Zombieland demonstrates the growing decline of political knowledge with a conversation between Tallahassee and Little Rock regarding one of the most influential political and social activists the world has ever seen. While they were riding in the car, Tallahassee is appalled to discover that Little Rock does not know who Bill Murray is and exclaims, "I mean, that's like asking who Gandhi is." Little Rock, perplexed, replies, "Who's Gandhi?" Little Rock is representative of the nation's youth, and it is very disconcerting that she does not know who Gandhi is since she is obviously old enough to have had at least some sort of formal education. Democracy is a system of government that is supposed to be fueled by the participation of the people, and with participation and political education dropping off the charts, it does not bode well for the country. Certainly there are still people who are knowledgeable about American politics and world figures, but as time goes on the number of these people are obviously shrinking.

Pop culture and media across the world are also changing to keep up with the increasingly careless and self-satisfying populations. The culture filling the heads of Americans emphasizes basic needs like sex, sleep, and food which can simplify the needs and wants of the population. The necessity of simplicity being used in advertisements has been proven by the length of sound bites (actual sound clips of people talking) used on political television ads and news broadcasts. In 1968 the average length of a sound bite on a political commercial was over 43 seconds long, but 24 years later (1992) the average was shortened to less than 9 seconds (bostonglobe.com). A change like this suggests that Americans have increasingly shortening attention spans and that any commercial involving politics can no longer rely on the words of the candidate but instead must rely on how aesthetically pleasing the ad is. Zombies are the pinnacle of being careless, simple, and self-satisfying as they take care of themselves and do not bother to assist any group or individual. In the film, the zombies are attracted to the lights and sounds of the Pacific Playland amusement park only because they are visually pleasing and draw people in. This is similar to the way that people are now drawn to short flashy advertisements and things like the "bright lights of Broadway" are meant to draw in crowds. Once the characters are in the theme park, the visuals in the film make them look more like large theme park crowds than like scary monsters. When Tallahassee is in the shooting booth, he is mobbed and

surrounded by screaming zombies similar to frenzied children rushing towards a game. Similarly, when Wichita and Little Rock are sitting in Power Tower ride, the zombies flock to the front of the ride, simulating people waiting their turn to ride (or climb up) the tower.

Citizen participation and civic engagement have also been rapidly declining in local politics for the last thirty years. One of the simplest ways to become involved at a local level is to attend any sort of community meeting or participate in local school affairs. However, according to poll samples from the Roper Organization, the number of people actually attending these meetings dropped from 22 percent in 1973 to 13 percent in 1993. Robert Putnam discussed in his article "Bowling Alone" that the lack of participation has surpassed the physical realm and in the last thirty years large numbers of Americans have become disengaged psychologically from politics as well. When asked how much people trust the government in Washington the number of people answering "some of the time" or "almost never" went from 30 percent to 75 percent in only 26 years (Putnam, 4). The pinnacle of Putnam's argument is that the social fabric of America is actually deteriorating due to the lack of civic engagement by American citizens. The clichéd American cul-de-sac throwing a patriotic Fourth of July party is a distant memory as growing numbers of people spend less time with their neighbors.

The main character, Columbus, begins the zombie apocalypse as one of these disengaged Americans. Columbus's first encounter with any type of zombie coincidentally happened with his neighbor, whom he knew only as 406 (Amber Heard), after he trustfully let into his home only to have her try and eat him. 406 had apparently lived across from Columbus for some time; however, he never knew her name or even the faintest detail about her. After 406 initially turns into a zombie, Columbus sums up his trust for fellow humans by saying, "You see? You just can't trust anyone. The first girl I let into my life and she tries to eat me." This encounter is completely symbolic of what Putnam was discussing in "Bowling Alone" with this new generation since there is obviously an incredible amount of disconnect between these two teenagers who only live across the hall from each other. Putnam says that there are "adverse trends in social connectedness" that need to be reversed to restore "civic engagement and civic trust," actively demonstrated by the neighborly disconnect between Columbus and 406