in the "Roaring Twenties"**
- 7. Union strikes**
- 8. 1960s "Hippies," war protestors, & political assassinations**
- 9. Independent political parties**
- 10. Legal suits**

In 2006, 18 independent experts on the United Nations Human Rights committee (in a regular review of each of the 156 signatories of the International Covenant on Civil & Political Rights) leveled charges of American human rights violations in 4 broad areas:

- 1. Capital punishment disproportionately imposed on minority groups & poor people in America**
- 2. Failure of U.S. federal & state governments to follow through on promised Katrina reconstruction plans, especially to African-Americans**
- 3. Lack of Congressional representation & voting rights for the citizens of Washington D.C.**
- 4. Maintenance of secret incarceration centers for military & political prisoners & the complete suspension of their human rights in direct violation of the Geneva War Convention**

RELIGIOUS AMERICANS

FREEDOM!

**“No kings or Anglican
state church for us!”**



FREEDOM OF RELIGION or FREEDOM FROM RELIGION?

- 1. A variety of political, economic, & religious reasons brought European immigrants to the British colonies before America become a nation.**
- 2. Many of the colonialists sought religious freedom from European state churches (such as England's Anglican church), but others came to escape organized religion all together.**
- 3. The 13 original colonies were religiously diverse. A few tolerated religious freedom, but the majority set up their own version of state churches.**
- 4. By no means were all colonial Americans religious, tolerant, or Christian.**

DEISM OR CHRISTIANITY?

- 1. America's main "founding fathers" (especially Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, Thomas Paine, John Adams, James Madison) who led the nation into a civil war against Britain & established the U.S. constitution & government) tended to be religious deists rather than orthodox Christians.**
- 2. Deism was the philosophical outgrowth of the European Enlightenment (17th & 18th centuries), a movement which emphasized human rationality (thinking, science, & humanism) over spirituality. Major Enlightenment thinkers included Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, & John Locke.**



- 3. Deists believed in God but not the Trinity of traditional Christianity. Jesus was viewed as a great moral teacher, but not the divine son of God.**
- 4. Deists thought of God as the creator of the universe, who turned the world over to mankind to run without God's further guidance or intervention—hence the heavy deist reliance on science, political institutions, & the intellect rather than religious “superstitions.”**
- 5. “Deism influenced, in one way or another, most of the political leaders who designed the new American government.”**

DEGREES OF NATIONAL RELIGIOSITY

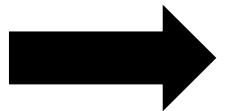
Percent of people who say religion is “very important” in their lives: USA = 60%; Italy/Poland = 30%; Germany = 21%; Britain = 16%; France = 14%; Czech Republic = 11%; Sweden = 10%; Denmark = 9%; South Korea = 25%; Japan = 10%. Half of all Danes, Norwegians, and Swedes (versus only 18% of Americans) say God does not matter to their lives.

2008 AMERICAN RELIGION POLL

92% of Americans say they believe in God; 74% say they believe in life after death; 63% believe their scriptures are the word of God; 25% of Christians say they have some doubts that God exists.

57% of American evangelical Christians said they believe that many religions can lead to eternal life (even though this conflicts with the traditional teaching of their religious group).

- 1. “America is a land of Puritans & pornographers, with Puritanism symbolizing religion & pornography symbolizing popular culture. What makes this so hard for foreigners to take is that America is so aggressive at exporting both of them.”**
- 2. “America is the only modern country where most people belong to a religious organization and where some 90% believe in God.”**
- 3. There are 140,000 American missionaries around the world & America-style mega-churches are beginning to appear in Europe.**



- 4. “For many Euro secularists, America’s religiosity is its least attractive characteristic. They can’t believe that any modern person can be religious unless they are either stupid (Britain’s *Private Eye* called President George W. Bush the leader of the “Latter Day Morons”) or insane (a former German chancellor was known to accuse Bush of ‘hearing voices—namely God’s’).”**
- 5. Recent European polls found that most French & Dutch as many as a large number of Brits & Germans think Americans are way too religious.**

HOW AMERICA'S HERITAGE SHAPED THE AMERICAN PERSONALITY

- 1. America's unbounded hope and optimism about the future (based on the premise of being God's promised bountiful land) stimulated a cultural legacy of entrepreneurial risk-taking and hard work.**
- 2. The belief that God was in control of America's destiny produced a foreign policy of moral unilateralism (dealing with other nations as we supposed was God's will).**
- 3. America's conquering of the frontier led to a cultural mind-set that people should be evaluated and rewarded in society strictly on the basis of their productivity (rather than background). Income and status inequalities were tolerated by Americans on the grounds that people deserve no more than what they earn for themselves on an individual basis through hard work and ingenuity.**

AMERICA'S "CULTURAL WARS"

So far in the 21st century, America's values have been split down the middle, with conservative "right wing" values (nationalism, religion, anti-immigration, pro-family, consumerism, etc.) dominating the government, but liberal "left wing" values (pro-abortion, gay rights, environmentalism, etc.) dominating the cultural world. "The natural response to being marginalized is to rage at the other doing the marginalizing."

2 CENTURIES, 2 AMERICAS

To a great extent, America's current "cultural war" revolves around which century Americans want to live in. Older Americans who spent most of their lives in the "cold war" 20th century tend to be less change-oriented than younger Americans more adapted to the changes of the 21st century. 20th century Americans tend to be more nationalistic, institutionalized, & politically conservative, while younger 21st century Americans are more-open minded about "paradigm."

IS PATRIOTISM AMERICA'S RELIGION?

