Texas Podcast Assignments

TX LO: Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in Texas.

- Civil Protests & Protesting Civility **Texas Matters**
- Texas as a Bellwether of American Politics **The New Yorker**
- A Smarter Texas **Center for Strategic and International Studies**

TX LO: Analyze the state and local election process.

- Will this be the year of 'reverse coattails' in Texas? **Texas Take**
- Risks of Candidate Debates **Houston Matters**
- O'Rourke and Cruz Clash Over What it Means to Be American **Texas Take**
- Cannabis Oil, Special Elections, and Redistricting **Texas Tribune**

TX LO: Identify the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

- The Gun Show **More Perfect**
- Civil Protests & Protesting Civility **Texas Matters**
- A Right To An Education **Texas Matters**
- Texas v. Hernandez **Stuff You Missed in History Class**

TX LO: Analyze issues, policies, and political culture of Texas.

- Racism in Law Enforcement **Houston Matters**
- How Will Cuts To Arts Funding Impact The Texas Economy? **The Source**
- Lethal Injections and Opioids **Texas Standard**
- Why Texas Works **Alphachat**

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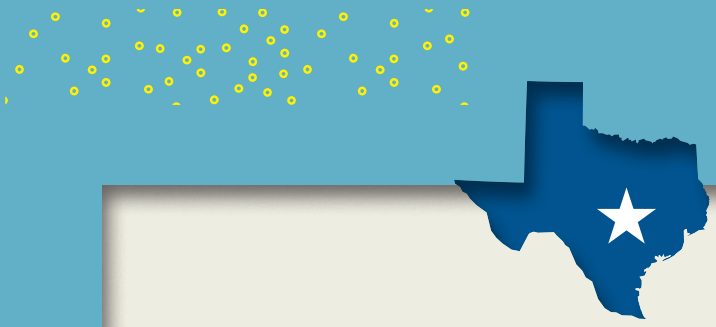
The State Of Texas: Government, Politics, and Policy

FOURTH EDITION



THE STATE OF TEXAS:
Government, Politics, and Policy

FOURTH EDITION

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Texas State University

With contributions from:

- Donna Hooper, North Central Texas College
- Patrick Moore, Richland College
- Veronica Reyna, Houston Community College
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THE STATE OF TEXAS: GOVERNMENT, POLITICS, AND POLICY, FOURTH EDITION

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PREFACE

Built for Texas Government Courses . . .

By Texas Government Voices . . .

For Texas Government Students!

The State of Texas: Government, Politics, and Policy, 4e, combines concise content with effective digital tools that provide a personalized learning experience for every student. Built to align directly with state learning outcomes and core objectives, this highly readable program provides students with the content and tools to make Texas government relevant in their lives.

Developing Foundational Knowledge and Honing Skills

With a comprehensive content program, a revision that was informed by student data, and numerous assignable activities in Connect Texas Government®, *The State of Texas* includes ample material for a full semester course on Texas government. SmartBook 2.0®, found in Connect Texas Government, is organized around the Texas Learning Outcomes and Core Objectives, providing the ability to assess directly on those outcomes.

Better Data, Smarter Revision, Improved Results

Students study more effectively with SmartBook 2.0. SmartBook 2.0 is an adaptive reading experience designed to help students learn better, study smarter, and retain more knowledge for greater success. It helps students distinguish what they know from what they don't know and focus on concepts they are most likely to forget.

New to this edition, SmartBook is now optimized for mobile and tablet and is accessible for students with disabilities. And as part of any government course, SmartBook now focuses on the broader context for and building blocks of the political system. Specifically, it has been enhanced with improved learning objectives to ensure that students gain foundational knowledge while also learning to make connections for broader understanding of government institutions, events, and behavior. SmartBook personalizes learning to individual student needs, continually adapting to pinpoint knowledge gaps and focus learning on topics that need the most attention. Study time is more productive and, as a result, students are better prepared for class and coursework. For instructors, SmartBook tracks student progress and provides insights that can help guide teaching strategies.

Using SmartBook, students helped inform the revision strategy:

STEP 1. Over the course of two years, data points showing concepts that caused students the most difficulty were anonymously collected from the Connect Texas Government SmartBook product.

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STEP 2. The data from SmartBook were provided to the authors in the form of a **Heat Map,** which graphically illustrated "hot spots" in the text that impacted student learning (see images left).

STEP 3. The authors used the **Heat Map** data to refine the content and reinforce student comprehension in the new edition. Additional quiz questions and assignable activities were created for use in Connect Texas Government to further support student success.

RESULT: Because the **Heat Map** gave the authors empirically based feedback at the paragraph and even sentence level, they were able to develop the new edition using precise student data that pinpointed concepts that caused students the most difficulty.

Understanding Impact

Understanding Impact features help students understand why key content matters and includes critical thinking questions to help them apply what they learn. Topics include understanding the impact of informal qualifications in the Texas gubernatorial race and understanding the impact of Internet-savvy campaigns for upstart candidates.

Understanding Impact In the previous section, Formal Powers of the Governor, you learned that the powers of the Texas governor are relatively weak when compared to the power conferred on governors of other states. In this section you learned that the informal powers of the governor have evolved over time and the position has achieved new relevance. Do you believe the governor's informal powers have strengthened the power of the office, or does our governor still occupy a relatively weak position in state government? Give reasons for your answer.

How To

How To features provide students with step-by-step guidance for developing skills they need for college and for life. Topics include "How to Think Critically about Issues" and "How to Interpret a Table."

How to

Interpret a Table

Tables summarize and simplify information. They present names, numbers, percentages, and amounts in a way that is easy to read. Let's use Table 4.3 to work through the process of interpreting a table.

Step 1: What is the title of Table 4.3?
The title of the table tells you how the elements within the table are related. Table 4.3 has the title "Governor Rick Perry Campaign Contributions and Appointments to Boards and Commissions." The title presents the relationship between Governor Perry's campaign contributions and the appointments he made to state boards and commissions.

$10,616 each. This information suggests that those appointed to education boards and commissions gave more money to Rick Perry's campaign than any other appointed office category. Conversely, 28 individuals that Perry appointed to retirement boards and commissions contributed less than other appointed office categories, with an average contribution of $248 per appointee.

Step 4: What conclusions can you draw from Table 4.3?
Though it is possible to make several observations about the data included in the table, it is important to look for the big picture. For example, the total appointee do-

Critical Thinking Activities

At the *apply, analyze,* and *evaluate* levels of Bloom's taxonomy, **Critical Thinking activities** in Connect Texas Government allow students to engage with the political process and learn by doing. For example, students will understand how Texas is a majority-minority state.

Informing and Engaging Students on Texas Government . . . as It Happens

Using Connect Texas Government, students can learn the course material more deeply and study more effectively than ever before.

Texas NewsFlash

We ensure that you have the most up-to-date content to share with your students through our NewsFlash activities, which are updated monthly. **NewsFlash** exercises tie current news stories to key Texas government concepts and learning objectives. After interacting with a contemporary news story, students are assessed on their ability to make the connection between real-life events and course content.

Texas Podcasts

Texas government faculty can now create broader interest, engagement, and relevancy in their courses by leveraging political podcasts about Texas government and politics. These assignments, which will be periodically expanded, will ask students to listen to relevant podcasts, demonstrate their understanding of the basic concepts presented, and reflect the broader context of the Texas political system.

Concept Clips

Concept Clips help students break down key concepts in government. Using easy-to-understand audio narration, visual cues, and colorful animations, Concept Clips provide a step-by-step presentation that aids in student retention. In addition to the concept-based clips, the new edition also offers several **Skills Based Clips** that equip students for work within and outside the classroom. These skills-based clips include the following:

- How to Evaluate News Source
- How to Think Critically
- How to Read a Court Case
- How to Understand Charts and Graphs
- How to Interpret Political Cartoons
- How to Avoid Plagiarism

Focus On

Focus On features present students with engaging examples of how Hispanic and Latino individuals, groups, and culture play an important role in Texas political life. Focus On features now profile individuals relevant to today's student. In Chapter 4, for example, the Focus On feature is titled "A Hispanic Governor for Texas?"

Focus On

A Hispanic Governor for Texas?

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Absolutely, proclaims *Texas Monthly* magazine. The article, "El Gobernador," written in February 2008, begins with a hypothetical story of Rafael Anchia, currently serving as a state legislator from Dallas, winning the 2018 Texas gubernatorial race. Although the article begins with a look forward, its main focus is on the history of Hispanic politics and the changing demographics of the state.[3] According to the U.S. Census, 38.6 percent of Texans are Hispanic.[4] Texas will likely have a Hispanic governor someday; the main question is when.

During the 2002 governor's race, the state came very close. Tony Sanchez, a business executive and politician from Laredo, was the first Hispanic to run for governor in the statewide election. Before the election, he served as board regent for the University of Texas at Austin and also worked, albeit unsuccessfully, to get a Hispanic to run for president of the UT Health Science Center in San Antonio. Moving into election season, Sanchez won the Democratic primary with 60 percent of the vote and faced off against Rick Perry, who had been unopposed in the Republican primary.[5]

During the election, many Democrats hoped that the state's Hispanic population would turn out in larger numbers and become a more distinct bloc in favor of the Democratic Party.[6] Unfortunately for Democrats and Sanchez, there was less Hispanic mobilization for their party than desired. Sanchez lost the election, winning only 40 percent of the vote.[7] In addition, although Hispanic turnout improved somewhat from the 2000 election, there was not enough movement to indicate a surge.[8] Hispanic turnout has been historically low as a percentage of Hispanic population and remains so.[9] (See Chapter 9 for more information on Hispanic voter turnout.)

2018 Governor's Race

Lupe Valdez©REX/Shutterstock

Lupe Valdez, former sheriff of Dallas County, was one of the two top vote-getting candidates in an indecisive Democratic primary in March 2018. She faced off against Andrew White, the son of former governor Mark White, in a May 2018 runoff to determine the candidate of the Democratic Party.

Both the Democratic and Republican parties have been making inroads, capturing votes as well as candidates from the grassroots up. Although voter turnout among Hispanics remains low, Rafael Anchia and Lupe Valdez are part of a rising group of Hispanic politicians who have very real potential to capture the governor's office in the near future. This group also includes current Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush and former secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julian Castro.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What do you think it will take to mobilize and expand the Hispanic electorate?
2. In your opinion, why might the Hispanic vote be important for candidates seeking statewide office?

Emphasizing Texas Voices

The Fourth Edition is proud to include the contributions from several Texas faculty members with a wealth of experience in the Texas government classroom:

- Donna Hooper, North Central Texas College
- Patrick Moore, Richland College
- Veronica Reyna, Houston Community College
- Thomas Varacalli, Texas State University
- Geoffrey Willbanks, Tyler Junior College

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Content Changes

As mentioned, we revised the Fourth Edition in response to student Heat Map data that pinpointed the topics and concepts where students struggled the most. This was reflected primarily in the chapter on public policy in Texas.

Chapter 1: Introduction to Texas History and Politics

- Reduced the number of historical details
- Added information on diversity within Texas
- Updated political and economic information
- Added a "How to Read a Map" feature

Chapter 2: The American Federal System and the Texas State Constitution

- Enhanced discussion of American federalism
- Explained the connection between culture and constitutional history
- Highlighted characteristics common to state institutions
- Updated information on Navarro's legacy today and how it impacts us
- Added a "How to Read Critically" feature

Chapter 3: The Texas Legislature

- Reordered text to improve flow
- Reduced the amount of detail

- Revised information on gerrymandering
- Included information on how students can find contact information for their own representatives
- Added a "How to Think Critically about Issues" feature
- Updated political information, economic information, and research results

Chapter 4: The Executive Department and the Office of the Governor of Texas

- Enhanced discussion of governor's formal and informal powers
- Explained how race, class, and gender play into the history of the Texas governorship
- Highlighted the role informal powers play in the governorship
- Updated the Focus On feature with the 2018 Texas governor's race
- Added a "How to Interpret a Table" feature

Chapter 5: The Court System in Texas

- Enhanced discussion of Texas judicial selection
- Explained the role campaign finance plays in judicial elections and decision making
- Highlighted the difference between civil and criminal procedures
- Updated the Focus On feature to include a brief discussion of Hispanics on the Texas Supreme Court today
- Added a "How to Interpret Figures" feature

Chapter 6: The Criminal Justice System in Texas

- Added information on juvenile justice and the death penalty
- Updated research data and polling results
- Added a "How to Locate Primary Sources" feature, with a focus on Texas primary sources

Chapter 7: Local Governments in Texas

- Enhanced discussion of types of local government
- Explained municipal elections in Texas
- Highlighted the issue of voter turnout
- Updated information on special purpose districts
- Added a "How to Speak Effectively" feature

Chapter 8: Public Opinion and the Media in Texas

- Enhanced coverage on the role of public opinion
- Explained the functions of media in Texas politics
- Highlighted the role of the media in Texas political campaigns
- Updated information of the various sources of media
- Added a "How to Interpret Polling Data" feature

Chapter 9: Voting and Political Participation in Texas

- Added an explanation of how wealth and political protests affect politics
- Added information on gerrymandering in Texas

Chapter 10: Campaigns and Elections in Texas

- Enhanced coverage of the election process
- Explained primary elections
- Highlighted information on federal Voting Rights Act
- Updated data on early voting
- Added a "How to Get Involved with a Candidate or Issue" feature

Chapter 11: Political Parties in Texas

- Added specifics on voter fraud to make the chapter livelier and easier to understand
- Included information on Texas women seeking the right to vote
- Included information on "white primaries" in Texas and on nonwhite people being excluded from voting
- Updated information on Texas political races
- Clarified information on the impact of third parties in Texas, including Raza Unida
- Included information on the "bathroom bill" in Texas and on transgender citizens

Chapter 12: Interest Groups and Lobbying in Texas

- Added a "How to Evaluate Sources" feature
- New "Understanding Impact" feature challenging students to think critically about the political process in which interest groups operate
- Updated map of right-to-work states and added new photos
- Enhanced discussion of Hispanic interest groups and recent challenges to Texas immigration law
- Updated data on labor union participation rates and lobbyists in Texas
- Provided new examples of interest group activity

Chapter 13: Public Policy in Texas

- Added an introduction explaining what public policy is and why it matters to an individual student
- Revised and streamlined information on why and how public policy changes
- Revised information on policy liberalism indices to focus on Texas
- Streamlined chapter by reducing or deleting information on welfare policy, school curricula, sex education, water policy, and veteran policy
- Updated information on LGBTQ rights
- Updated information on border control
- Updated information on tuition costs at public universities in Texas and elsewhere in the United States
- Updated research results

Chapter 14: Financing State Government

- Enhanced coverage of tax equity
- Explained the principles of taxation
- Highlighted new data on tax structures
- Updated data on Texas expenditures
- Added a "How to Interpret a Graph" feature

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Learning Outcomes and Core Objectives

GOVT 2306 is one of the foundational component areas within the Core Curriculum identified by the Undergraduate Education Advisory Committee (UEAC) of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). The UEAC has identified six core objectives, of which four—critical thinking skills, communication skills, social responsibility, and personal responsibility—must be mapped to content in GOVT 2306. Those four core objectives are mapped to specific *The State of Texas* content here and throughout each chapter.