“American civil (patriotic) religion rose to such an extent during the extended period of violence associated with the Civil War (roughly 1852-1865), that serving country (Union army vs. Confederate) became co-equal with serving God in the national mindset. American patriotic religion borrowed so heavily from the language of traditional Christian faiths that many Americans saw no difference between the two.” Today, evidence for American patriotic religion is still strong and is a major source of America's current “cultural wars” (“red states” vs. “blue states”)



“The Bible prevails as America’s most popular book, & often patriotism draws on familiar biblical themes to refer not to the church and its believers but to the nation & its citizens. ‘Chosen people,’ ‘promised land,’ & ‘New Israel’ all represent familiar metaphors in American culture reflecting America’s messianic mission to be a ‘redeemer nation.’ Until the late 20th century, the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag would be accompanied by prayers asking God’s blessings on His ‘American people.’ ”

**PRAGMATIC
AMERICANS**

PRAGMATISM:

- 1. Compromising an ideal in order to accomplish something in a convenient, practical (corner-cutting) way that occasionally borders on being unethical or illegal**
- 2. Finding a way to beat the system**

You're pragmatic if you ask:

1. Did it work?

2. Did it sell?

3. Did you win?

**4. Did you get away
with it?**



Good ole American pragmatism: SUCCESS > IDEALS



**Why did Ben Franklin
pragmatically say he
preferred
older women?
("It's a lot
harder to
get them
pregnant.")**

AMERICAN CULTURAL PRAGMATISM

- 1. Justifying state-promoted lotteries on the basis of (miniscule) contributions to school funding**
- 2. Radar detectors for highway driving**
- 3. The “literary” *Playboy* magazine**
- 4. Guerilla warfare against the British in the Revolutionary War**
- 5. Universities charging high “service fees” to make actual tuition appear lower**

BUSINESS PRAGMATISM

- 1. “Fat Free” Milk Duds**
- 2. Resume fudging**
- 3. Catsup defined as a vegetable for school lunch programs**
- 4. \$12 parking sports venues**
- 5. Postage & handling: \$7**
- 6. “Name a star after someone!”**



- 8. 35/hour per week employees (so they don't qualify for benefits)**
- 9. Internet cookies & ad blitzes**
- 10. Selling mailing lists**
- 11. National Enquirer & email spam**
- 12. "Lose weight while you sleep"**
- 13. Hyperfast talk on the legal part of radio ads**



- 14. Public school teaching revolving around passing the state achievement exams**
- 15. "No fault" divorces**
- 16. Retailer coupons**
- 17. The "quick loss" Atkins diet**
- 18. Low tar/nicotine cigarettes**
- 19. "Dr. Van Auken, what's the lowest grade I can get on the final exam and still make a B in the course"?**

- 20. "Amateur" athletics that generate billions of dollars annually for colleges**
- 21. TAKS tests to "prove" that public school students are "educated"**
- 22. Fast food places that sell healthy salads**
- 23. Dollar hot dog night in major league baseball**

**MIDDLE
CLASS
AMERICANS**

**George Washington
refused to be
elected “King George”**

**Classical music is “upper
class,” but (American-
created) pop music is
middle class.**

THE MIDDLE CLASS MINDSET

- 1. Americans have always disdained the “upper classes” (those born into wealth rather than earning it).**
- 2. American politicians & celebrities typically affect a middle class persona: Cowboy hat for George W. Bush; President Andrew Jackson turned the White House into a giant beer bust for his uncouth frontiersmen friends from Tennessee; Bill Gates & Steven Jobs remind everyone that they didn't finish college.**



- 3. Americans share one thing in common that makes them middle class: they want (& feel entitled to) more of everything.**
- 4. Thumbs down from the American middle class on: artsy stuff; being a follower; self-discipline; boredom; conservative lifestyle (saving money, functional cars, postponing consumption)**
- 5. Americans are the world's biggest financial risk-takers, saving virtually nothing & toting record levels of consumer debt. "Tomorrow will always be better than today."**

AMERICAN MIDDLE CLASS FRIVOLOUS CONSUMPTION

- 1. \$540B on Botox in 2003**
- 2. \$7.7B on cosmetic procedures in 2002**
- 3. \$18.9B on pet food in 2003**
- 4. \$20.3B on antidepressants & sexual dysfunction drugs in 2003**
- 5. \$22B on potato chips & other salty snacks**

**AMERICA'S
DECLINING
STANDARD OF
LIVING &
UNBALANCED
INCOME
DISTRIBUTION**

AMERICA INCOME CLASSES

1% upper class (above \$500K per household): celebrities, execs, federal politicians

15% upper middle class (\$100-\$500K): grad degree professionals & managers

32% lower middle class (\$35-75K): craftsmen; some college

32% working class (\$16-30K): blue collar, clerical

14-20% lower class (\$14-20K): part-time jobs; high school ed. or less

AMERICA RANKS...

4TH on the Human Development Index

13th on the Quality of Life Index

16th on the poverty Index

45 on the Gini Index of income

**distribution, where the lower the score,
the more fairly income is distributed.**

(EU Gini = 32; Germany = 28.3)

**Since 1975, almost all household income
gains went to the richest 20% of
American households.**

AMERICA'S DECLINING STANDARD OF LIVING

- 1. In 2007, the U.S. ranked 19th among industrialized nations in preventable deaths.**
- 2. Self-paid family health premiums average \$12,106 annually.**
- 3. Over the past decade, American insurance premiums increased 87% (not counting increased co-pay & deductibles).**
- 4. One in 6 insured American has significant problems paying medical bills; 42% have had their insurance company refuse to pay for a medical bill.**



- 5. A generation ago, the average American family spent 54% of its annual income on the basics of housing, health insurance, transportation, & taxes. Today it's 75%.**
- 6. College tuition has risen 175% in the past decade & out-of-pocket healthcare costs have doubled.**
- 7. Hourly wages adjusted for inflation are the same today as they were 30 years ago.**
- 8. The number of Americans with career-related pension plans fell from 30.4M in 1984 to 23M in 1998.**
- 9. 1% of Americans own almost half of all corporate stock & business wealth; 5% of Americans own 70%.**

STRESS INCREASES DUE TO:

- 1. Dual-career marriages & especially the household “second shift” for women after work**
- 2. Sleep deficits of 60-90 minutes per night (less than needed for optimum health & productivity)**
- 3. The “electronic sweatshop” (doing the work of more than one employee)**
- 4. Significant rise of stress-related health dysfunctions: high blood pressure, ulcers, depression, exhaustion**

Median American household income = \$43,000; 42% of American homes have 2-wage households

Housing costs have doubled since 1997

Health care costs have risen 12% vs. 3% for wages

Significant rises in the cost of food, energy, entertainment, & college (increased 3-4 times faster than the rate of inflation)

"Time poverty": American have only 16 1/2 hours of leisure time per week (a decline of 1/3 since the 1970s)

The standard of living in this country is going down fairly rapidly. All too often both husband and wife must work, and many have two and three jobs, none of which have benefits or retirement plans. We used to be told productivity was everything. Has productivity gone down? In fact, productivity has been going up so fast that companies can get by with a small fraction of the work force they once employed.