Institutions must assess learning outcomes (provided in the *UEAC's Academic Course Guide Manual*); for example, the student's demonstrated ability to explain the origin and development of the Texas Constitution, consistent with assessment practices required by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC).

These requirements include an explanation of measures, methodology, frequency, and timeline of assessment; an explanation of targets and benchmarks of "Core Objective" attainment; evidence of attainment of the required core objectives; interpretation of assessment information; and the use of results for improving student learning. SACS principles of accreditation 3.3.1.1 requires institutions to identify expected learning outcomes, assess the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provide evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results.

Adopting *The State of Texas* and using the provided assessment tools makes SACS compliance easy while meeting the purpose of the Core Curriculum.

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Learning Outcomes and Core Objectives Correlation Table

CHAPTER 1	**Learning Outcome:** Explain the history, demographics, and political culture of Texas.	Thinking Critically	List the several different "waves" of immigration. How have these settlement patterns changed over time and/or how have they stayed the same? How did they change the character and culture of Texas?
	Learning Outcome: Explain the history, demographics, and political culture of Texas.	Communicating Effectively	Write a short synopsis of Texas's changing economy and its role in international trade.
	Learning Outcome: Explain the history, demographics, and political culture of Texas.	Taking Personal Responsibility	What can you do to become well informed about political issues so that you can make good decisions at election time?
	Learning Outcome: Explain the history, demographics, and political culture of Texas.	Being Socially Responsible	Understanding the relationship between religious affiliations and politics can improve civic knowledge. How would you use this knowledge to engage effectively in your community? Think about your own religious affiliations (if any) and political beliefs and how they compare with those of your neighbors. How might knowing your neighbors' religious affiliations help you better understand their political views?
CHAPTER 2	**Learning Outcome:** Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice in Texas.	Communicating Effectively	Analyze the diagram in Figure 2.3 and the division of powers in Table 2.2 to describe the separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice in Texas.
	Learning Outcome: Explain the origin and development of the Texas Constitution.	Thinking Critically	What is the impact of a constitutional convention dominated by one party? What were the consequences of the 1875 constitutional convention in the development of the Texas Constitution?
	Learning Outcome: Describe state and local political systems and their relationship with the federal government.	Being Socially Responsible	To what extent should the government "promote general welfare"? What does promoting general welfare mean to you? In developing an understanding of state and local political systems and their relationship with the federal government, who do you think should play a greater role—the states or the federal government?
	Learning Outcome: Describe state and local political systems and their relationship with the federal government.	Taking Personal Responsibility	As a resident of Texas and a citizen of the United States, can you identify and discuss examples that reinforce the Full Faith and Credit Clause and the Privileges and Immunities Clause of the U.S. Constitution? Which examples, in your opinion, violate these principles?
CHAPTER 3	**Learning Outcome:** Describe the legislative branch of Texas government.	Communicating Effectively	Some people contend that smaller constituencies might allow a wider array of people to participate in state politics, rather than just the "rich" or "well born." How would you argue in favor of or against this statement?
	Learning Outcome: Describe the legislative branch of Texas government.	Being Socially Responsible	Use this website to find your representatives: https://capitol.texas.gov/. The "Who Represents Me" section allows you to put in your address and locate your state house and senate members.
	Learning Outcome: Describe the legislative branch of Texas government.	Thinking Critically	Both demographics and voting patterns have changed in Texas, and some districts have become more competitive, especially for Democrats in South Texas and in inner-city districts. Discuss what these shifts mean for future elections and the composition of the Texas House and Senate. Reference Table 3.5 in your answer.
	Learning Outcome: Describe the legislative branch of Texas government.	Taking Personal Responsibility	It has been stated that the success of legislation depends largely on a relative few individuals who make up the leadership in the Texas House and Senate. Do you think the Speaker of the House and the lieutenant governor have too much control over the passage of bills? How can you influence legislation? What can individuals do to affect legislation?

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CHAPTER 4	**Learning Outcome:** Explain the structure and function of the executive branch of Texas government.	Communicating Effectively	Analyze Map 4.1. What inferences can you draw from the data? Think about how the data relate to Texas, its neighbors, and other regions of the country.
	Learning Outcome: Explain the structure and function of the executive branch of Texas government.	Being Socially Responsible	How does the comptroller promote effective involvement in regional, national, and global communities?
	Learning Outcome: Explain the structure and function of the executive branch of Texas government.	Taking Personal Responsibility	What can you do to become more actively engaged in the civic discourse about the role of the State Board of Education?
	Learning Outcome: Explain the structure and function of the executive branch of Texas government.	Thinking Critically	The six factors that influence the strength of the power of the governor are the number of elected statewide executives, the tenure of office, the governor's appointive powers, the governor's budgetary powers, the governor's veto powers, and the extent to which the governor controls his or her political party. What can you conclude about the powers of the governor?
CHAPTER 5	**Learning Outcome:** Describe the structure and function of the judicial branch of Texas government.	Communicating Effectively	Analyze Figure 5.4. Describe the appeals process for a civil case filed in county court.
	Learning Outcome: Describe the structure and function of the judicial branch of Texas government.	Being Socially Responsible	What impact, if any, do you think partisan election of judges has on judicial outcomes?
	Learning Outcome: Describe the structure and function of the judicial branch of Texas government.	Thinking Critically	Reflecting on the discussion about representation of minorities and women in the Texas judicial system, do you think it is important to have a judiciary that is representative of the general population? Why or why not?
	Learning Outcome: Describe the structure and function of the judicial branch of Texas government.	Taking Personal Responsibility	Given what you read in this section, it would seem that citizens have little impact in disciplining and/or removing judges. What do you think is a citizen's responsibility in this matter? How can individuals take greater personal responsibility to ensure that judges perform properly?
CHAPTER 6	**Learning Outcome:** Analyze issues and policies in Texas.	Communicating Effectively	Explain the difference between criminal and civil law, including how the standard of proof differs for each. Provide an example of each type of case.
	Learning Outcome: Analyze issues and policies in Texas.	Taking Personal Responsibility	Currently, at what age does the state of Texas consider a person an adult in criminal and civil proceedings? At what age do you think the state should require individuals to take personal responsibility? Why?
	Learning Outcome: Analyze issues and policies in Texas.	Being Socially Responsible	Why might the use of special courts to punish crimes like prostitution provide a cost savings for the criminal justice system?
	Learning Outcome: Analyze issues and policies in Texas.	Thinking Critically	Given the current challenges faced by the criminal justice system, what types of reforms would you recommend? What might be some of the negative or unintended consequences of your recommendations?
CHAPTER 7	**Learning Outcome:** Describe local political systems in Texas.	Communicating Effectively	Compare Figures 7.1, 7.3, and 7.4 with Table 7.2. Discuss the fundamental differences between weak mayor, strong mayor, and council-manager forms of government. Which do you prefer and why?
	Learning Outcome: Describe local political systems in Texas.	Being Socially Responsible	Compare at-large election systems and single-member district systems. An argument in favor of single-member district systems is that they increase minority representation in local government. In your opinion, does increased minority representation increase intercultural competency? Why?
	Learning Outcome: Describe local political systems in Texas.	Taking Personal Responsibility	Local government directly impacts people in their daily lives. What can you do to improve local governance?
	Learning Outcome: Describe local political systems in Texas.	Thinking Critically	Identify some of the problems facing county governments. What solutions would you propose?

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CHAPTER 8	**Learning Outcome:** Evaluate public opinion and the role of the media in Texas politics.	Thinking Critically	Review Figure 8.3. Note that Donald Trump (Republican) was the U.S. president at the time of polling. Why might Texas Democrats display higher levels of trust in the U.S. Supreme Court than in other branches of government? Why might Texas Republicans and Independents display less trust in the Supreme Court than in the presidency?
	Learning Outcome: Evaluate public opinion and the role of the media in Texas politics.	Taking Personal Responsibility	What media sources do you consume? Print? Television? Social media? Which do you access most and least often? How might social media influence you differently than television?
	Learning Outcome: Evaluate public opinion and the role of the media in Texas politics.	Being Socially Responsible	What responsibility do citizens have as social media participants within the context of political campaigns?
	Learning Outcome: Evaluate public opinion and the role of the media in Texas politics.	Communicating Effectively	Explain how the federal government regulates print and electronic media.
CHAPTER 9	**Learning Outcome:** Identify the rights and responsibilities of citizens.	Taking Personal Responsibility	What activities do you engage in that are related to governance? Which forms of political participation do you think are the most effective?
	Learning Outcome: Identify the rights and responsibilities of citizens.	Thinking Critically	How do you think the Texas voter ID law impacts voter turnout in Texas? Where do you stand on the issue? Explain why you favor or oppose voter ID laws.
	Learning Outcome: Identify the rights and responsibilities of citizens.	Being Socially Responsible	Considering the discussion of the socioeconomic factors that affect voter turnout, identify effective ways to increase civic knowledge in culturally diverse communities.
	Learning Outcome: Identify the rights and responsibilities of citizens.	Communicating Effectively	Write a one-page summary of the rationalist explanations for low voter turnout.
CHAPTER 10	**Learning Outcome:** Analyze the state and local election process in Texas.	Thinking Critically	Explain the challenges that hinder minor party candidates from succeeding in statewide elections.
	Learning Outcome: Analyze the state and local election process in Texas.	Communicating Effectively	Do you think the Voting Rights Act requirement that Texas provide a bilingual ballot increases voter turnout? Construct an argument in favor of or against this provision of the Voting Rights Act.
	Learning Outcome: Analyze the state and local election process in Texas.	Being Socially Responsible	What responsibility do you think the media have in covering campaigns and elections? Are the media living up to your expectations?
	Learning Outcome: Analyze the state and local election process in Texas.	Taking Personal Responsibility	If you choose to contribute to a candidate's campaign, to what extent is the candidate obligated to you as a contributor? Should your contribution influence public policy? What about corporate contributions?
CHAPTER 11	**Learning Outcome:** Evaluate the role of political parties in Texas.	Communicating Effectively	Explain how political reforms have weakened political parties.
	Learning Outcome: Evaluate the role of political parties in Texas.	Taking Personal Responsibility	Examine your political values and compare them to the expressed values of both parties. Do your ideas about the role of government, politics, and policy align with one particular party?
	Learning Outcome: Evaluate the role of political parties in Texas.	Being Socially Responsible	What impact, if any, do factions have on enhancing or diminishing civic engagement? In your opinion, do factions promote acceptance of diverse opinions?
	Learning Outcome: Evaluate the role of political parties in Texas.	Thinking Critically	For a variety of reasons, third parties do not currently have much impact on Texas politics. What measures might be taken to level the playing field for third parties and improve their competitiveness in elections?

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CHAPTER 12	**Learning Outcome:** Evaluate the role of interest groups in Texas.	Thinking Critically	Review Table 12.1. Are you a participant in a membership organization? If so, how does the organization represent your interests? If not, how are your interests represented at the state and federal levels of government?
	Learning Outcome: Evaluate the role of interest groups in Texas.	Taking Personal Responsibility	Socrates suggested "know thyself," and Shakespeare's Hamlet admonished "to thine own self be true." It is important to know what your interests are and how they are represented in government. Consider what you have read in this chapter and determine how interest group efforts align with your personal interests. If they do not, what can you do to ensure that government addresses your interests or the interests of those who share similar values?
	Learning Outcome: Evaluate the role of interest groups in Texas.	Communicating Effectively	Review the data presented in Table 12.4. Identify the interest group category that spent the most money in 2014. Discuss the impact that PAC spending has on government.
	Learning Outcome: Evaluate the role of interest groups in Texas.	Being Socially Responsible	How can geographic distribution of interest groups improve political awareness between culturally diverse populations?
CHAPTER 13	**Learning Outcome:** Analyze important public policy issues in Texas.	Taking Personal Responsibility	How can you impact public policy decisions? At what point in the policy cycle could you voice your preferences? Use Figure 13.1, the policy cycle graphic, to help you answer these questions.
	Learning Outcome: Analyze important public policy issues in Texas.	Being Socially Responsible	To what extent should Texas be responsible for ensuring equal funding for wealthy school districts and poor school districts?
	Learning Outcome: Analyze important public policy issues in Texas.	Communicating Effectively	Summarize the legislation that Texas has passed on abortion. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of state involvement in this policy issue.
	Learning Outcome: Analyze important public policy issues in Texas.	Thinking Critically	Given the water-related challenges facing Texas, what measures would you recommend to ensure all Texans have access to water? What might be some negative or unintended consequences of your recommendations?
CHAPTER 14	**Learning Outcome:** Analyze state financing issues and policies in Texas.	Thinking Critically	What goods and services do you think state government should provide? Consider the consequences of your answer. What would the possible impact to society be, given your position? Who would benefit, and who would lose out?
	Learning Outcome: Analyze state financing issues and policies in Texas.	Being Socially Responsible	Texas taxes prepared food items, but does not tax unprepared food items (e.g., raw meats and fresh produce). Earlier in this chapter, you learned that individuals can be excluded from receiving services such as electricity if they cannot pay. Keeping this in mind, how does taxing prepared food affect our state's poorest citizens?
	Learning Outcome: Analyze state financing issues and policies in Texas.	Communicating Effectively	Consider Table 14.8, which illustrates how specific appropriations are restricted. What percentage of funds is not restricted? How does restricting funds impact budget flexibility?
	Learning Outcome: Analyze state financing issues and policies in Texas.	Taking Personal Responsibility	Although few individuals would express a preference for higher taxes, given the information in this chapter about the goods and services the state provides and the revenue data presented in Figure 14.9 and Table 14.9, should Texans advocate for a personal income tax? Why or why not?

mor12418_fm_i-xxx.indd 18 12/19/18 4:04 PM

Brief Contents

CHAPTER 1 Introduction to Texas History and Politics 1

CHAPTER 2 The American Federal System and the Texas State Constitution 37

CHAPTER 3 The Texas Legislature 73

CHAPTER 4 The Executive Department and the Office of the Governor of Texas 119

CHAPTER 5 The Court System in Texas 157

CHAPTER 6 The Criminal Justice System in Texas 185

CHAPTER 7 Local Governments in Texas 231

CHAPTER 8 Public Opinion and the Media in Texas 263

CHAPTER 9 Voting and Political Participation in Texas 311

CHAPTER 10 Campaigns and Elections in Texas 339

CHAPTER 11 Political Parties in Texas 361

CHAPTER 12 Interest Groups and Lobbying in Texas 405

CHAPTER 13 Public Policy in Texas 433

CHAPTER 14 Financing State Government 467

mor12418_fm_i-xxx.indd 19 12/10/18 9:18 PM

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO TEXAS HISTORY AND POLITICS 1

Flags of Texas: From Spain to Statehood 2
Spain 2
France, Briefly 2
Spain Returns 2
The Republic of Mexico 3
The Republic of Texas 4

Core Objective: Thinking Critically . . . 5

The Twenty-Eighth State of the Union 5
The Confederate State of Texas 6

How To: Read a Map 7

Civil War and Reconstruction: A Time of Transition 7
Effects of the Civil War 8
Reconstruction in Texas 9

Post-Reconstruction Texas 11
Land 11
Transformation of the Texas Economy 11

Core Objective: Communicating Effectively . . . 13

Texas's Economic Regions 13
Texas Politics: From Democrat to Republican 15

Core Objective: Taking Personal Responsibility . . . 17

Demographics: The Road to Majority-Minority 17
Urban and Rural 17
Majority-Minority 19

Focus On: How the Government Defines "Hispanic" 20
Religion in Texas 22

Core Objective: Being Socially Responsible . . . 24

Challenges in Texas 24
Recession in Texas 24
National Issues 25
Income and Poverty 25
Education 25
Immigration and In-Migration Today 26
In-Migration 26
Immigration 26

Texas Political Culture 27
Types of Political Culture 27
Populism, Progressivism, and Other Ideologies 29

Conclusion 31
Summary 32
Key Terms 32
Notes 32

CHAPTER 2 THE AMERICAN FEDERAL SYSTEM AND THE TEXAS STATE CONSTITUTION 37

The American Federal System of Government 38
The Federal Structure 38
Division of Powers between National and State Governments 38
The "Necessary and Proper" Clause and the Tenth Amendment 39
Interstate Commerce Clause 40
Equal Protection and Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment 41

How To: Read Critically 42
Power to Tax and Spend to Promote the General Welfare of Citizens 43

Core Objective: Being Socially Responsible . . . 43

The Evolution of American Federalism 44
Relations between States in the Federal System 45

Core Objective: Taking Personal Responsibility . . . 46

Conclusion to Federalism 47

Principles of Constitutional Government 47

Characteristics Common to State Constitutions 48
Separation of Powers 48

Core Objective: Communicating Effectively . . . 50

Bill of Rights 50
Supreme Law of the State 51

FINAL PAGES aptara EQA

Evolution of the Texas Constitution: 1824–1876 51
Constitutions under the Republic of Mexico 51
The Republic of Texas Constitution of 1836 52
Statehood Constitution of 1845 53
Focus On: The Tejano Contribution to Texas's Founding 54
The Civil War and Reconstruction Constitutions of 1861, 1866, and 1869 55
The Constitution of 1876 55
Core Objective: Thinking Critically . . . 56
Culture Drives Institutions 56
Important Sections of the Texas Constitution 56
Article 1: Bill of Rights 57
Article 2: The Powers of Government 57
Article 3: Legislative Department 57
Article 4: Executive Department 57
Article 5: Judicial Department 58
Additional Articles 58
Comparing the Structure of State Constitutions 58
Amending and Revising State Constitutions 62
Patterns of Constitutional Change 63
Amending the Texas Constitution 63
Criticisms of the Texas Constitution 67
Conclusion to the Texas Constitution 68
Summary 69
Key Terms 70
Notes 71

CHAPTER 3 THE TEXAS LEGISLATURE 73
The Structure and Size of the Texas Legislature 74
Core Objective: Communicating Effectively . . . 75
General Characteristics of the Legislature 75
Sessions and Session Length 75
Qualifications and Demographics 78
Core Objective: Taking Personal Responsibility . . . 78
Focus On: The First Hispanic Woman in the Texas Legislature 79
Salary 81
Staff and Facilities 84
Single-Member versus Multimember Districts 84
Reapportionment and Redistricting 86
Equity of Representation 86
Minority Representation 88
Political and Racial Gerrymandering 89
Core Objective: Being Socially Responsible . . . 90
Redistricting in 2001 90
2003 and the Texas Eleven 91
Redistricting in 2011 and Beyond 92
How To: Think Critically about Issues Getting Elected 94
Competition for House and Senate Seats 95
Core Objective: Thinking Critically . . . 97
Term Limits 97
Turnover in State Legislatures 97
Leadership Positions in the Texas Legislature 98
Speaker of the House 98
Lieutenant Governor 100
Committees in the House and Senate 101
Core Objective: Taking Personal Responsibility . . .103
Functions 103
Lawmaking 103
Bills 103
Resolutions 104
Budget and Taxation 104
Oversight 104
Impeachment 105
Procedures 106
Formal Rules: How a Bill Becomes a Law 106
Conference Committee 108
The Governor 108
Legislative Workload and Logjams 108
Informal Rules 109
Legislative Roles 110
Representational Roles 111
Partisan Roles 111
Legislative Professionalism versus Citizen Legislatures 112
Conclusion 112
Summary 112
Key Terms 113
Notes 113

CHAPTER 4 THE EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT AND THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR OF TEXAS 119
Qualifications 119
Formal Qualifications 119
Informal Qualifications 120
Experience 120

FINAL PAGES aptara EQA

Focus On: A Hispanic Governor for Texas? 121
Race and Ethnicity 122
Women 122
Wealth 122

Core Objective: Communicating Effectively . . . 123

Salary 123

Succession to Office and Acting Governor 124

Postgubernatorial Office 125

Removal from Office 125

Formal Powers of the Governor 127

Election of Other Statewide Executives 127
Office of the Attorney General 128
Comptroller of Public Accounts 128

Core Objective: Being Socially Responsible . . . 129

Commissioner of the General Land Office 129
Commissioner of Agriculture 130
The Texas Railroad Commission 130
The State Board of Education 131

Core Objective: Taking Personal Responsibility . . .131

Tenure of Office 131
Governor's Appointment Powers 133
Secretary of State 136
Commissioner for Health and Human Services 136
Office of State-Federal Relations 137
Adjutant General of the National Guard 137
Other Single-Head Agencies 137
Boards and Commissions 137
Appointment and Campaign Contributions 138
Removal Powers 138

How To: Interpret a Table 140

Budgetary Powers 140
Legislative Powers 142
Governor's Control over Party 143
Administrative Agencies of State Government 144
State Employees 144
Legislative Agencies 144
Legislative Budget Board 145
Texas Legislative Council 145
Legislative Audit Committee and State Auditor's Office 145
Legislative Reference Library 146
Judicial Agencies 146
Judicial Powers 146
Ex Officio Boards and Commissions 147
Multi-Appointment Boards 147
Democratic Control and Bureaucratic Responsiveness 147
Sunset Review 148
Powers of the Texas Governor in Comparative Context 148

Core Objective: Thinking Critically . . . 149

Informal Powers 151

Roles 151
The Governor's Staff 152

Conclusion 153
Summary 153
Key Terms 154
Notes 154

CHAPTER 5 THE COURT SYSTEM IN TEXAS 157

The Legal System 158

Types of Law 158
Grand Jury 160
Petit Jury 161

Judicial Federalism 162

The Structure of State Courts 162

Trial and Appellate Courts 162

How To: Interpret Figures 164

Magistrate or Minor Courts 164

Core Objective: Communicating Effectively... 165

County Courts 165
District Courts 166
Appellate Courts 166
Supreme Courts 166

Judicial Selection 167

Appointment by the Governor 167
Election by the Legislature 167
Partisan Election 168
Nonpartisan Election 168
The Merit, or Missouri, Plan 168

Judicial Selection in Texas 171

Partisan Elections 171

Core Objective: Being Socially Responsible... 172

Appointive-Elective System 172

Is There a Best System for Judicial Selection? 173

Challenges to the Judiciary in Texas 174

Familiar Names Can Skew Judicial Elections 174
Straight-Ticket Voting 174
Campaign Contributions 174
Gender and Minority Representation in the Texas Judiciary 175

mor12418_fm_i-xxx.indd 22 12/10/18 9:18 PM

FINAL PAGES aptara EQA

Focus On: The First Hispanic Justice on the Texas Supreme Court 176

Core Objective: Thinking Critically . . . 178

Removing and Disciplining Judges 178

Core Objective: Taking Personal Responsibility . . .179

Court Decision Making 179

Conclusion 180
Summary 180
Key Terms 181
Notes 182

CHAPTER 6 THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IN TEXAS 185

Elements of the Criminal Justice System 186
Law Enforcement and Policing 186
Criminal Law and Civil Law 188

Core Objective: Communicating Effectively . . . 191

Criminal Justice Policy 192

Focus On: Navigating the Criminal Justice System in Spanish 192

Juvenile Justice 193
Government's Duties to Minors 194
Procedures Involving Juveniles 195

Core Objective: Taking Personal Responsibility . . .197

Correction and Rehabilitation 198
The State Prison System 198
Managing the Prison Population 199

Core Objective: Being Socially Responsible . . . 200

Private Prisons 201
Local Government Jails 204
The "Three R's": Recidivism, Rehabilitation, and Reform 205
The Death Penalty 206
Texas, the Death Penalty, and the Harris County Factor 208
Poverty and Access to Legal Services 211

Problems and Reform: Implications for Public Policy 212
Overcriminalization 212
Sentencing Reform 212
Police Militarization 213
Civil Asset Forfeiture 213
Mental Illness in Prison 213
Fine and Fee Practices 214
Suicide 215
Technology and Crime 216
Exoneration 216
Race, Gender, and the Criminal Justice System 217
Misconduct in the Justice System 218

How to: Locate Primary Sources 220

Core Objective: Thinking Critically . . . 221

Conclusion 221
Summary 221
Key Terms 222
Notes 222

CHAPTER 7 LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN TEXAS 231

Federalism Revisited 232
Creatures of the State 232

General Law Cities and Home Rule 233
Incorporation: The Process of Creating a City 234
Annexation 225

Types of City Government 236
Council-Manager Government 236
Role of the Mayor 238
Role of the City Manager 238
Weaknesses of the Council-Manager Form 239
Mayor-Council Government 239

Core Objective: Communicating Effectively . . . 241

Focus On: Hispanic Representation in Local Government 241
Commission Form of Government 242
Weaknesses of the Commission Form of Government 243
Impact on the Evolution of Local Government 243

Municipal Elections 243
Texas Municipal Election Systems 244
At-Large Election Systems 244
Single-Member District Election Systems 245

Core Objective: Being Socially Responsible . . . 246

Cumulative and Preferential Voting Systems 246
Nonpartisan Elections 246
Voter Turnout in Local Elections 247

Core Objective: Taking Personal Responsibility . . .248

County Governments 248
The Structure of County Government 249
The County Commissioner's Court 249
The County Sheriff 251
The County and District Attorneys 251
The County Tax Assessor/Collector 251

FINAL PAGES aptara EQA

The County and District Clerk 251
The County Treasurer 252
The County Auditor 252
Weaknesses of County Government in Texas 252
Inability to Provide Urban Services 253
Lack of Ordinance Authority 254
Inequity of Financial Resources 254
Possible Reform of County Government 254

Core Objective: Thinking Critically . . . 255

Special District Governments 255
School Districts 256

How To: Speak Effectively 257

Conclusion 258
Summary 258
Key Terms 259
Notes 259

CHAPTER 8 PUBLIC OPINION AND THE MEDIA IN TEXAS 263

Public Opinion 263
What Is Public Opinion? 264
How Can It Be Measured? 265

How To: Interpret Polling Data 270

Core Objective: Thinking Critically . . . 271

Why Is It Important? 271

The Media and Their Functions 272
What Are the Media? 272
Media as Sources of Information 273
How the Media Shape Perceptions 273
Media as Linkage Institutions and Political Actors 275

Media Sources: Print, Broadcast, and Online 275
Print Media: Newspapers and Magazines 276
Broadcast Media: Radio and Television 279
New Media: The Internet and Social Media Networks 284

Core Objective: Taking Personal Responsibility . . .288

The Media in Political Campaigns 288
Traditional Media 289
Digital Media 291
Digital Campaigning and Citizen Participation 291

Core Objective: Being Socially Responsible . . . 292

Media Bias 293
Perceptions of Media Bias 293
Reality of Media Bias 293

Regulating the Media 295
Federal Regulation of Print and Broadcast Media 295
Federal Regulation of the Internet 297
State and Local Regulation 298
Regulation within State and Local Agencies 299

Core Objective: Communicating Effectively . . . 299

Whose Media? 299
Who Owns the Media? 299
The Future of Media 301

Focus On: Using the Media to Appeal to Hispanic Voters 302

Conclusion 303
Summary 304
Key Terms 304
Notes 305

CHAPTER 9 VOTING AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN TEXAS 311

Political Participation 312

Core Objective: Taking Personal Responsibility . . .314

Voting in Texas 315
Current Voting Requirements 315
Ongoing Controversies with Voting 316
In Comparison with Other States 317

Core Objective: Thinking Critically . . . 317

Voter Turnout in Texas 318

Explaining Voter Turnout 322
The Legacy of Restricted Ballot Access in Texas 322
Social and Economic Factors 326

Focus On: Low Voter Turnout among Hispanics 327
Felony Conviction and Voting 328

Core Objective: Being Socially Responsible . . . 328

Party Competition and Gerrymandering 328
Other Factors Affecting Voter Turnout 329
Rationalist Explanations for Low Voter Turnout 330

Core Objective: Communicating Effectively . . . 331

Other Forms of Political Participation 331

Conclusion 333
Summary 334
Key Terms 334
Notes 334

FINAL PAGES aptara EQA

CHAPTER 10 CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS IN TEXAS 339

Campaigns 340

The Role of the Media in Campaigns and Elections 341

Core Objective: Being Socially Responsible . . . 341

Political Consultants 341

Money in Campaigns 342

Core Objective: Taking Personal Responsibility . . .344

How To: Get Involved with a Candidate or Issue 345

The Election Process 346

Ballot Form 346

Ballot Access to the November General Election 348

Independent and Third-Party Candidates 348

Core Objective: Thinking Critically . . . 349

Party Caucus 349

Political Differences between Open and Closed Primary Systems 352

The Administration and Finance of Primary Elections 353

Special Elections 354

The Federal Voting Rights Act 355

Focus On: The Hispanic Population and Bilingual Ballots 356

Core Objective: Communicating Effectively . . . 356

Absentee and Early Voting 357

The Changing Nature of Elections 357

Conclusion 358
Summary 358
Key Terms 359
Notes 359

CHAPTER 11 POLITICAL PARTIES IN TEXAS 361

How Parties Have Operated in the United States 362

Modern Campaigns 364

Political Parties Dimished 365

Core Objective: Communicating Effectively . . . 368

National versus State Parties 368

The Strength of State Party Organizations 369

Party versus Ideology 369

Core Objective: Taking Personal Responsibility . . .369

Evolution of Political Parties in Texas 370

Politics of the Republic of Texas 371

Annexation and the Civil War Era 371

The One-Party Democratic Era in Texas 372

Fractures in the Texas Democratic Party 372

Party Realignment in Texas 374

A Three-Party State 375

The Election of John Tower 376

A Two-Party State 377

The "Conversion" and Election of Phil Gramm 377

Texas Republicans Seize Control 378

The One-Party Republican Era in Texas 379

The Current Party System in Texas 379

Today's Texas Republicans 380

Blue Texas? 383

Maybe Not . . . 384

Focus On: The Political Affiliation of Hispanics 385

Core Objective: Being Socially Responsible . . . 386

Third Parties in Texas 386

Challenges for Third Parties 390

Core Objective: Thinking Critically . . . 391

Party Organizations 392

Permanent Party Organization 392

The Precinct Chair 392
The County Chair 393
The County Executive Committee 393
The State Executive Committee 393
The State Chair 394