Manufacturing workers produce an average of \$95,519 worth of product per year, or \$1,837 per week. Of this, \$330 goes to the worker, \$64 goes to the government in taxes, and \$1,443 goes to the corporation for overhead, interest, advertising, and profits. Corporate lobbyists try to get workers excited about the \$64 in taxes they're not getting. Nobody mentions the \$1,443 per week they're being "taxed" by the corporation. In the good old days, the average CEO made a salary 10 to 15 times that of the average factory worker. Today, they make 150 times as much.

- **The financial wealth of the top one percent of households now exceeds the combined wealth of the bottom 95 percent.**
- **The wealth of the *Forbes 400* richest Americans grew by an average \$940 million each from 1997-1999_ while over a recent 12-year period the net worth of the bottom 40 percent of households declined 80 percent.**
- **For the well-to-do, that's an average increase in wealth of \$1,287,671 per day. If that were wages earned over a 40-hour week, that would be \$225,962 an hour or 43,876 times the \$5.15 per hour minimum wage.**

- **While the number of households expanded 3 percent from 1995 to 1998, households with a net worth of \$10 million or more grew 44.7 percent.**
- **Eighty-six percent of stock market gains between 1989 and 1997 flowed to the top ten percent of households while 42 percent went to the most well-to-do one percent.**
- **The top one percent captured 70 percent of all earnings growth since the mid-1970's.**
- **The Federal Reserve found that "median income between 1989 and 1998 rose appreciably only for families headed by college graduates."**

- The average wealth of the *Forbes 400* was \$200 million in 1982, just after the enactment of the Reagan-Bush "supply-side" tax package paid for with \$872 billion in deficit financing. By 1986, their average wealth was \$500 million.
- In 1982, inclusion on the *Forbes 400* required personal wealth of \$91 million. The list then included 13 billionaires. By 1999, \$625 million was required for inclusion on a list that included 268 billionaires.
- The federal debt was \$909 billion in 1980. At the close of the Reagan-Bush era, the debt was \$4,202 billion. It currently hovers around \$5,700 billion.

- **The pay gap between top executives and production workers grew from 42:1 in 1980 to 419:1 in 1998 (excluding the value of stock options).**
- **Executive pay at the nation's 365 largest companies rose an average 481 percent from 1990 to 1998 while corporate profits rose 108 percent.**
- **Had the typical worker's pay risen in tandem with executive pay, the average production worker would now earn \$110,000 a year and the minimum wage would be \$22.08.**
- ***Business Week* reports that in 1998 the average large company chief executive was paid \$10.6 million, a 36 percent jump over 1997.**

- **Household working hours reached 3,149 in 1998, roughly 60 hours a week for the typical family, moving Americans into first place worldwide in the number of hours worked, nudging aside the workaholic Japanese.**
- **According to the Bureau of Labor statistics, the typical American now works 350 hours more per year than a typical European.**

•A 40-hour week at today's minimum wage of \$6 per hour nets a pre-tax annual income of \$10,300. That's \$6,355.00 below the official 1998 poverty line for a family of four.

•Had increases in the minimum wage kept pace with inflation since the 1960s, the minimum wage would now exceed the earnings of nearly 30 percent of U.S. workers.

From 1973 to 1993, wages of low income laborers (janitors, etc.) went down 15%. Wages of production workers went down 20%. Wages of young male high school grads went down 30%. Wages of middle-age men with 4 years of college went down 24%. And the total wages of those earning a million dollars or more a year shot up an average of 243% per year.

•In the same year (1998) when one American (Bill Gates) amassed more wealth than the combined net worth of the poorest 45 percent of American households, a record 1.4 million Americans filed for bankruptcy -- 7,000 bankruptcies per hour, 8 hours a day, 5 days a week. Personal bankruptcy filings topped 1.3 million in 1999.

•Since 1992, mortgage debt has grown 60 percent faster than income while consumer debt (mostly auto loans and credit cards) has grown twice as fast. The fastest growing segment of the credit card market consists of low-income holders, with the average amount owed growing 18 times faster than income.

- The top one percent pocketed, on average, an annual tax cut of \$40,000 since 1977, an amount exceeding the average annual income of the middle fifth of households.
- The wealth of the world's 84 richest individuals exceeds the GDP of China with its 1.3 billion people.
- In 1970, the median Philadelphia family paid \$1,689 in income and social security taxes. In 1989, they paid \$8,491. Meanwhile, the average taxes paid by millionaires went down by \$436,389 each per year.
- In 1982, 75% of workers at companies with 100 or more employees had fully-paid health coverage. In 1989, only 48% of them were covered.

"Most Americans have experienced little, if any, income growth in the 21st century. Instead, consumers have kept the economy going by maxing out their credit cards and refinancing their mortgages in order to consume the equity in their homes. The income gains of the 21st century have gone to corporate chief executives, shareholders of offshoring corporations, and financial corporations. Today recession is only a small part of the threat that we face. Financial deregulation, Alan Greenspan's low interest rates, and the belief that the market was the best regulator of risks, have created a highly leveraged pyramid of risk without adequate capital or collateral to back the risk."

Recent comprehensive studies of America's America's highway, transportation, & public services systems concluded that if quick investment actions are not taken, America will have a third-world infrastructure within a few decades. With the nation's projected 70% increase in freight volume by 2020 & 50% population growth, the next generation of Americans face an investment crisis of sobering proportions. \$1.6B will have to be spent just to bring the existing infrastructure into decent repair. "If America leaders do not act boldly, our economic growth & quality of life will be diminished."



The Environmental Protection Agency forecasts a funding gap of \$11B over the next 20 years between what is currently being invested into American water needs & the amount that is needed to provide for these needs. America's transportation networks (ports, bridges, toll roads) are choked with overuse, wasting \$78B annually in lost hours of productivity & wasted gas. The nation's passenger railroad system (which will have to transport more urban Americans than ever in the new gas rationing era) is one of the most outmoded & dysfunctional in the industrialized world.

A national commission on transport policy recommended that the federal government should spend \$225B (more than 40% higher than currently) each year for the next 50 years just to meet the exploding needs of our mass transit system. Toll roads (many foreign finance and operated) in America's metropolitan areas will have to generate considerably more revenue more than the current \$120B annually. America is in no position to make "little plans" about its infrastructure future. "They don't have the magic to stir men's blood. It's time to think big again."