Temporary Party Organization 394

Precinct Convention 394
County or Senatorial District Convention 395
State Convention 395

Caucus and Primary Delegate Selection Systems 396

Texas Presidential Primaries 396

2008 Democratic Party Caucuses 398

Conclusion 398
Summary 399
Key Terms 399
Notes 400

FINAL PAGES aptara EQA

CHAPTER 12 INTERESTS GROUPS AND LOBBYING IN TEXAS 405

Interest Group Typology 406

Membership Organizations 408

Core Objective: Thinking Critically . . . 408

Nonmembership Organizations 412

Government Organizations 412

Techniques Used by Interest Groups 412

Lobbying 412

Electioneering 415

Core Objective: Taking Personal Responsibility . . .415

Core Objective: Communicating Effectively . . . 417

Public Relations: Public Education and Grassroots Lobbying 418

Litigation 419

Focus On: Hispanic Interest Groups 420

Regulation of Interest Groups 420

How To: Evaluate Sources 422

Factors Influencing the Strength of Interest Groups 423

Leadership and Organization 424

Geographic Distribution 424

Core Objective: Being Socially Responsible . . . 425

Money 425

Economic Diversity 425

Political Party Competition 425

Professionalism of the State Legislature 426

Fragmented Government Structure 426

Conclusion 428
Summary 428
Key Terms 429
Notes 429

CHAPTER 13 PUBLIC POLICY IN TEXAS 433

Steps in the Policy-Making Process: The "Policy Cycle" 435

Problem Identification and Agenda Setting 435

Policy Formation 436

Policy Adoption 437

Policy Implementation 437

Policy Evaluation 437

Core Objective: Taking Personal Responsibility . . .438

Policy Liberalism Index 438

Public Policy Areas in Texas State Government 441

Regulatory Policy 441

Health Care Policy 444

Primary and Secondary Education in Texas 446

School District Financing 446

Core Objective: Being Socially Responsible . . . 447

High-Stakes Testing 447

Focus On: Hispanics and Bilingual Education 448

Higher Education in Texas 448

Tuition and Fees 449

Curriculum and Degree Requirements 449

Higher Education Funds 451

Access to Higher Education 451

Social Policies 453

Firearms Policies 453

LGBTQ Rights 454

Abortion Policies 455

Core Objective: Communicating Effectively . . . 456

Immigration Policy 456

Water Policy 459

Core Objective: Thinking Critically . . . 460

Conclusion 460
Summary 460
Key Terms 461
Notes 461

CHAPTER 14 FINANCING STATE GOVERNMENT 467

Why Do Governments Provide Services to Citizens? 468

Characteristics of Public Goods 468

Types of Public Goods 469

Social Goods 469

Toll Goods 470

Common-Pool Goods 470

Core Objective: Thinking Critically . . . 470

Sources of State Revenue 471

Evaluating State Tax 471

State Taxes in Texas 473

mor12418_fm_i-xxx.indd 26 12/10/18 9:18 PM

FINAL PAGES aptara EQA

Focus On: Tax Contributions of Hispanic Households 473

Equity in Taxes 475

Regressive and Progressive Taxes 475

How To: Interpret a Graph 477

Tax Shifting 479

Core Objective: Being Socially Responsible . . . 480

Local Taxes 480

Comparison of State and Local Tax Revenues 481

Nontax Revenue Sources 482

Expenditures: Where the Money Goes 484

The Budget "Fix" 485

Core Objective: Communicating Effectively . . . 487

Continuing Issues in State Finance in Texas 487

Tax Structure 488

Is There a Personal Income Tax in the Future for Texas? 488

Core Objective: Taking Personal Responsibility . . .489

Conclusion 491
Summary 492
Key Terms 493
Notes 493

GLOSSARY 495

INDEX 503

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mor12418_fm_i-xxx.indd 28 12/10/18 9:18 PM

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CHAPTER 8

Public Opinion and the Media in Texas

Texas Learning Outcome

- Evaluate public opinion and the role of the media in Texas politics.

Two terms that seem fairly concrete - "public opinion" and "the media" - are actually quite complex. This chapter aims to provide context to those terms and to demonstrate their importance to politics and public policy in Texas and in the United States as a whole.

Whereas Chapter 9 discusses citizens' formal role in the political process, this chapter discusses their informal roles: "the ways in which policymakers' perceptions of public opinion influence their decisions" and the role the media play in both facilitating and shaping this process.[1]

Chapter Learning Objectives

- Explain the role of public opinion in U.S. and Texas politics.
- Explain the functions of media in U.S. and Texas politics.
- Describe the various sources of media in Texas.
- Explain the role of the media in Texas political campaigns.
- Describe bias in the Texas media.
- Explain how the media are regulated in Texas.
- Explain concerns about control of the media in Texas.

Public Opinion

Learning Objective: Explain the role of public opinion in U.S. and Texas politics.

Many academics have theorized what public opinion is and is not, from arguing "it simply doesn't exist" to "it exists but it's complicated." Some argue it is an illusion presented by the media, whereas others say it exists as an artifact of a complex sociocultural system; that is, American democracy.[2] To get at a definition,

perhaps it's better to ask: What role does (or should) public opinion play in our democratic system?

What Is Public Opinion?

It is reasonable to assume that public intent is the most important determinant of what happens politically in a democracy. The American Founders were very aware of this concept, naming the legislature, the representative body, as preeminent. At the same time, however, the Founders doubted "the public's capacity to contribute constructively to political decision-making" and, therefore, in part, created the bicameral legislature to isolate decision makers from the masses and allow for focused deliberation. Over the years, politicians, theorists, and political scientists have argued over what role the public in general should play and how much influence it ought to have over policy. The reality, along with the debate, has transformed over time.[3]

Of course, we need to define what we mean when we say "the public." The term is not identical nor exchangeable with other terms that might describe the American citizenry, such as "the crowd" or "the masses." A public is characterized entirely by its communicative nature.[4] Whereas the activities of crowds and masses ostensibly take place outside the home, the activities of the public are the activities of the **public sphere**, a community's arena that allows individuals to freely discuss and identify societal problems and influence political action. "Unlike a mass, a public is self-aware and interactive" and engaged with current political and societal issues.[5]

public sphere
A community's arena that allows individuals to freely discuss and identify societal problems and influence political action

When discussing public opinion, we are generally referring to a public engaged in **political communication** (through whatever medium) in the public sphere. For example, Table 9.5 in Chapter 9 shows that most of the other identified forms of political participation in which Texans engage are acts of political communication. In this less-formal political engagement, it is difficult for politicians and government bureaucrats to understand, and the media to accurately report, what the public wants.

political communication
Communication in the public sphere concerned with social and political matters, encompassing all media and messages, between and among citizens, the media, and the governing elite; also an academic field of study that focuses on how information is disseminated and shapes the public sphere

With that in mind, what do we mean when we say **public opinion**? It turns out, unsurprisingly, that public opinion can mean a number of things, depending on who is discussing it, who is trying to measure it, and for what purpose it is being used. As identified in Table 8.1, there are five broad definitions: aggregation, majoritarian, interest group conflict, media/elite opinion, and fiction.

public opinion
The aggregate (sum) of attitudes and opinions of individuals and groups on a particular topic

Each of these categories has implications for the ways in which public opinion can and/or should be taken into account. The measurers' perspective determines which type of public opinion they want to examine, influences the measurement tool they use, and colors their interpretation of the results.

Individuals form political opinions through a process called **political socialization**; that is, learning political attitudes and opinions through **agents of socialization**. Attitudes are how you feel about things; opinions are how you think about things. The process by which you acquire your attitudes and opinions is a process called socialization, and it begins the moment you are born. Generally, the first agent of socialization we encounter is the family, and it persists across time. The second agent is education, or schooling, which introduces the concept of civics and what it means to be a member of society. Primary and secondary education typically include the basics on how state and national governments function. Religious institutions provide normative understandings of what a good life should be and how community members ought to behave toward one another. Generational effects describe the way in which your peer group may view an issue. Baby boomers, for example, might feel very differently about same-sex marriage than millennials

political socialization
The development of political attitudes and beliefs through agents of socialization, such as socioeconomic factors, family, religion, school, community, the media, and so on

agents of socialization
Family, teachers, peer groups, religious institutions, geographic location, class, gender, race/ethnicity, mass media; those societal forces and institutions that surround individuals from early childhood onward

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TABLE 8.1

Categories of Public Opinion

Type	Definition
Aggregation	"The simple sum of many individual opinions"
Majoritarian	"The values and beliefs of the majority of citizens"; "people do pay close attention to the opinions of friends, coworkers, and neighbors and tend to conform to the majority opinion among their significant others"
Interest Group Conflict	"Groups are constantly engaged in a struggle to define social problems and provide solutions to them"
Media/Elite Opinion	"Projection of what journalists, politicians, and other 'elites' believe"
Fiction	"Rhetorical construction used so freely in our newspapers and on television as to be meaningless"

Source: Carroll J. Glynn, *Public Opinion* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004), 19–29.

do. Finally, the media are instrumental in crafting our view of reality and are, for the majority, the source of most of our information.

What might this mean for individual public opinion in Texas? The state's individualistic and traditionalistic political culture, as well as its predominantly Republican government and conservatively biased media coverage, affect individual Texans' opinions. For example, in a June 2016 poll by the University of Texas at Austin, more than half of Texas respondents were in favor of a border wall between the United States and Mexico (52 percent), with 40 percent opposed. This reflects, in part, Donald Trump's campaign talking points and his popularity in the state as the Republican presidential nominee.[6] An individual's values, as shaped by these factors, affect "political thinking and direct individuals towards a specific mode of conduct."[7] Just as Chapter 9 discusses **socioeconomic factors** affecting voter participation during elections, so too do these agents of socialization affect political participation and communication more broadly.

socioeconomic factors
Factors such as income, education, race, and ethnicity that affect voter turnout

How Can It Be Measured?

Public opinion is measured formally though voting (see Chapter 9) and informally through public opinion polls (surveys and focus groups) and the mass media.

Public opinion polling as we know it today began to emerge in the mid-1800s in the form of **straw polls**. Newspapers would set up outside of polling places and interview men (and, later, women) after they cast their vote. Much of the early polling era was characterized by these personal interviews, the results of which were published and shared with increasingly large audiences as newspaper circulation increased.

straw polls
Unofficial, ad hoc personal interviews surrounding a formal vote

The 1920s and 1930s saw a convergence of changes. A growing concern over accuracy was accompanied by the founding of polling organizations, such as Gallup (originally the American Institute of Public Opinion) and Harris. Both employed more scientific methodologies, such as statistical sampling, and they could field large networks of interviewers to more accurately monitor national public opinion. It is important to note that just as Gallup and Harris were discovering national trends, so too was the public. The progress of communication

technologies allowed citizens greater and faster access to information from an ever-widening geographic area.[8] In addition, the media were pushing for more data about their readers and listeners because they wanted to be able to sell those data to advertisers. The advent of broadcast media—radio and then television—as well as a swelling populace meant more advertising and an increased need to know who the members of the public were and what they wanted.

In the early 1970s, the cost of telephoning drastically decreased. In that same period, the relative complexity of political issues in the United States increased (civil rights, Vietnam, countercultures, culture wars), thereby increasing the need to more accurately take measure of the public's pulse.[9] Politicians began to take polling data seriously, particularly those related to presidential and gubernatorial administrations. The process of public opinion polling became more scientifically rigorous. Terms such as "population," "scientific sampling," "margin of error," and "response rate" became common language in political circles. Given the impracticality of surveying everyone, polling organizations began to use statistical methodology, the most important of which is probability sampling.

Suppose, for example, you want to find out what Texans think of toll roads. All Texas citizens are your population. But instead of phoning every single citizen, which would take far too much time and money, you decide to call a percentage of that population: That percentage is your sample. The tricky part is making sure that your sample is representative of the whole. In previous chapters, we've discussed types of representation. Here, descriptive representation is particularly important. You typically want your sample to be descriptively representative; that is, representative of your targeted population's demographics (sex, race, age, income levels, political values, and so on).

However a representative sample is determined (there are a variety of accepted methods), polling organizations must take into account a certain margin of error. Errors can crop up in a few ways: sampling error (the possibility for unrepresentative responses), total versus actual sample size (the possibility for respondents to answer some but not all questions), and response rate (the possibility for a large percentage of nonresponses). Pollsters make note of this margin of error by including a plus/minus percentage along with their results (that is, a survey's results or infographic summary will include a short statement like "The margin of error is +/−2%"). Still, as long as a poll is conducted scientifically and follows standard, accepted statistical methodology, it is considered more representative of a given population's political view or opinion than a nonscientifically captured survey.

In 2006, for example, to find out Texas opinion on toll roads, Kaethe V. Podgorski and Kara Kockelman of the University of Texas at Austin decided to use a telephone survey. They noted in their report that "in order to obtain 2,111 completed interviews, 53,625 calls were made to 18,750 phone numbers." Those total calls included partial interviews, nonresponses, and outright refusals. Still, overall, they discovered that within a margin of error of plus or minus 1 percent, 71 percent of Texans do not want to pay tolls on preexisting roads.

There are a number of ways you could measure Texas public opinion on toll roads. Scientific polling methods such as opinion surveys are usually favored and are typically conducted by phone (see Table 8.2).

Focus groups are also common ways to measure public opinion in Texas and elsewhere (see Table 8.3).

exit polls
Interviews of voters just as they leave the polling center

Less scientifically rigorous methods are still in use, such as the straw poll mentioned earlier, and **exit polls**, which are interviews with citizens just after they have

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TABLE 8.2

Surveys

Definition	"A research technique for measuring characteristics of a given population of individuals"
Process	1. Identifying a population 2. Sampling that population 3. Determining an instrument method (personal, phone, or mail interviews) 4. Developing an interview instrument (typically some kind of questionnaire) 5. Determining the type of analysis (quantitative)
Specific Types	1. Census survey, which counts the individuals within a population 2. Sample survey, which interviews a nonscientific sampling of people within a population 3. Probability sample survey, which interviews a scientifically determined sampling of people within a population; results can be extrapolated to overall population 4. Panel survey, which reinterviews people to determine changes in opinion over time
Problems	1. Low response rates; people are not required to respond 2. Biased sampling; those who respond may not be representative of larger population 3. Leading questioning/poor questionnaire design 4. Potential ignorance on issue being studied

Source: Carroll J. Glynn, *Public Opinion* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004), 75–84.