THE DAWNING ERA OF AMERICAN DEBT POLITICAL TURMOIL


- 1. America's runaway domestic debt will soon have to be addressed through a combination of rising taxes & spending cuts. Both of these approaches to dealing with the debt crisis will be political divisive.**
- 2. The largest controversy will revolve around who will give up the most in disappearing government services: Rich or poor? Young or old? Working or retired? Military or social welfare benefits? Corporations or consumers? "Pork barrel" state projects or federal projects?**

**AMERICAN
QUALITY
OF LIFE**

RECENT AMERICAN SOCIAL PROGRESS

- 1. Decline in the number of working women with infants**
- 2. Teen premarital sex, pregnancy & abortion declined by one third over past 15 years**
- 3. Child poverty is down from its high in 1993**
- 4. Juvenile crime, drug & alcohol use are declining**



- 5. 73% of American teens are hopeful about their future**
- 6. Increase in number of two-parent black families**
- 7. A quarter of American adults have a college education & the U.S. produces a third of the world's scientific papers, employs 2/3 of the world's Nobel-prize winners, & has 17 of the world's top 20 universities.**
- 8. America's welfare rolls have fallen by half in less than a decade with no  increase in the national poverty rate.**

- 9. 37M Americans currently live below the poverty line.**
- 10. During 2005, 25M Americans (including 9M children & 3M senior citizens) turned to charitable food banks at least once. 12% of American households (13.5M people) had difficulty providing enough food for family members.**
- 11. Americans among the world's richest: Bill Gates: \$50B (richest man in the world); Warren Buffet (2nd wealthiest): \$42B; Michael Dell (#12): \$17.1B; Alice Walton (#20): \$15.7B; Ross Perot (#147): \$4.3B; Mark Cuban (#428): \$1.8B**

OVERVIEW OF AMERICAN POVERTY

- 1. 12.2% OF Americans lived below the poverty level (under \$20,444 for a family of 4) in 2006.**
- 2. 15.8% of Americans (47M) lack health insurance**
- 3. America's median household income is \$48, 200**
- 4. Cities with the highest poverty rates (in descending order): Brownsville TX, College Station TX, Camden NJ, Edinburg TX, Bloomington IN, Fin, MI, Kalamazoo, MI**

INCOME EQUALITY COMPARISONS BETWEEN RICH NATIONS (the lower the score, the greater the degree of income equality)

- 1. Denmark (22) Highest income equality in the world**
- 2. Sweden (23)**
- 3. Netherlands (25)**
- 4. Switzerland (26)**
- 5. France (27)**
- 6. Germany (28)**
- 7. Australia (31)**
- 8. Japan (32)**
- 9. Britain (33)**
- 10. Italy ((34)**
- 11. USA (41)**

Scandinavian countries have the lowest child poverty rates in the world thanks to their welfare system; in Denmark just 2.4% of children live in poverty; 3.4% in Norway; 4.2% in Sweden. Mexico & the U.S. have the highest child poverty rates in the developed world: 27.7% for Mexico & 21.9% for the U.S.

POVERTY RISES IN 21st CENTURY AMERICA

- 1. In 2007, the number of Americans below the poverty line rose to 12.5% (37.3M). The median income American family made \$1100 less in 2007 vs. 2001. "The new economy of tax cuts & business deregulation (started by Ronald Reagan in the 1980s) did nothing for the poor and actually lowered the living standard of the working middle class. We must get over the ruinous 1980s way of thinking or face more gimmicks and economic busts that will leave us even farther behind."**

RISING 21st CENTURY AMERICAN POVERTY

A 2009 revised survey of poverty in America, based on a updated, more realistic array of poverty factors, disclosed that nearly 1 in 6 (15.8% or 47.4 million) Americans now are impoverished. 18.7% of Americans over 65 live in poverty; 14.3% of people between 18-64; and almost 25% of blacks.



Another 2009 survey found that 49% of American children (37% of whites & 90% of blacks) eat food provided by food stamps at some time during their upbringing. Half of these children were younger than 18 years of age. The average monthly benefit per household averaged \$222. The poverty rate for children will likely rise to 26% in 2011 vs. 18% in 2007.

THE EVOLVING AMERICAN DREAM

THREE INGREDIENTS

OF THE TRADITIONAL AMERICAN DREAM:

- 1. Pursuit of personal happiness & success via ability, sacrifice, & the work ethic**
- 2. Receiving only what you have earned**
- 3. Living for tomorrow more than for today**

MUTATION OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

- 1. The American Constitution's idea that everyone has an inalienable right to pursue happiness has mutated into the expectation that Americans have the right to happiness. Thus the American Dream is no longer a quest but viewed as a right. The original American Dream emphasized that success comes from hard work, skill, and self-reliance; under the New American Dream, success is linked to self-promotion, government social activism, and luck.**
- 2. Signs and icons of the New American Dream: mass consumerism ("I shop, therefore I am"), credit as a lifestyle, gambling, playing the lotto, and reality TV (which sends a clear cut message that success is largely a matter of luck; that anyone can become famous; and that happiness comes automatically without effort or sacrifice). Movies & TV send the constant message that life is endlessly entertaining.**

IT'S NOT THE TRADITIONAL AMERICAN DREAM WHEN...

- 1. Pro sports franchises with the richest owners take credit for winning championships simply by buying the best free agent athletes.**
- 2. You become rich & famous by winning on American Idol or getting on a 3-month reality show.**
- 3. Corporations buy out their competitors rather than beat them in direct competition.**



- 4. Corporations off-shore their operations to make more money for their stockholders.**
- 5. Politicians get elected on the basis of how much money they can raise.**
- 6. Investment bankers reap whirlwind profits by gambling on high risk debt-financed securities, & then receive free \$ \$\$ handouts from the government when they go bankrupt.**
- 7. Companies lower their fringe benefit expenses by working employees less than 40 hours a week.**

“Based around the pursuit of personal happiness/gratification, the New American Dream emphasizes the pursuit of momentary pleasures and trivial pursuits—living for the moment and for self. Young Americans have “been there, done that”—been everywhere, done everything, seen everything, and had everything. This New American Dream gives them little or nothing to look forward to or aspire to—their dreams were answered before they even dreamed them. The biggest challenge presented to Americans by the new American dream is motivation itself—the momentary pleasures of vices thrive as a way to ward off boredom and to make it through another day.”

THE NEW EUROPEAN DREAM

- 1. National and personal interdependence > independence/autonomy**
- 2. Quality of life > quantity of life (materialism)**
- 3. Relationships/security**
- 4. Sustainable development: living today in a way that promotes, rather than borrows from, future economic growth**
- 5. Political support of a secular welfare state to promote equal results (not merely equal opportunity)**
- 6. Global mentality > nationalism/patriotism**

**DECLINING
AMERICAN
DEMOCRACY**

Since the 1970s, an escalating series of revolutionary political and business changes have gradually eroded “grass-roots” American democracy (people’s influence over their individual lives).

- 1. Large, well-financed special interest groups (especially in politics, organized religion, & the media) advanced their self-serving commercial, social, & ideological agendas.**
- 2. Political action campaigns and lobbyist groups increasingly dominated the selection & election of numerous national (often career) politicians.**

- 3. Extensive deregulation of industries (savings & loan, banking, energy, transportation) significantly increased the social power and decreased the social responsibilities of large corporations and fueled industrial concentration (oligopolies).**
- 4. The news media were increasingly controlled by the profit-agendas of parent-company corporations (General Electric, Disney, Rupert Murdoch, etc).**
- 5. Politicians have used media ideological image-creation & negative campaigning to evade political debate.**

- 6. Soaring government deficits became an American lifestyle spearheading rapid decline in national self-sufficiency & global influence.**
- 7. American income inequality grew by leaps & bounds, creating a new class of rich "oligarchs" who dominate corporations with limited accountability & often pay little or no income taxes.**
- 8. Public education became increasingly state-operated.**
- 9. A virtual one-party American government coalesced as Republicans and Democrats parties forged controversial policies on most major national issues: fiscal policy, foreign policy, trade, the military/industrial complex, political campaigning, and taxation**

American Community

"It seems now that anyone who calls himself an American is in the minority. The majority of our citizens don't seem proud enough to call themselves true Americans. I am part Indian, Irish, & Dutch, but I am an American plain & simple. Why do people say that are something else, like a German-American? Why can't we just have Americans & immigrants who become Americans? The sooner we can live together as all Americans, the sooner we will become a better nation."

(Letter to the Waco newspaper)

INDIVIDUALISM vs. COMMUNITY CULTURES

- 1. Taking care of yourself vs. providing for a family**
- 2. A race car driver vs. bus driver**
- 3. One paycheck family vs. dual-career marriage**
- 4. Me vs. we**

THE TRADITIONAL AMERICAN SENSE OF COMMUNITY

- 1. Individualism > Community**
- 2. Social Darwinism (“rugged individualism”): Only the most capable & hard-working should thrive**
- 3. All Americans should be melted down into a single community**
- 4. The nuclear family is the main building block of American community, not extended family, which might restrict rugged individualism**

- 1. Though Americans have always shown themselves to be big-hearted & generous, America's sense of community has always been at tension with its rugged individualism ("It's a free nation, & I can do anything I want.").**
- 2. The American Civil War, Prohibition, civil rights movement, Vietnam protests, "Red" vs. "Blue" states, & the American world-leading crime rate reflect the constant struggle for a sense of American community.**
- 3. Ultimately, Americans believe in individualism more than community, while realizing that some sense of community goes with being a democratic nation.**

I'VE GOT MINE!

(I'm not my brother's keeper)

The mixture of individualism + independence + Social Darwinism in traditional American culture spawned the "I've got mine—now you get yours!" attitude of non-community. "I've got my good job; now make something of yourself and get yours." "I've found success in life; if you work hard, you can be successful too." "I have a nice home in a safe neighborhood; it's up to you find a way out of your rough neighborhood."

CIVIC-MINDED AMERICANS?

America ranks 139th among nations in voter turnout.

Seventy-eight million eligible citizens (approximately the populations of California, New York and Texas combined) did not vote in the 2004 presidential election.

THE TWO DIVISIONS IN AMERICAN CULTURE

- 1. Division #1: “Blue” states vs. “Red” states: cultural conflicts surrounding lifestyle issues (especially abortion & gay rights), separation of church & state, & nationalism (America’s war involvement, immigration, & global isolationism)**
- 2. Division #2: Individualism vs. community: individual (private) interests (as represented by corporations & special interest groups) vs. community (the needs of America as a nation)**



- 3. Examples of ideological & political battle lines between individual/private interests vs. community interests that are dividing America: American domination of the world; separation of church & state (theocratic government); environmentalism; immigration; commercialized vices (especially gambling & pornography); & national security vs. human rights (especially the "war on terror")**
- 4. Post-modern philosophy (individuals determine "truth" for themselves & militantly defend their own private realities) undergirds America's cultural divisions by legitimizing the rights of individuals over those of community. American society has "devolved" into subgroups competing to make their ideological agenda dominant.**

- 5. Since the 1980s, “liberal” has been a dirty word in American politics because past liberals tried to extend the concept of community beyond the family to include government agencies, affirmative action, bilingual education, cultural diversity, etc.**
- 6. Political conservatives began using the “family values” phrase to imply that American community should not extend beyond the nuclear family.**
- 7. “Red” states are those which support a limited concept of community, while the “blue” states embrace a more comprehensive view.**

SORTED CULTURE

“Americans are splitting into balkanized communities whose inhabitants find other Americans culturally incomprehensible.” Americans are increasingly sorting themselves into like-minded ideological communities and geographic neighborhoods based on political, religious, & overall lifestyle preferences—a form of voluntary cultural segregation. The intolerant American has emerged, rejecting those who don’t conform to the same idiosyncrasies.




Examples of psychological & physical isolationist ideologies: Home schoolers, bloggers, cable channel aficionados, bipartisan voters, gated communities, school gangs, & religious schools. "We now live in a giant feedback loop, hearing only like thoughts about what's right and wrong bounced back to us by the TV shows we watch, the newspapers, magazines, & books we read, the blogs we visit, the sermons we hear, and the people we live next to." In a survey of 12 nations, Americans were the least likely of all to talk about issues with those who disagreed with them.

AMERICAN COMMUNITY ON THE INTERSTATE

What would America be without cars? The closest grasp of community many American have is Interstate travel. You're eyeball to eyeball with countless number of people, frustrated by the slow ones & energized by keeping pace with the speeders. McDonalds & Starbucks are just a few exits away and maybe even an outlet shopping mall. It's definitely a middle class affair, because the rich fly and the poor ride the bus. Like the covered wagon American pioneers, today's Interstate Americans equate travel with adventure & progress.

A NEW AMERICAN FINANCIAL ARISTOCRACY?

1. American income equality is definitely growing wider. In the 20 year period from 1980-2000, the wealthiest 20% of Americans increased their share of total national income from 44% to 50%. Every other lower wealth bracket (top 60%-80%, 40%-60%, 20-40% & lowest 20%) lost money during this 20 year period.