TABLE 8.3

Focus Groups

Definition	"'Carefully planned discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment'"
Process	1. Identifying a population 2. Sampling that population in small, random doses; typically fewer than 10 individuals at a time 3. Developing an instrument (usually a written questionnaire with a few focused demographic questions) 4. Talking with a moderator 5. Determining the type of analysis (can be qualitative or quantitative)
Benefits	1. More flexible than surveys 2. Make observable the dynamic forces of opinion formation through communication (its inconsistency and subjective construction over time) 3. Allow for unanticipated responses in participants 4. Can supplement survey research
Problems	1. Less quantitatively measurable 2. Used less than survey methods

Source: Carroll J. Glynn, *Public Opinion* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004), 84–101.

voted in an election. These latter methods are subject to more controversy, particularly in how the media employ them during campaigns and potentially influence their audience[10] (a topic discussed later).

push polls
Illegitimate, unscientific polling technique aimed at attacking a candidate or issue

Push polls are considered outright illegitimate for two major reasons. Unlike other polls, push polls do not use scientific sampling. These pollsters typically try to telephone as many people as possible and, instead of maintaining some degree

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of nonpartisanship, they attack opposing candidates and ideas during the interview. Unfortunately, push polls are a reality of political life and are typically used by candidates to target potential voters, but also appear outside of campaigns aimed at specific issues.[11] For example, in January 1996, Texas Attorney General Dan Morales became the target of a push poll by Public Opinion Strategies, a lobby/consulting group, aimed at reducing his chances for reelection. At the time, he was preparing to sue the four largest tobacco companies in the state. Although Morales proceeded with the lawsuit, the poll demonstrated that the tobacco companies could mobilize public opinion in their favor if they wanted to.[12]

As we can see, measuring public opinion is not a simple process, and much of it depends on who is doing the polling and the techniques they choose. Legitimate polling operations can give us a good picture of what people are thinking on important issues. The Texas Politics Project is one of the major legitimate Texas-based scientific polling operations. It published a number of reports in 2016 during the lead-up to the presidential election, as shown in Figures 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3.

In Figure 8.1, UT/Tribune surveyed Texans on how they viewed Governor Abbott's performance and separated out their responses by party affiliation. It is not surprising that Texas Republicans overwhelmingly supported the Republican governor while Texas Democrats overwhelmingly disapproved. This tends to be the norm. Party affiliation is a good indicator of how voters view major politicians in elected positions.

Perhaps most interesting is Figure 8.2. Immigration is a major issue in Texas and the country overall. President Trump, during his campaign, said on record he intended to repeal the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) as one of his first acts in office. It was originally created in the Obama administration to allow illegal minors a grace period and opportunity to obtain a permit. In September 2017, the Trump administration announced the beginning of repeal. Although Texas Republicans have largely indicated overall approval for Republican executive figures (i.e., Governor Abbot and the president himself), there is less support for totally ending the program. As Figure 8.2 shows, it's apparent that there is significantly more Democratic support to keep DACA than there is a Republican consensus to totally end it. Texas Republicans seem to be fairly split

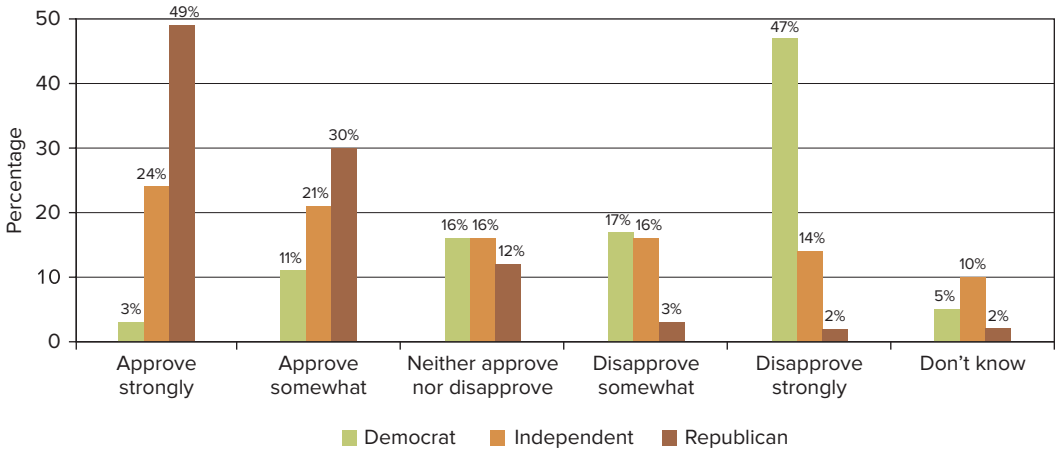

FIGURE 8.1 Greg Abbott Job Approval Ratings (October 2017)

Source: https://texaspolitics.utexas.edu/set/continue-or-end-daca-october-2017#party-id; https://texaspolitics.utexas.edu/set/greg-abbott-job-approval-october-2017#party-id.

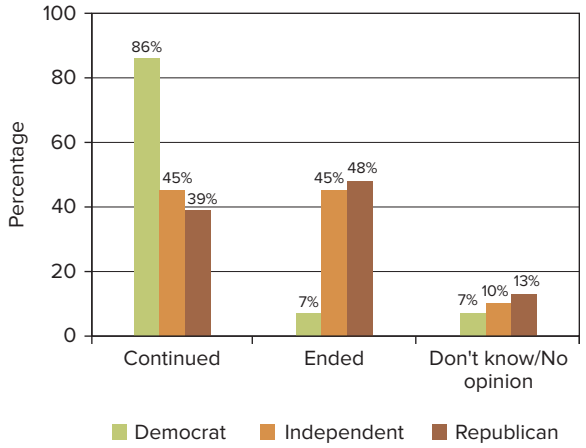

FIGURE 8.2 Texas Voters Continuing or Ending DACA (October 2017)

Source: http://texaspolitics.utexas.edu/blog/public-opinion-texas-intersection-agendas-president-elect-trump-and-85th-legislature.

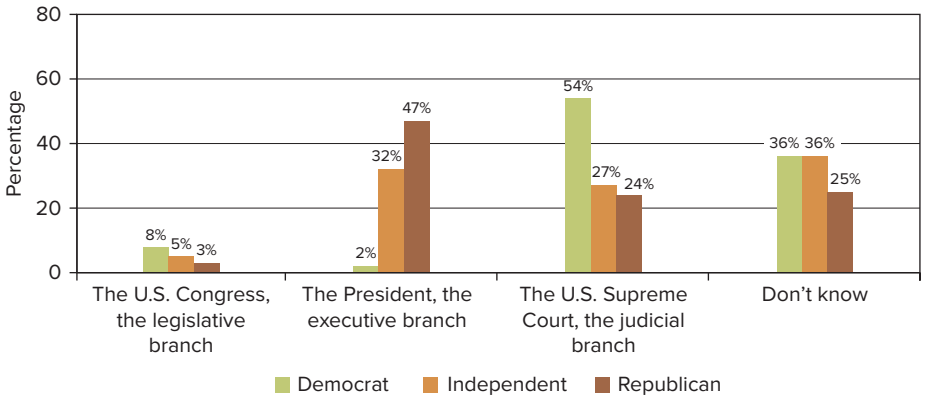

FIGURE 8.3 Texas Voters on Their Trust in the Federal Government (October 2017)

Source: https://texaspolitics.utexas.edu/set/most-trusted-branch-federal-government-october-2017#party-id.

on the issue. As of this writing, the final fate of DACA has not yet been decided. It is currently in the hands of Congress tied to efforts for overall immigration reform.

Figure 8.3 looks at how Texans regard the major branches of the federal government. As can be seen in Figure 8.3, Texas Republicans have higher overall approval for Republican-controlled government positions. Interestingly, the U.S. Supreme Court has a much higher approval rating from Texas Democrats whereas Texas Republicans and Independents are much more hesitant. This may or may not be a factor, but former president Obama made two appointments, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan, while President Trump has made one appointment, Neil Gorsuch, as of this writing. Of course, approval ratings change over time. It is important to pay attention to such fluctuations in the context of who is on the Court and the cases it takes on.

These three survey questions take a snapshot in time. They paint a picture of how Texans view their state government, major issues, and our national government at a particular moment.

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How to

Interpret Polling Data

Polling is one of the most significant methods political scientists, journalists, legal analysts, politicians, and citizens use to interpret public opinion. Scientific polling is based on a random sample. A sample is a small group of individuals that the pollster questions and interviews to estimate the opinions of an entire population.

The sample must be entirely random in order to avoid bias. Bias in polls can happen when one geographic location, political ideology, political party, gender, race, ethnicity, class, age group, or any other faction is overrepresented or underrepresented.

Polling is a science. Unfortunately, not all polls are scientific, random, or legitimate. Polls that do not randomly select their participants may lead to significant bias. With this in mind, it is imperative to go over the steps to interpret data.

Step 1: Check the source.

Reliable polls seek out their participants; participants do not seek out the poll company. Therefore, the first step is to make sure that the poll comes from a legitimate company. Trustworthy and reliable polling companies are Gallup, Marist College, Quinnipiac University, CBS/New York Times, ABC/Washington Post, and NBC/Wall Street Journal, among many others. If you come across a poll from a different company, go to the poll's website and research how it implemented the poll. Reputable polling companies should always have such information available to the public.

Step 2: Read the question. How is the question worded? What is the purpose of the question?

Sometimes you may misunderstand a poll because you misread it. Read the question carefully and slowly.

First, analyze the wording of the question. A good poll question is not supposed to sound as if it is favoring a particular position. Instead, the question should be neutral.

Second, analyze the choices to the question. Sometimes polls will provide only two choices, such as "Favorable" or "Not Favorable." Other polls may provide a third option, such as "Undecided," "Not Applicable," "No Opinion," or "Neutral." Still other polls may provide an even wider array of choices, such as five- or seven-point scales that range from "Very Favorable" to "Very Unfavorable."

Step 3: Analyze the data.

After you analyze the structure of the question, examine the results. Pay particular attention to the percentages next to each response option. If the question had more than two options, you may have to combine percentages. For example, suppose a question measuring the popularity of a certain politician shows that he or she is 42 percent Favorable, 50 percent Unfavorable, and 8 percent Undecided. Although the poll demonstrates that more constituents believe the politician to be unfavorable than favorable, it would be a mistake to believe that the majority of the sample believes the politician to be unfavorable because 8 percent of the respondents are undecided.

Step 4: Examine the dates the poll was taken, the sample error, and the sample size.

Always check the days when a poll was commissioned. Polls usually occur over a series of days. Moreover, there is sometimes a gap between when the interviews for the poll concluded and when the poll was released to the public. One of the limitations of political polls is that they are political snapshots of a particular moment. Poll participants can change their minds quickly because of evolving personal preferences, political events, natural disasters, national scandals or successes, or new and different personal experiences. Therefore, a poll taken two weeks ago may not be as instructive as a newly published poll.

Always check the sample error. This is a percentage of the poll's fallibility. Usually, even the best polls have a sample error of between 2 percent and 4 percent. In statistics, it is a statement of confidence, or a calculation based on a confidence interval. Pollsters calculate this by using a standard formula.

Finally, always check the sample size. A poll should have at least several hundred people. Statisticians have a mathematical method for determining what the minimum sample size should be based on the total population and the confidence interval they want to stay within. Without enough people participating in the poll, it becomes doubtful whether the poll's sample is truly representative of the intended population.

CORE OBJECTIVE

Thinking Critically . . .

Review Figure 8.3. Note that Donald Trump (Republican) was the U.S. president at the time of polling. Why might Texas Democrats display higher levels of trust in the U.S. Supreme Court than in other branches of government? Why might Texas Republicans and Independents display less trust in the Supreme Court than in the presidency?

Why Is It Important?

"Democracy" means "rule by the people," yet many political scientists would say that in the United States, it means "majority rule." When we look at how our government actually operates, we see many elements that would seem undemocratic by that definition. Political scientist E. E. Schattschneider notes that "It is hard to see how anyone can formulate a satisfactory theory of public opinion without meeting this problem head on."[13]

Even though politicians are interested in public opinion and rely on information about it, they are not completely beholden to it. Nor do individuals always engage in political communication in the public sphere on every political topic. People can be ignorant on some issues and uninterested in others. Even politicians themselves cannot be fully informed or knowledgeable about everything that could possibly be relevant to governing. With that in mind, we return to the question posed at the beginning of this section: what is the role of public opinion in Texas and the United States as a whole?

Let's take a look at an example. Texans have been fairly rigidly opposed to most forms of marijuana legalization. But polls in recent years have shown, in aggregate, increasing support among the overall Texas population for expanding legal medicinal use of the drug. In 2016, a Texas Tegna poll showed that more than 70 percent supported legalizing the use of marijuana for an expanded list of medical conditions.[14] In 2017, a UT/*Texas Tribune* poll found that more than 80 percent of Texans favor legalization for medical purposes (with 53 percent supporting recreational use and small personal possession).[15] This change encompasses two forms of public opinion: the aggregate opinion of Texas individuals and the majoritarian opinion of the Texas population. We can see that, in several polls over several years, the majority of the Texas population (that is, the majoritarian opinion) favors some form of expanded legalization, which has effects on politicians and government bureaucrats in the state.

This is evidenced by the fact that the number of dismissals for possession of small amounts has been increasing rapidly. An *Austin American-Statesman* study released in September 2016 on the five largest counties (Bexar, Dallas, Harris, Tarrant, and Travis) found that

> the rate of dismissal has risen since 2011, dramatically in some places. The trend also appears to be playing out statewide, where 23 percent of all misdemeanor marijuana cases were dismissed in 2011. In 2015, nearly a third were.[16]

Significantly, in December 2017, Dallas "began issuing citations,[17] rather than making arrests, for possession of less than four ounces of marijuana." In addition, the state legislature is seeing increased activity on the issue, with several bills

seeing movement in the House in the 2017 session. They didn't make it to the floor by the final round of voting, but they got further than any bills coming earlier. Of special note was House Bill 81. Although it did not support recreational use, it would have eliminated a jail sentence for possession of less than an ounce of marijuana.[18] It had bipartisan support; it was coauthored by Joe Moody (D-El Paso) and Jason Isaac (R-Dripping Springs). During the 2019 session, there will likely be more attempts for some form of legalization.

The political elite lead, but when conflict arises (such as on marijuana use and other political issues), public opinion affects the elite. This process happens through the media. The history of public opinion and its measurement is intrinsically tied to the history and functions of the media. It is a technological history as well as a social and political one.[19]

Understanding Impact What are your thoughts on the legalization of marijuana? If marijuana were legalized for medicinal use, what might be some of the consequences, particularly in terms of state regulation?

The Media and Their Functions

Learning Objective: Explain the functions of media in U.S. and Texas politics.

Although today people use the words "press" and "media" fairly interchangeably to refer to the media industry as a whole, at the time the Constitution and Bill of Rights were written, the Founders meant something a bit different. Freedom of speech was intended not just for journalists or "newsmongers," but for everyone. All citizens should be allowed to speak their mind, to give their opinion. Freedom of the press meant, literally, freedom to use the printing press, the technology itself. No one, and no opinion, should have more right or access to a printing press than any other. Over time, the meanings of the press and the media have broadened and overlapped significantly.