- 2. Income distribution inequality has been growing wider in the U.S. over the past generation. From 1950-1970, for every dollar earned by the bottom 90% of Americans in wealth, the wealthiest 1% of Americans earned \$162. Between 1990-2002, the richest 1% of Americans earned \$18,000 for every dollar earned by the bottom 90%.**
- 3. The only category of American taxpayers in 2001 & 2002 whose taxes decreased were the top 1% in wealth.**

**CAVEAT
EMPTOR**

- 1. Why are fast food franchises so reluctant to provide nutritional information about their menu?**
- 2. Why do so many Americans follow the Atkins diet even though it's not good for you in the long-run?**
- 3. Why don't campaigning politicians take stands on issues?**
- 4. Why do so many companies use sex in marketing their products?**

Like the ancient Romans, Americans practice caveat emptor (let the buyer beware), implying that we cannot completely trust business.

The adversarial relationship between companies & consumers has been fought out on the battlegrounds of advertising, political lobbying, consumer legislation, environmentalism, ethics, & class action suits.

With their a high tolerance for “rugged individualism” in the marketplace, Americans grant corporations license to compete aggressively and pragmatically. However, burgeoning consumer legislation over the past generation reflects less tolerance of business behavior perceived as exploitative. Some Western nations, such as France, who are less “gung ho” about business than America utilize socialist government to create a “buffer zone” between corporate self-interest & consumer self-interest.

HOW PRAGMATIC COMPANIES STRIVE TO GAIN EVERY EDGE & ADVANTAGE IN THE CONTEST WITH CONSUMERS

- 1. Engage in intensive advertising
(brainwashing)**
- 2. Withhold product information**
- 3. Use enticements such as coupons
& contests**
- 4. Push credit-financed purchasing**
- 5. Use PR to disguise & sugarcoat
corporate motives**

AMERICA THE CONSUMER

- 1. American children are bombarded with 40,000 television ads per year, up from 20,000 in the 1970s.**
- 2. At \$235B, the U.S. billion accounts for over half of the world's total advertising market.**
- 3. In 1970, Americans drove some 80 million cars close to 1 trillion miles burning 5.25 million barrels of fuel per day. By 2000, there were about 128 million cars—60 percent more. They traveled 2.3 trillion miles (a growth of 146 percent), consumed 56% more fuel and emitted 302 million tons of carbon.**
- 4. The United States uses about 26 percent of global oil, but has only 6% of the global population**
- 5. The US now contributes the same amount of greenhouse gases as the 2.6 billion people living in 151 developing nations.**

A 2006 World Health Organization study concluded that, "Obesity has reached pandemic proportions throughout the world and is now the greatest single contributor to chronic disease." The spread of the problem was "led by affluent Western nations whose physical activity and dietary habits are being adopted by developing nations." The study found that the world now has more fat people (1b+) than hungry ones (800m).

Transparent Companies (?)



American corporations tend to be secretive about operations as a source of competitive advantage

INDEBTED

AMERICA

**In what way are middle
class Americans the
world's biggest risk-
takers?**

**(Heavy consumer
indebtedness with only 2
months of living
expenses in savings)**

- 1. Number of U.S. households that have one or more credit cards: 73% (vs. 16% in 1970)**
- 2. Average credit cards per household: 7.8 in 2003 (vs. 0.6 in 1971)**
- 3. Total amount Americans purchase with credit cards annually: \$2.2 trillion in 2002 (vs. \$724B in 1994)**
- 4. % of annual U.S. GDP attributed to credit card purchases: 20%**
- 5. Merchants accepting credit cards: 5.3M in 2004 (vs. 820,000 in 1971)**
- 6. Amount of credit processed by Visa every second: \$32,000.**



- 7. Over the past decade, Americans have tripled their amount of credit card debt.**
- 8. In 2004, the federal government took in the same amount of money as in 1999, but spent 34% more.**
- 9. More than 40% of U.S. government debt is owed to foreign nations, including \$500B to China & \$720B to Japan.**

RECORD CONSUMER DEBT HIKES THE U.S. DEFICIT

- 1. Total American indebtedness has more than doubled over the past decade to \$7.3T, including \$1.98T in non-mortgage debt—(\$18,700 per household)**
- 2. Credit card debt makes up \$735 billion of this total; \$12,000 per household; \$1,700 in annual interest**
- 3. 40% of Americans pay only the minimum balance on their cards each month**



- 1. The International Monetary Fund recently warned America that its “unprecedented” domestic debt (consumer + government) threatens to reduce global output by 2.5% & U.S. output by 2% due to forcing up global interest rates (in an effort to slow down America’s debt appetite). “The rest of the world is affected seriously by the U.S. fiscal deficit.” (IMF chief economist)**
- 4. The national debt accumulates at \$1.69B each day (\$25,068 per capita debt for every American)**
- 5. If historical trends continue, America’s total domestic indebtedness will soon equal 40% of annual GDP (higher than after WW2).**

THE DAWNING ERA OF AMERICAN DEBT POLITICAL TURMOIL

- 1. America's runaway domestic debt will soon have to be addressed through a combination of rising taxes & spending cuts. Both of these approaches to dealing with the debt crisis will be political divisive.**
- 2. The largest controversy will revolve around who will give up the most in disappearing government services: Rich or poor? Young or old? Working or retired? Military or social welfare benefits? Corporations or consumers? "Pork barrel" state projects or federal projects?**

TOUGH FINANCIAL TIMES FOR WORKING AMERICANS

At the close of the first decade of the 21st century, Americans have more than triple the debt (an average of \$46,000) than they had in 1982 (\$14,000) but less than half the savings. Savings is down from 10.9% of income (\$2537 average) in 1982 to just 2.7% (\$940) in 2008. More Americans are having to settle for part-time work & 4/5 of full-time jobs are in the low-paying service sector. Three times as many Americans are likely to go bankrupt compared to 1982.

AMERICAN BUSINESS CULTURE

“What’s the bottom line?”



**“The business of America is
business”
(Pres. Calvin Coolidge)**

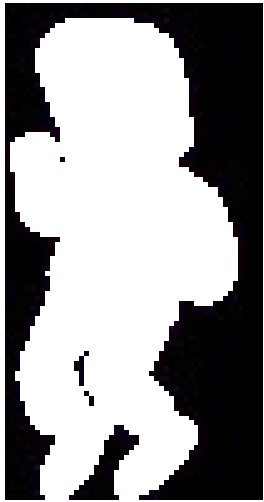


Buffalo Bill was the American West's greatest entrepreneur



His profitable buffalo hunting parties often killed 10,000 animals a day (left to rot) as part of the Army's campaign to subdue the plains Indians by eradicating their main food source.

**What unsophisticated
American became our
biggest cultural
“icon”?**



Why does the USA lead the world in entrepreneurship?

**Individualism + risk-taking +
institutional infrastructure +
achievement ethic +
commercial culture = success**

AMERICAN EMPIRE-BUILDING

- 1. Standard Oil, General Motors, McDonalds, Microsoft, Wal-Mart**
- 2. The Fortune 500**
- 3. Sports dynasties ("We're #1")**
- 4. Gold & platinum records**
- 5. "We're the fastest growing church in town!"**
- 6. Baylor University striving to attain "tier 1" academic & sports status**

AMERICA'S MARKETING CULTURE

- 1. Big is better!**
- 2. New, new, new!**
- 3. Call now!**
- 4. You deserve...**
- 5. \$19.95 (not \$20)**
- 6. Convenience**
- 7. EZ use**
- 8. 2 for 1**
- 9. The more you buy, the more you save!**

AMERICAN MANAGEMENT STYLE

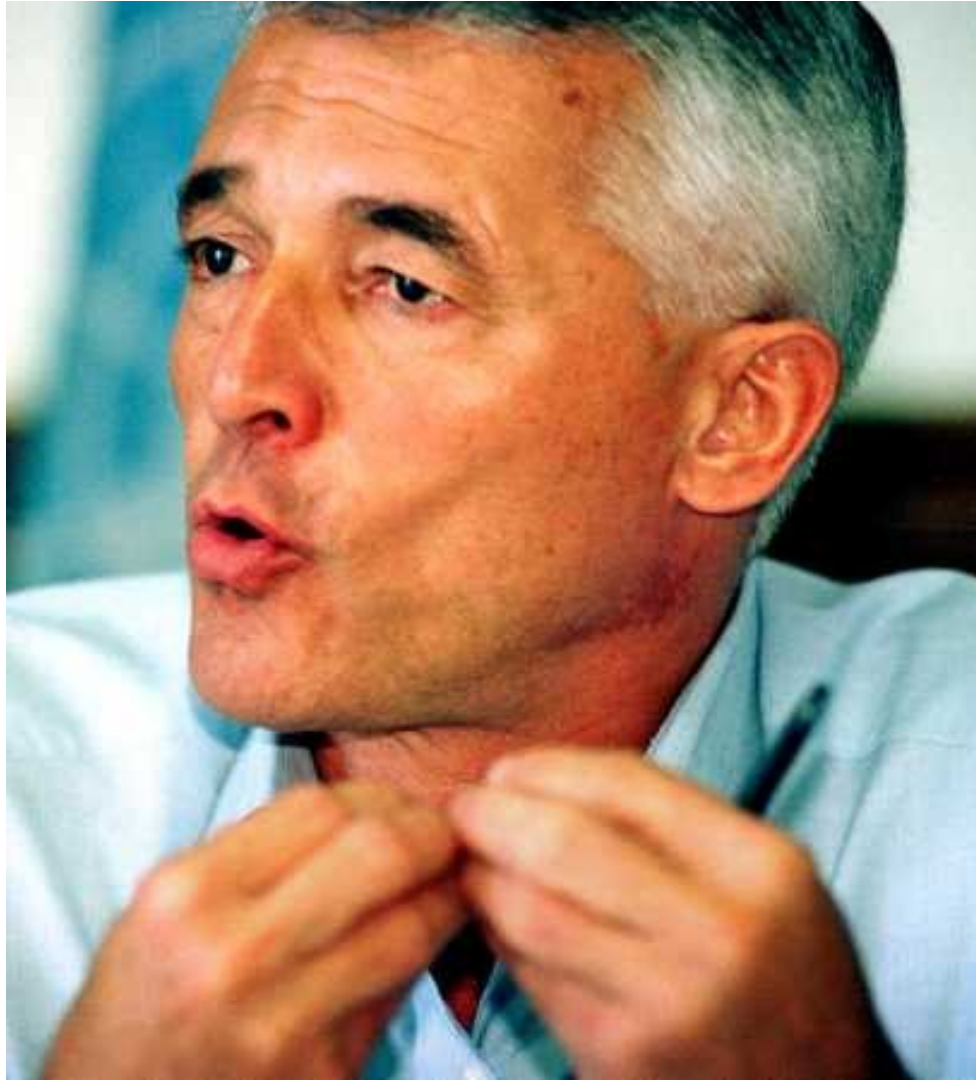
Do American employees like participative management? They say they do, but in reality, most American workers really want decisive managers who don't waste much people's time with "frivolous" meetings. Americans want decisive managers, not ditherers. Americans push for quick results & instant problem-solving; they want those in charge to deliver—"win baby win."

Decisiveness: No time for small talk



**Do American
companies hold
their employees
more accountable
for ethics or for
results?**

“Just do it”



- 1. Credit as a lifestyle**
- 2. Commercialized sex**
- 3. Commercialized Xmas
& holidays**
- 4. Intrusive telemarketing**
- 5. Market spying (Internet
cookies, focus groups, etc.)**
- 6. \$\$\$ over patriotism for out-
sourcing U.S. corporations**


Turf power! **(personal empire-building)**



1. The classic power game in American big business centers around individualistic competition to climb the hierarchy, often putting career interests ahead of company interests. American executive success is measured more by corporate “turf” controlled than by financial compensation, but the two are closely correlated.



2. Executive power/success are measured by how many “key” people report to you; by the size of your budget; and by how much your decisions impact the corporation. “Fast track” executives strive to expand & protect their corporate turf via controlling the 3 M’s: manpower, money, & markets. The mystique of MBA degrees from prestigious schools provide young graduates with an instant entrée to corporate power corridors—battle on the front lines.



3. The difference between the compensation of American corporate chief executive officers (CEOs) and the pay of factory workers is large & getting wider. In 2001, executives of surveyed corporations in the United States made more than \$11 million—350 times as much as the average factory worker's \$31,260 annual pay . And this earnings differential grew more than fivefold between 1990 and 2001. In 2007, execs made 179 times more than "rank and file" workers. If the minimum wage had grown as fast since 1990, the minimum wage would now be almost \$23 per hour.



5. Between 1994 and 2007, executives pay increased \$90 for every dollar gained by lower level workers.

4. Today, the U.S. top-to-bottom pay gap is at least 10 times greater than the differential in other industrial nations, where tax laws and cultural norms have blocked huge increases in executive pay.