What Are the Media?

mass media
Means of communication that reaches many individuals

At the most basic level, the media are a set of technological "mediums" by which information is transmitted. **Mass media** transmit information to mass audiences. Yet it is clear that when we speak colloquially of "the media," we mean something much more complex.

Political scientist Harold Lasswell's model, "Who, Says What, In Which Channel, To Whom, With What Effect?,"[20] is significant. Although the details and emphases from other models may differ, the basic questions are roughly the same as Lasswell's: Who is the sender? What is the message? Who is the audience? What is the method? These questions and the answers to them are part and parcel of what the term "the media" encompasses today. It is a complex system of messaging by private companies, journalists, citizens, and public institutions, all motivated by particular interests. These motivations can be economic, ideological, or professionally driven.

As such, the media serve three broad functions within their communities: (1) providing information, (2) shaping perception, and (3) acting as a link "between elected representatives and their constituents."[21]

Media as Sources of Information

First, the media provide **information**. Information is generally considered to be the coverage of goings-on in a community. Educating the public about community events strengthens social ties. Public service announcements about local parades, carnivals, or rummage sales allow community members opportunities to interact with their neighbors. The media play a vital role in sharing these events with the communities they serve.

Political scientist Thomas Patterson argues that the quality of information that citizens can directly access affects their interest in the news. **News** is defined as those stories that provide timely information about the important events or individuals in a community, state, nation, or world. News at the local level may often reflect more of an informational perspective, but will also include coverage of governmental decisions by city or county officials, criminal activity, or stories of public interest.

Hard news covers important events involving elected leaders, major domestic or foreign issues, or significant disruptions to daily lives. Conversely, the aim of **soft news** is to entertain; often, it includes special news features or human interest stories. Soft news can take the particularly negative tone of **critical journalism**, featuring embarrassing "gotcha" moments, typically seen in local newscasts, described as "the journalism of outrageousness."[22]

Arguably, as broadcasters compete for viewers and listeners, the temptation to shock viewers grows. Broadcasters can shock through the use of soft news that highlights increasingly critical or negative stories about elected leaders and policy issues. Political analysts Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein contend that because of increased competition for an audience, the media have become increasingly focused on "sensationalism, extremism, and infotainment over information."[23] This presents a serious conundrum for Texans and other Americans seeking factual information. A 2001 survey from the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics, and Public Policy at Harvard found that many are "ambivalent, at best, about today's news."[24] That ambivalence does not bode well for the levels of trust citizens have in their governmental institutions.

information
Messages provided that concern social events occurring or services available in a community to its members

news
Stories that provide timely information about the important events or individuals in a community, state, nation, or world

hard news
Factual, in-depth coverage of public affairs that contributes to citizens' understanding of political events and leaders in the public sphere

soft news
Information, presented as news, that serves to entertain, titillate, or overdramatize events but that lacks substance and value with respect to contributing to citizens' understanding of political events and leaders in the public sphere

critical journalism
A style of soft news that focuses on political scandal, vice, or mistakes of the government or politicians

How the Media Shape Perceptions

When faced with an array of complex information, citizens need to be able to discern which aspects of an issue are most relevant. The mass media act as gatekeepers of information. **Gatekeeping** is the process of filtering down all of what is happening in a given community into a specific set of news and then transmitting it to an audience. After the gatekeeper determines newsworthiness, it uses agenda setting, priming, and framing to transform the remaining information into news stories.

Agenda Setting Bernard C. Cohen argued in 1963 that "the media are stunningly successful in telling their audience what to think about."[25] It could certainly be argued that the level of public interest in an issue is proportional to the amount of news coverage an issue receives and to which the public is exposed. Deciding what is news is a fundamental function of the media; it is defined as **agenda setting**. The media evaluate many issues that might go unnoticed and thrust them into the public sphere.

For example, in 2016, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services' Child Protective Services (CPS) agency faced a public crisis that had begun more than a decade earlier, when the 82nd Legislature cut its funding significantly. Although the operations of this agency go largely unnoticed by the vast

gatekeeping
The process of filtering information and selecting what to transmit or not transmit as news

agenda setting
The power of the media to bring issues and problems to the public's attention

majority of Texans, agents working for CPS ensure children who are neglected or abused are protected or removed from harmful environments. The latest problems—including poor caseworker supervision, inadequate training, high caseloads, mounds of paperwork, and low salaries—meant that the agency faced high rates of turnover that hovered around 25 percent of its caseworkers, causing many children to fall through the cracks. Chronically underfunded, a federal judge finally declared the Texas foster care system broken in the winter of 2015.[26] It was not until after the media covered a series of high-profile deaths of children across Texas that there was a storm of public outcry, and members of the Texas legislature, meeting in interim session during the summer, began reviewing CPS operations and problems. In this instance, the media served to set an agenda and force government action.

Regardless of the intent (journalists' or otherwise) behind media coverage of an issue, the fact that it remains in the headlines influences public opinion respecting the importance of that particular issue. The question is whether media coverage serves to invigorate democracy and public debate.

priming
The ability of the media to help shape public opinion respecting an event or a person in the public sphere

Priming Related to agenda setting is the act of **priming** public opinion, an issue that people have studied since the early 1980s. Whereas agenda setting means the media influence what people see as newsworthy, priming provides a specific context and background through which audiences engage with a particular topic or story. For example, when the rodeo comes through town, the local media not only will announce it is happening but also will typically continue to bring it up over the period of time it is in town. That repetition of an issue or event over time is priming. It primes an audience to be aware that the rodeo is in town and also consider it important and/or interesting.

framing
The media's attempts to focus attention on certain events and place them within a context for meaning

Framing Additionally, the media **frame** issues by using perspective when reporting stories to the public. George Lakoff, a renowned cognitive linguist, studied why individuals attach themselves to particular political opinions and positions, especially where party affiliation is concerned. Lakoff argues that *how* the *story is told,* or what metaphors are selected, often shapes the public perception of what government chooses to do or not do about a policy problem. At times, this perception of a story can be irreversible, even after accurate but conflicting information comes to light. Although simply deciding *what* is news has a huge effect on public perception, *how* it is framed significantly influences public reaction to it. This is particularly true in political arguments. According to Lakoff, counterarguments become less effective in persuading an audience after an event or issue has been framed. Here, the opposition view has the added burden of not only discrediting the initial framing of the issue but also discrediting the issue itself.[27]

For example, immigration is a huge issue for Texas and other states that border Mexico. Several studies over the years have indicated that newspapers from counties near the border tend to have an overall negative slant toward immigrants and include references to illegality, regardless of any liberal or conservative affiliation. In 2016, Simone Jasper of Elon University analyzed several Texas and Arizona newspaper articles from the summer of 2014 to see how their journalists framed stories, specifically about child immigrants from Latin America. She found that whereas the youth of the immigrants added a "victim" frame, the children were still referred to in a criminal context. This slanting further reinforces negative local community beliefs.[28]

Resonance The reinforcement and magnification of existing beliefs about reality and commonality of events due to the presentation of reality by the media is

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called **resonance**. The media cultivate and influence the public's social reality and mirror society's culture back to the viewer.

resonance
The reinforcement and magnification of existing beliefs about reality and commonality of events due to the presentation of reality by the media

Media as Linkage Institutions and Political Actors

According to Harvard public policy theorists Matthew Baum and Philip Potter, "The traditional view of the media—especially in political science—as a mostly accommodating conduit for elite messages is built on a simplifying assumption that the media serve primarily as a linkage mechanism rather than as an independent, strategic actor in the policy-making process."[29] What they mean by "linkage mechanism" is that the mass media, as an institution in our democracy, traditionally act as a conduit for information up and down between the political elite (politicians and government bureaucrats) and their constituents.

It is apparent that the mass media, particularly the news media, are more than information providers.[30] Jan E. Leighley of Texas A&M notes that there are several models by which we might understand the mass media as political actors:

1. Reporters of objective fact: simple information conveyor belts
2. Neutral adversaries: watchdogs on government and on the political elite
3. Public advocates: strategic information conveyor belts whose purpose is to not only inform the public but also drive conversation in the public sphere toward important topics; actively seek to better society and maintain its financial independence
4. Profit seekers: businesses whose news outputs are products designed to make money; greater emphasis on sensationalism and infotainment
5. Propagandists: pushers of a particular individual/politician, product, or idea[31]

Each model affects the functions the media play in a community, and media institutions can play any of these roles at a given time. As McCombs et al. note, "the extent to which the public in aggregate has any opinion at all about a public issue or political candidate is strongly linked to patterns of news coverage."[32]

Media Sources: Print, Broadcast, and Online

Learning Objective: Describe the various sources of media in Texas.

The media are typically categorized by type of message and type of medium. Entertainment, advertising, and news media differ in the type of *message* transmitted. Although they all can be mass media (messages transmitted to large audiences), they differ in content. The news media, in particular, operate as an institution within the public sphere, fulfilling a critical role by communicating information to the public so that something approaching public opinion can be formed.[33] Media professor Natalie Fenton insists that "news provides, or should provide, the vital resources for processes of information gathering, deliberation and analysis that enable democracy to function."[34] In many ways, the mass media determine what information the public receives.

In terms of *medium*, there are **print media** and **electronic media**. Print typically includes newspapers and magazines, both of which are still often published on paper. Electronic media include both analog and digital transmission. Broadcast

print media
Means of communication in the form of physically printed materials, such as newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets

electronic media
Means of communication that uses electronic equipment and can be analog or digital in nature

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media (television and radio) are electronic media but are still distinct from the Internet and social media. Broadcast media function as one-to-many transmissions, whereas digital content transmitted online and through social media networks is often many-to-many transmissions. However, as time goes on, these distinctions become blurred as media companies increasingly publish their content on the Internet in addition to their original medium.

According to media theorist Marshall McLuhan, the form that the message takes shapes the way people receive the message. In addition, each medium contains within it the medium that came before.[35] For example, magazines, born out of newspapers, share events as written in the newspapers but include more pictures. Subsequently, television puts these events in motion and draws the viewer in even further. Generations have watched as the media brought the world into their living rooms. History and its events appear onscreen in color and with sound, and viewers become part of the story as their own perceptions, emotions, and reactions intertwine with the news of the day.

As technology has improved, methods of delivering the news have changed as well. First, radio and television changed the way people consumed information. Now, less than a century later, we receive information almost instantly. How citizens receive information affects their perception of what is news and even what is reality. Admittedly, this subject is a messy one.

Print Media: Newspapers and Magazines

Generations ago, Texans and other Americans came to rely on the print media to keep abreast of the goings-on in the global, national, and local communities. At its peak at the turn of the twentieth century, there were more than 17,000 printed newspapers across America.[36] Almost every town and city in America had at least one newspaper that was delivered to its readers' homes, sometimes twice daily. Newspapers provide citizens with information about their local communities, politics and war, and domestic and international events. They conduct investigations and play a critical role in ensuring citizens are informed by exposing violations of trust by elected and appointed officials, earning the nickname "public watchdog."

Between 1813 and 1846, Texas was home to more than 85 newspapers. Texas's first newspaper (a single page with two columns) was the Spanish newspaper *Gaceta de Texas,* published in 1813. It was technically published in nearby Natchitoches, Louisiana, but its dateline specified Nacogdoches, Texas. More newspapers cropped up soon after.[37] During the Texas Revolution, the *Telegraph and Texas Register* became the origin of the rallying cry, "Remember the Alamo!" Other newspapers reprinted the paper's reporting on the Alamo battle, spreading the information across Texas and the United States.[38]

It wasn't until 1842, however, that Texas would have a semiweekly paper when the *Galveston News,* which still operates today as a morning paper, began publication.[39] As the nineteenth century turned to the twentieth, newspapers increasingly became part of Texas's urban culture and were a force for urbanization and industrialization through the 1970s. Urban daily newspapers were frequently in symbiosis with their local business leaders and political elite. Patrick Cox, in his book *The First Texas News Barons*, argues that newspapers were, to a large degree, responsible for Texas's development of its unique blend of culture—urban, but also western with its cowboys and ranches, and southern in its conservative, traditional values.[40]

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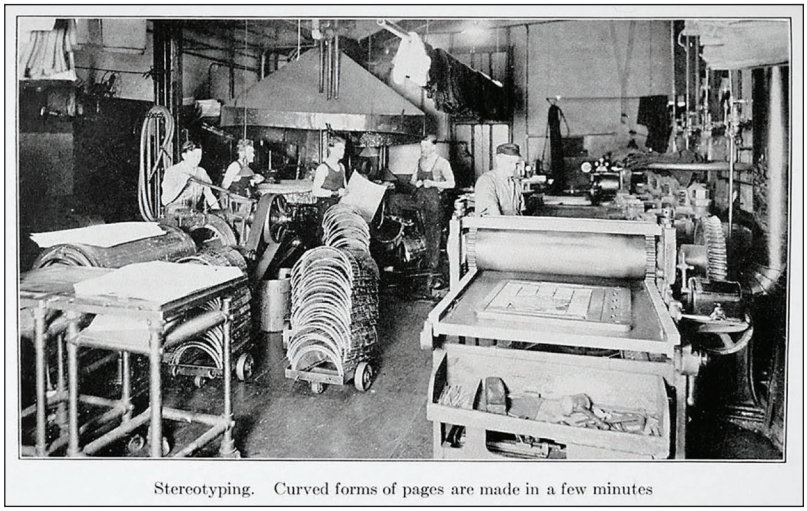
Table 8.4 identifies the top 10 daily newspapers in the state as of 2016. Today, the most widely circulated paper in Texas is the *Houston Chronicle,* which has a little over 223,900 in daily circulation (305,930 on Sundays). The next largest is the *Dallas Morning News*, which has 161,977 daily and 226,506 on Sundays.[41] Both, however, have seen precipitous declines in subscriptions since 2013. (The *Morning News* has experienced a decline of more than 30 percent.)


Stereotyping. Curved forms of pages are made in a few minutes

Stereotyping, early 1900s mass printing technique using cylinder presses
Source: Frank Shaw, *The Printing Trades* via Harry Ransom Center, UT Austin *©Harry Ransom Center the University of Texas, Austin*

For decades, newspapers were the means people had of learning about issues and events, but they have suffered from competition since the early twentieth century. Initially, the competition came from radio, which began offering news and entertainment in the 1920s. The real struggle for newspapers to remain viable would not come until the advent of television in the 1950s. By 1992, only 37 cities in the United States had separately owned, competing daily newspapers. As of 2018, only 1,204 newspapers are in circulation across America.[42] Interestingly, according to Figure 8.4, even as newspapers are declining, those who read their content tend to still do so in print.

Although many Americans still rely on print media to access news, the demographic divide between baby boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) and younger generations is quite stark. According to a 2016 Pew Research poll, only 5 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds get news from a print newspaper, whereas about

TABLE 8.4

Top 10 Newspapers in Texas with Daily Circulation

Houston Chronicle	223,900
Dallas Morning News	161,977
Fort Worth Star-Telegram	104,419
San Antonio Express-News	87,942
Austin American-Statesman	70,563
Focus Daily News (Desoto, TX)	35,786
Corpus Christi Caller-Times	29,682
Waco Tribune-Herald	25,677
El Paso Times	25,456
El Diario De El Paso	21,626

Source: Kantar Media, "Texas Newspaper Circulation Summary," in *SRDS Circulation 2018,* p. 679 (accessed February 16, 2018)

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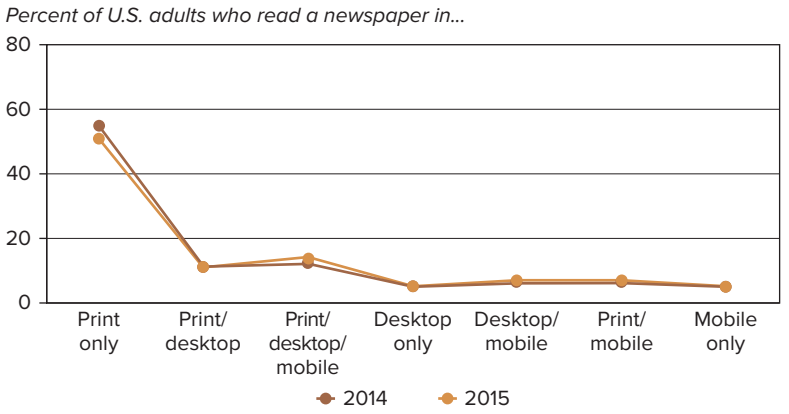
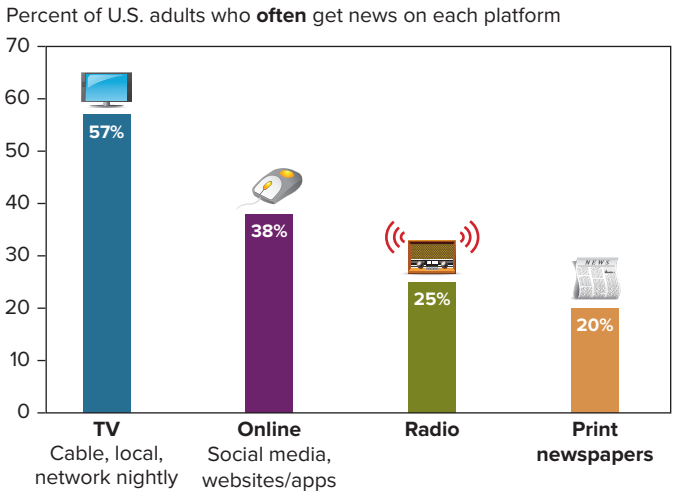
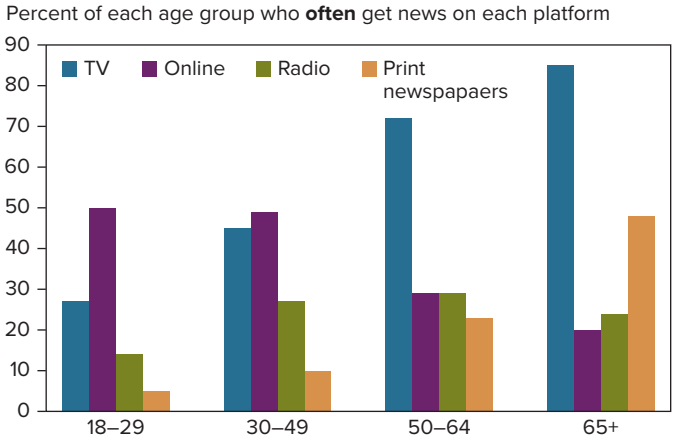


FIGURE 8.4 Accessing the News

Source: Pew Research Center, "Print-Only Still Most Common Way of Reading Newspaper," State of the Media 2016; http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2016/06/30143308/state-of-the-news-media-report-2016-final.pdf (accessed February 16, 2018).





Note: Just 1% said they never got news on any platform (not shown).

FIGURE 8.5 Americans' News Access by Platform

Source: http://www.journalism.org/2016/07/07/the-modern-news-consumer/pj_2016-07-07_modern-news-consumer_1-01/.

Wendy Davis and the Castro Brothers in *Texas Monthly*

©Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call/Getty Images

half (48 percent) of those age 65 and older do. In fact, only 2 out of every 10 Americans get their news from print. Less than one-third of twenty-somethings and college students are regular TV news watchers; however, half of this same group regularly read and share online news stories.

Magazines are far fewer in number, and Texas boasts only two of note: *Texas Monthly,* which began in 1973, and *The Texas Observer,* which has been around since 1954. Both magazines provide in-depth coverage of politics and current events using **investigative** style journalism. In fact, *The Texas Observer* broke the story about the Tulia scandal discussed in Chapter 6, which ultimately led to front-page coverage in the *New York Times* and other news outlets nationally. News magazines, though not widely circulated, provide significantly more substance for the reader because they have the space to include more in-depth coverage of a story and, because they are published relatively infrequently, the time to ensure quality and accuracy.

investigative journalism
Deeply researched stories that uncover serious crime, corruption, or corporate wrongdoing

Broadcast Media: Radio and Television

Traditional radio stations have existed in America since the early 1920s, operating along the AM and, later, the FM bandwidths. Like television stations, they transmit information over the air. Radio broadcasts brought news and information into Americans' homes. Broadcasts provided new forms of entertainment as well, including music, live broadcasts of stories, and plays. It was, and is, also a way that government can connect directly with citizens.

In Texas, the earliest radio stations began on the campuses of UT Austin and Texas A&M in the early 1910s. The first commercial radio station was WRR of the City of Dallas, initially established for fire and police dispatch in 1920.[43] Not long after, many other commercial stations began popping up, including WOAI in 1922, the first radio station in San Antonio.[44]

Early radio in the home was often listened to communally; the family gathered round.

©Bettmann/Contributor/Getty Images

By the end of World War II, almost 95 percent of American households owned radios, but television had begun to affect the number of listeners. More recently, the advent of satellite radio created very little stir, with minimal market penetration. Although subscriptions do continue to grow in small increments, by 2016, roughly 30.1 million adults, or only about 19 percent of the adult population in the United States, subscribed to satellite radio.[45]

Table 8.5 lists the current top listened-to stations in the state and, as expected, reflects concentration in the largest metro areas.

TABLE 8.5

Top 10 Radio Stations in Texas

KODA-FM—Sunny 99.1—Houston, TX
KHKS-FM—106.1 Kiss FM—Dallas, TX
KDMX-FM—NOW 102.9—Dallas, TX
KBXX-FM—97.9 The Box—Houston, TX
KKHH-FM—Hot 95.7—Houston, TX
KRBE-FM—104.1 KRBE—Houston, TX
KVIL-FM—103.7 KVIL—Dallas, TX
KPLX-FM—99.5 The Wolf—Dallas, TX
KLUV-FM—98.7 KLUV—Dallas, TX
KHMX-FM—Mix 96.5—Houston, TX

Source: Cision Media Research, "Top 10 Radio Stations in Texas," December 18, 2013, http://www.cision.com/us/2013/12/top-10-radio-stations-in-texas/ (accessed January 20, 2017).

Television, even more than radio, disrupted our relationship with print media and our perceptions of political reality. According to the Texas State Historical Association:

> The first television station in Texas, WBAP-TV, Fort Worth, began operating on September 27, 1948, carrying a speech by President Harry Truman; the station officially signed on two days later. By 1950 six stations were in operation in Texas, with three in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, two in San Antonio, and one in Houston. . . . In [1953] network broadcasting was made possible across the state through use of facilities of the Bell Telephone System, which had invested $10 million in Texas television cables and microwave relay stations.[46]

The November 1963 assassination of John F. Kennedy was a turning point in the evolution of broadcast media and the resulting effect on people's perception of the news. Anthropologist Thomas de Zengotita writes:

> Everyone became a participant/eyewitness to events on the world stage, past and present. . . . Reams of coverage, endless coverage, amazing coverage—in a way *more* compelling than if you had been there physically, because virtually you were there from so many different perspectives. . . . You had a sort of God's eye view.[47]

Studies from more than 20 years ago indicate that among the forms of media that existed, television provided the vast majority of citizens' information and news; however, print media's superior quality meant they overshadowed television

President Kennedy in Dallas

©Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy

CNN Effect

©badboo/123RF

media.[48] More recent research determined that television news remains the most effective single medium available for the acquisition of political information.[49] It is difficult to overstate how important television news media are as a linkage mechanism and political actor.

CNN effect
The effect of 24-hour broadcasts of live news media (CNN, MSNBC, FOX, etc.)

The **CNN effect** is a major factor in television's continuing importance.[50] Although the term is more typically heard in the foreign policy arena, it is applicable within a national context because these 24-hour news channels discuss issues that affect the country.

Local television news outlets have a slightly different focus, given their limited time slots. They tend to focus on recent sensational stories such as crimes, fires, or car crashes, as well as on entertainment-related programming, such as local sports and the weather. The percentage of such local content to the percentage of national news stories is variable, and is discussed later.[51]

Today, more than half of Americans still access information and news through television (national and local broadcasts); in fact, television continues to be the top daily news source for most Americans. In a 2013 Gallup poll, 55 percent of Americans polled relied on television to get their news.[52] CBS ranks as the number-one network, in part because of its popular *60 Minutes* broadcast each Sunday. However, as Table 8.6 illustrates, television viewing is in decline.

In fact, older Americans are also increasingly utilizing the Internet for news acquisition. In Figure 8.6 we can see a marked increase in online use for higher age demographics, especially in the 65-plus range.

Still, while evidence shows that network viewership is declining, there are two major counterpoints. First, on average, Americans still spend a little more than 10 hours a day consuming information through television.[53] According to the information in Table 8.7, TV market penetration in Texas is very high.

TABLE 8.6

Top 10 Networks by Number of Viewers 2014–2015 (in millions)

Network	2014	2015	Percent Change
CBS	9.375	9.419	0%
NBC	8.264	7.757	−6%
ABC	6.838	6.894	1%
Fox	5.973	5.198	−13%
Univision	2.969	2.551	−14%
ESPN	2.205	2.022	−8%
TBS	1.886	1.876	−1%
USA	2.201	1.850	−16%
Disney	1.955	1.784	−9%
Fox News	1.750	1.775	1%

Source: Michael Schneider, "Most Watched Television Networks: Ranking 2015's Winners and Losers," *TVInsider,* December 28, 2015, http://www.tvinsider.com/article/62572/most-watched-tv-networks-2015/ (accessed September 3, 2016).

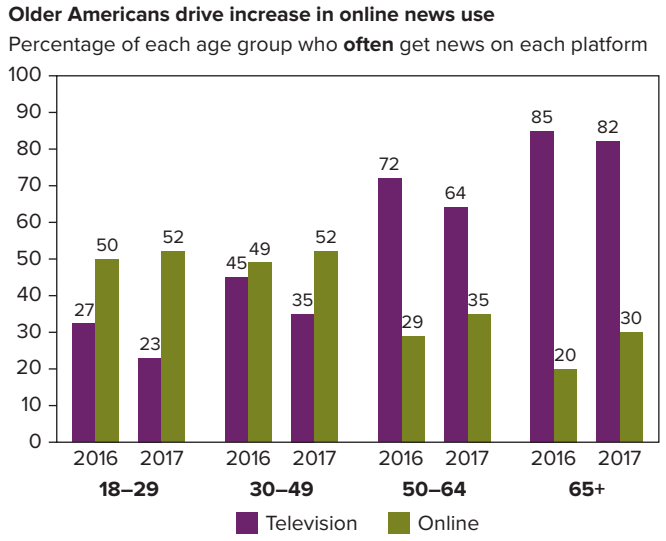


FIGURE 8.6 Older Americans' Decreasing Television News Consumption

Source: Jeffrey Gottfried and Elisa Shearer, "Americans' Online News Use Is Closing In on TV News Use," Pew Research Center, Fact Tank: News in the Numbers, September 7, 2017, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/09/07/americans-online-news-use-vs-tv-news-use/ft_17-09-05_platformnews_age/ (accessed February 16, 2018).

Although Americans are accessing news through a variety of platforms, they do tend to express preferences respecting their level of trust based on the medium through which it is gathered. In Figure 8.7, more than half of those surveyed trust traditional news organizations for their news, whether those are the result of news alerts or news received directly from news organizations.

TABLE 8.7

TV Penetration % by Local Television Market (Texas)

Rank (U.S.)	Designated Market Area	TV Homes	TV Penetration
5	Dallas-Ft. Worth	2,713,380	95.3%
8	Houston	2,450,800	97.4%
31	San Antonio	938,660	94.2%
39	Austin	771,210	90.4%
87	Waco-Temple-Bryan	357,720	92.9%

Sources: Kantar Media, "DMA TV Household Market Rankings by TV Households," in SRDS Circulation 2018 http://kantarmedia.srds.com/common/pdf/A13.pdf (accessed February 16, 2018); Kantar Media, "DMA Profiles & Maps," http://next.srds.com/resources/maps-profiles (accessed February 16, 2018).

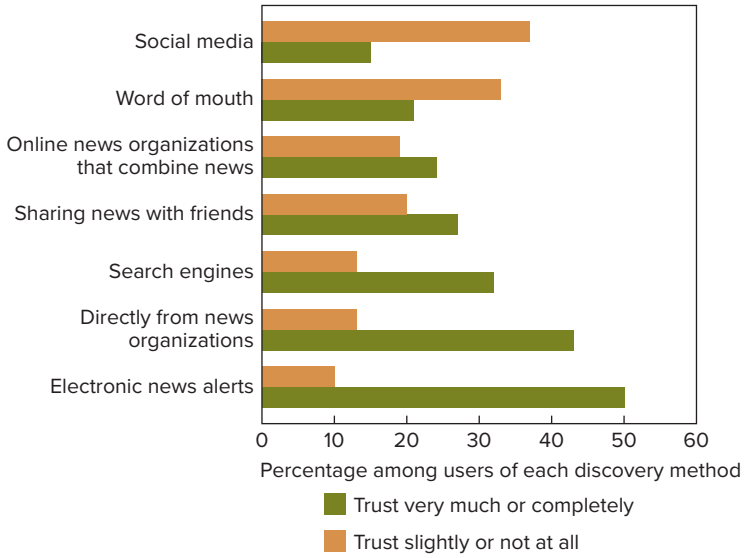


FIGURE 8.7 People's Trust in Different Ways of Discovering the News

Source: "How Americans Get Their News," American Press Institute: March 17, 2014, https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/publications/reports/survey-research/how-americans-get-news/ (accessed February 16, 2018).

New Media: The Internet and Social Media Networks

The Internet has made people part of the news as it happens; citizens can comment on live streams, are provided opportunities to interact with events, and stories and perceptions are shaped by others viewing them as they unfold. Internet access changed many aspects of Americans' lives, and social media have become an important tool for information gathering. Moreover, social media use has increased significantly over the past decade; today, more than two-thirds of all American adults use at least one form of social media to share information.[54] Figure 8.8 illustrates the use of social media by platform.