DONALD TRUMP ON BUSINESS

- 1. Be decisive and then stand by your decisions**
- 2. If you have someone who is disloyal to the team, get rid of him. No second chances.**
- 3. The business world is no place for loose cannons.**
- 4. Learn from your mistakes**



5. Rudeness with clients or co-workers is bad.

6. A woman using her sex appeal to flirt and succeed is unethical and unfair.

7. Passivity is an absolute sin in business.

8. Not standing up for yourself is a greater sin than unprofessionalism.

9. Don't just talk about rewards to employees—deliver them.

**FEMININE
BUSINESS
CULTURE**

AMERICAN WOMEN ARE CARVING OUT THEIR OWN BUSINESS CULTURE

- 1. Women business professionals are increasingly rejecting traditional male-dominated business careers in corporate cultures, especially after the after the age of 30.**
- 2. Most women 3-5 years into their business careers make less money than men.**
- 3. Only 29% of students in top MBA programs are women (but women own 38% of U.S. businesses).**




- 4. Corporate jobs have an image problem with many women: not a caring profession; long hours; lack of ethics; absence of role models.**
- 5. New career options for women: starting their own companies (in order to shape their own corporate culture); working for other women entrepreneurs; working part-time; working for non-profit organizations.**

THE FEMININE ADMINISTRATIVE STYLE

- 1. Cooperation > Competition**
- 2. Consensus > Autocracy**
- 3. Multiple goals > Profit as
the only goal**
- 4. HOW you do things >
WHAT you do**

WOMENOMICS

- 1. Economists now recognize that women are the most powerful engine of economic global growth in the 21st century.**
- 2. 2/3 of American women now work (vs. just 1/3 in 1950) & women make up almost half of the U.S. workforce.**
- 3. Since 1970, women have filled 2 new jobs in the global economy for every one filled by men.**
- 4. Women make 80% of all consumer decisions around the world.**
- 5. Women workers account of 60-80% of new jobs in the Asian economy. **

- 6. In developed nations, women produce about 40% of total GDP, but this rises to over half of GDP if the worth of housework (still done predominately by women) is added.**
- 7. Women make better grades than men at every level of education & are better financial investors as measured by rate of return.**
- 8. Corporations with both male & female executives earn a higher rate of return for stockholders than corporations with all-male executives.**



- 9. Globally more women now receive college degrees than men.**
- 10. A rapid decline in jobs that require manual labor put women on more of a level playing field with men.**
- 11. Women currently hold only 7% of board positions globally (15% in the USA; 1% in Japan).**
- 12. The main reason women earn less than men is because a greater % of women work in low-paying occupations (such as teaching & nursing) than men.**

% OF WOMEN WORKING IN...

- 1. Denmark: 73%**
- 2. Sweden: 72%**
- 3. Canada: 68%**
- 4. Britain: 66%**
- 5. USA: 64%**
- 6. Germany: 59%**
- 7. Japan: 57%**
- 8. Spain: 48%**
- 9. Italy: 33%**

EMOTIONAL INSTABILITY IN AMERICAN CULTURE

ROOT CAUSES OF EMOTIONAL DYSFUNCTIONS IN INDIVIDUALISTIC CULTURES

- 1. Isolation of individuals & the need to manufacture a personal identity**
- 2. Stress caused by Anglo-Saxon performance culture**
- 3. Cultural emphasis on quantity of life over quality of life**

WORKPLACE STRESS

- 1. 40% of Americans say their job is very or extremely stressful.**
- 2. 25% of Americans say their job is their #1 stressor in life.**
- 3. $\frac{3}{4}$ of employees feel work stress is worse today than a generation ago.**
- 4. 65% of American workers report that work stress causes them physical problems.**



- 5. An average of 20 Americans are murdered every week while at work. Homicide is the 3rd highest cause of work-related death.**
- 6. Americans work the longest hours of any Western nation, an average of 49 hours per week.**
- 7. 40% of workers describe their office environment as “like a real life survivor program.”**



8. Over the past 5 years, the number of workers calling in sick has tripled.

9. Unanticipated absenteeism costs companies \$602 per employee annually.

10. 40% of American job turnover is due to workplace stress.

FAMILY BREAKDOWN

- 1. 28% of American families are single parent**
- 2. 1 million children each year have their parents divorce.**
- 3. 10% of Americans have been divorced at least once.**
- 4. 40-50% of American marriages end in divorce.**

MURDER & SUICIDE IN AMERICA

**1. Average annual murder rate
over past decade: 16,000
(44 per day)**

**2. Approx. 25,000-30,000
American suicides annually
& 8-25 suicide attempts for
every actual suicide**



- 3. As of June, 2014, 297 students (including elementary) have been murdered in 137 separate American school incidents.**
- 4. In America's single largest mass murder to date (2007), 32 students were murdered & many more wounded by a fellow student at Virginia Tech University.**
- 5. Hundreds of students are subjected annually to violence, sexual molestation , or harassments in American public education.**

ALCOHOL & DRUG ABUSE

- 1. 43% of Americans have been exposed to alcoholism in their extended family.**
- 2. Approx. 7M Americans between the ages of 12-20 are binge drinkers.**
- 3. An American is killed every 30 minutes in an alcohol-related traffic accident.**



EATING DISORDERS

- 1. 61% of Americans are overweight or obese: 13% of children 6-11 years old; 14% of those 12-19 years old**
- 2. 15% of young American women have a serious eating disorder.**
- 3. Americans spend \$109M daily on dieting products**

SEXUAL ABUSE IN AMERICA

- 1. About $\frac{1}{4}$ of American women were sexually molested in childhood & 1 in 7 males**
- 2. Estimate of women raped every year by a stranger: 220,000- 1 million; 1.2M are raped by an acquaintance**



3. Ten states took action in 2008 to eliminate sexual abuse of students by teachers. Between 2001-2005, 2,570 teachers lost their teaching credentials in sexual misconduct charges. Experts say the problem is much bigger than the statistics indicate.

4. The suicide rate of the U.S. Army hit a record high in 2007, when 935 (115 in the Middle East) active duty soldiers took their lives. Another 166 American soldiers in the Middle East attempted suicide. Soldier suicides have risen each year of the Iraq war.

SEX IN THE AMERICAN MASS MEDIA

- 1. 75% of prime time American TV & 64% of all TV shows include sexual content.**
- 2. 87% of American movies include sexual content.**
- 3. Premarital sex is referred to 2-3 times every hour on American soap operas.**