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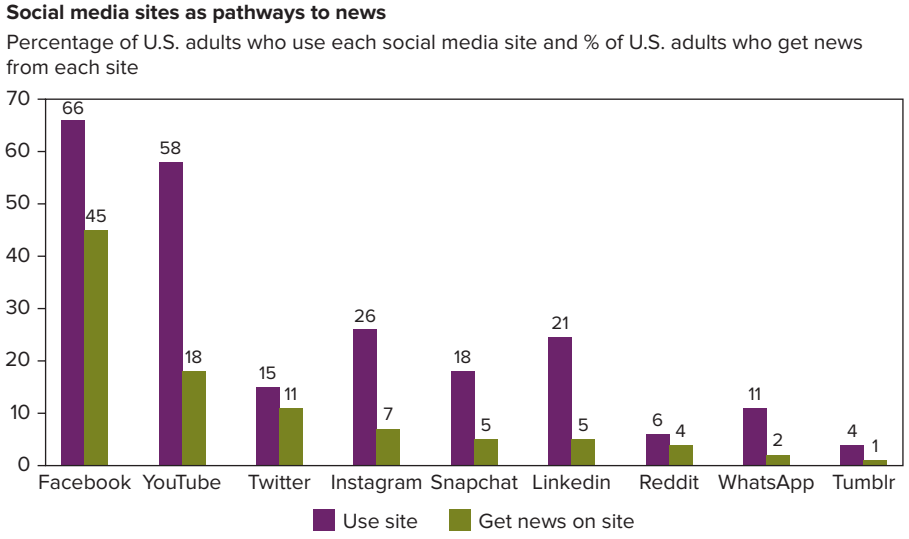

FIGURE 8.8 News Use across Social Media Platforms, 2017

Source: Pew Research Center, "News Use across Social Media Platforms 2017," http://www.journalism.org/2017/09/07/news-use-across-social-media-platforms-2017/ (accessed February 16, 2018).

Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter represent the three most popular social media sites, although there are certainly others. Distinct preferences are present among age groups; for example, younger people tend to gravitate toward Instagram or Twitter.[55] These different social media sites present a disruptive element to the traditional forms of media in that they allow citizens to shape the news agenda, and they provide exposure to news outside the mainstream sources that many Americans are accustomed to accessing.

When using social media, users often self-select information that is consistent with their existing beliefs. The result is an "echo chamber" that amplifies those beliefs and leaves little room for dissenting or conflicting information. This is problematic for a diverse, democratic society because, as Cass R. Sunstein states, "[without] shared experiences, a heterogeneous society will have a much more difficult time in addressing social problems."[56]

This is particularly important to keep in mind given the rise of Facebook and Twitter. According to recent Pew Research Center polling, more than 44 percent of those adults using Facebook get their news from postings there, representing an increase of almost 15 percent from three years earlier. In a controversial move, Facebook changed the algorithms that prioritize content of a feed and limit the ability of news organizations to insert themselves.[57] These changes did not affect users' ability to share news, but the chances that users would see news from organizations with which they may disagree, be they liberal or conservative, were diminished. Here, your "friends, family, and acquaintances" decide what *is* news, and the echo chamber effect is exacerbated.

With increased cell phone use, many people with no journalism training have begun using YouTube as a means by which to share news as citizen journalists. **Citizen journalism** has emerged as a new form of journalism, often alerting traditional media sources to breaking news. It has grown out of the public's ability to use technology and the Internet to share information. Although YouTube, for example, provides the means by which citizens are able to get information out,

citizen journalism
The collection, dissemination, and analysis of news and information by the general public, especially by means of the Internet

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often much more quickly than the news media can, it can be without context and lack the characteristics that represent work produced by professional reporters.

Where news is concerned, some significant issues exist with the use of YouTube. Although YouTube provides specific guidelines on how to properly attribute posted and shared videos, citizen journalists rarely follow those guidelines. Some users post dubious information, claiming it is news based on facts. Citizen journalists may provide more or different perspectives, or even cover events that traditional media has ignored, but there is always a risk that what they are providing is not factual or lacks context.

The issue of attribution notwithstanding, social media can allow people to share information when traditional media sources have refused or been unable to provide coverage to a story. For example, during one of the deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, social media sites, including Twitter and Facebook, were filled with news of the events as they unfolded, well before the police or news cameras arrived to intervene or to provide official coverage.[58] Similar use of social media occurred during the Las Vegas tragedy in October 2017 as well as after Texas's deadliest shooting in November 2017 at a church in Sutherland Springs.

Twitter is the third most popular social media sharing application, with more than 68 million accounts active in the United State alone.[59] Twitter users can send out more than 10 billion tweets in a day, but researchers at Carnegie Mellon University discovered in a survey that participants felt that barely more than one-third of the tweets reflected information worth reading. Those surveyed responded that the most "useless" information was the result of a tweet that did not share enough context to be understandable or worthwhile.[60] Although Twitter has the potential of providing relevant information to its users, like any other medium, the message must have substance and inform the user for it to be useful and valued.

In one instance, however, social media may have saved an innocent man from being falsely accused or perhaps even shot. Twitter brought the public news about the shooting deaths of five Dallas Metro Police officers in the summer of 2016 as a Black Lives Matter protest march in Dallas was occurring. In the confused aftermath, the Dallas police department tweeted a photo of a suspect. But citizens and other demonstrators were simultaneously posting photos and videos on Facebook and Twitter that clearly showed the suspect marching peacefully alongside others when the gunshots rang out. The suspect was not the shooter.[61]

Twitter use also played a role in the rise of Texas state senator Wendy Davis as a major political contender in the state as her filibuster of an anti-abortion bill went viral on the site in 2013. Over the course of a day, she garnered a significant online following with hundreds of thousands of retweets, an increase of over 40,000 followers, over 200,000 concurrent online viewers of her speech, and significant attention from both local and national media outlets across all media.[62] This popularity boost helped her gain a strong statewide standing and gave momentum to her 2014 campaign for governor, although she lost to Greg Abbott in the general election.

podcast
A digital audio file made available on the Internet for downloading to a computer or portable media player, typically available as a series, new installments of which can be received by subscribers automatically

Podcasts, which became popular with the advent of Apple's iPod over a decade ago, represent another medium by which citizens obtain information. Podcasts range from short news segments to weekly installments covering a variety of topics, and some have become incredibly popular, particularly among millennials. The most popular podcasts reflect content hosted by National Public Radio (NPR), such as *S-Town, Serial,* and *This American Life*, but Dan Carlin's *Hardcore History* and *TED*

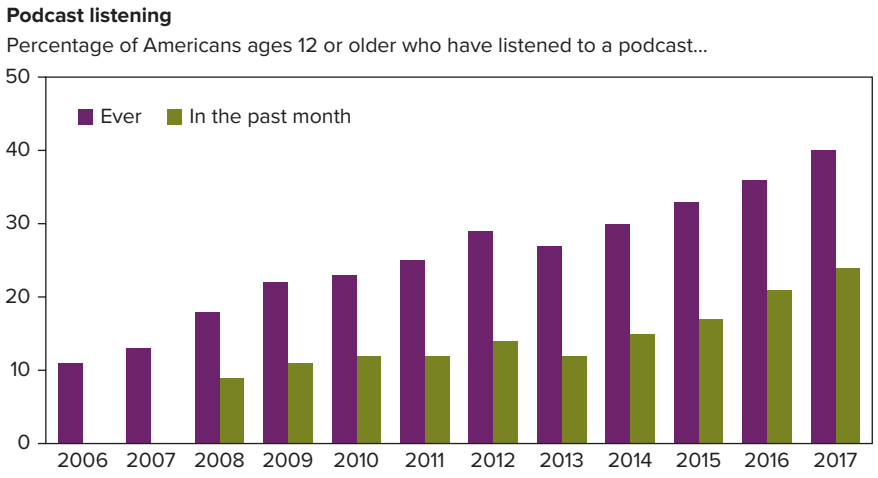

FIGURE 8.9 Americans' Podcast Listening Habits

Source: Pew Research Center, "Audio and Podcasting Fact Sheet," http://www.journalism.org/fact-sheet/audio-and-podcasting/(accessed February 16, 2018).

Radio Hour are also frequently downloaded.[63] Figure 8.9 shows that podcast listening is increasing, though still lower than other forms of Internet or audio use.

Although traditional media face challenges from social media, it is clear that they can complement one another as individuals share information provided through network television, radio, and newspapers via their personal networks. What is perhaps more of a threat to traditional media's longevity are **streaming services** such as YouTube Red, Pandora, Spotify, Netflix, and Amazon Prime. As more citizens begin moving away from commercial radio and television networks, a real possibility exists that these services will further erode broadcast media audiences. This is particularly relevant as more people have integrated smartphones into their daily lives. Although most social scientists today would argue that the medium (the physical means by we receive information) isn't everything, it certainly plays an important role. Our smartphones display information in certain ways and, therefore, affect how we perceive that information.

streaming services
The transfer of music or video data over the Internet, generally through a subscription service provider

As the Pew Center's data illustrate, millennials and younger generations are more inclined to access news through the Internet, especially via social media platforms where they are three times more likely than baby boomers to access news.[64] Even with this conspicuous gap in the means of access, people across all generations are most likely to discover news by going directly to a news organization. Fully 13 percent of adults under age 30 cite social media as their preferred way to find news, compared to 3 percent or less for all other age groups. For all groups, however, hearing directly from the reporting source is preferred to reading it as a social media post.

One of the more recent examples of how social media move the public occurred during the summer of 2016 after Britain voted to leave the European Union in a process nicknamed "Brexit" (for British exit). Twitter feeds lit up with calls for "#Texit," which would allow for a **referendum** for Texas to secede from the United States. During the Texas Republican convention, a few participants tried to force a floor vote on the issue.[65] Although there is much hope for the Internet and the potential for social media to invigorate democracy, early studies indicate that caution is in order.[66]

referendum
A direct public vote on a single political issue

A troubling paradox emerges if, in fact, three-quarters of Americans believe the media are biased in covering the news and providing information.[67] As the competition for "clicks" and advertising revenue becomes even more fierce, the quality of the news continues to deteriorate and the "medium becomes the message." For media to maintain an adversarial role to government within American democracy, their information, investigation, and analysis must explain complex issues, and the media must commit to substantial and accurate reporting of public affairs.

In 1969, Paul Baran, a computer engineer who is considered one of the Internet's earliest pioneers, penned an article on the effect new "electrical communications" would have on social values in America.[68] He predicted, with astonishing accuracy, that the rise of channel choice would create a decline of dialogue within the community and among individuals and groups with different ideological leanings and perspectives. This choice of channels would reflect not only the increase in options available to the viewer on television, but it would become further magnified with the advent of cable and satellite. Choice would increase again exponentially because of the Internet and the creation of a global community. Ironically, this increase in choice would lead to a decline in conversations among members in a community. The choices would create segregation into groups with like interests or viewpoints. As a result, these gaps of segregation (also called cleavages) would soon emerge, ultimately creating political instability.

Media's role then would be to provide a bridge between these cleavages so that, in societies, the overarching values that provide the "glue" would continue to bind even the most segregated groups. Baran cautioned that without some overlapping messages among these diverse media sources respecting the overarching principles of democratic theory, the ability for American (and Texan) media to function as those bridges would be questionable.

CORE OBJECTIVE

Taking Personal Responsibility . . .

What media sources do you consume? Print? Television? Social media? Which do you access most and least often? How might social media influence you differently than television?

The Media in Political Campaigns

Learning Objective: Explain the role of the media in Texas political campaigns.

In no uncertain terms, "without media coverage, a candidacy is dead in the water for state and national elections." Name recognition is everything. The media—in various roles as fact reporter, neutral adversary, public advocate, profit seeker, and propagandist—make that name recognition possible and elections winnable.[69]

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Traditional Media

Political campaign advertisements are the stuff that election seasons are made of. In 1992, Texas businessman Ross Perot spent $34.8 million of his own money—an equivalent of almost $60 million today—to purchase half-hour infomercials viewed by more than 16 million people.[70] It is estimated that for the 2016 election cycle, campaigns spent over $4 billion on television advertisements, and the fact is, they don't seem to matter much at the end of the campaign.[71] Candidates use **traditional media,** defined as conventional forms, such as television, print, radio, direct mail, and billboard signage, to connect with voters and get their message out, but this is expensive for a campaign. Candidates would prefer to rely on traditional media for free coverage when possible, and campaigns often schedule stump speeches, stage rallies, or agree to one-on-one interviews as opportunities for inexpensive or free exposure whenever they can.

traditional media
The term associated with conventional forms of media, such as television, print, radio, direct mail, and billboard signage

One means of free exposure is the newspaper endorsement. In what was considered quite a coup, Hillary Clinton received the endorsement of the *Dallas Morning News*'s editorial staff in early September 2016.[72] This was the first time the paper had endorsed a Democrat in 75 years and, as a result, the endorsement itself garnered national attention.

Candidates purchase and produce several types of ads, posted on television and online. Specific formats and language vary across media, but these ads can all be classified into several broad types: positive, negative, and a combination. They can also focus on a candidate or a particular issue.[73]

Generally, a positive ad is designed to make the public feel good about the candidate or the party. In 1984, Ronald Reagan told viewers it was "morning in

Clinton, joined by Representative Joaquin Castro, greets crowds in San Antonio during her presidential bid in 2016.

©Erich Schlegel/Getty Images

Social media outreach has become increasingly important to modern political campaigns. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and other popular platforms allow politicians to connect with a massive online audience.

©YAY Media AS/Alamy

America" in a commercial featuring scenes of a "middle America" town filled with happy people. In 1988, President George H. W. Bush saw "a thousand points of light." Others promise "fresh, bold leadership" or claim to have "common sense and uncommon courage." Still others, like gubernatorial candidate Clayton Williams, encourage listeners to "Share my vision." In 1998, Governor George W. Bush ran a number of TV spots that asked voters to support his effort to have every child read and become a productive member of society.

Positive candidate ads might try to depict the candidate as having saintly qualities: "Senator Smith is a Christian family man, Eagle Scout, Little League coach, Sunday school teacher, involved, concerned, committed, community leader who fights the people's fights. Let's keep him working for us." Others might take the form of testimonials from other citizens about the candidate. In a staged "person on the street" interview, the citizen says something like, "Senator Smith is the most effective leader this state has seen since Sam Houston. He's so effective it's frightening. He is committed to his job, and we need him to fight the coming battles with the liberals." In Texas, cattle and horses in the background can provide a down-to-earth backdrop for ranchers' "good ol' boy" testimonials.

Positive issue ads also tend to show the candidates taking courageous stands on issues everyone supports: sound fiscal management, planned orderly growth, good schools, open government, getting tough on crime, low taxes, and so on.

Negative ads, also called attack ads, play on voters' emotions by painting their opponent in a very unfavorable light. Former governor Rick Perry, running for secretary of agriculture in 1990, defeated Democratic incumbent Jim Hightower. In one of his commercials, Perry claimed that Hightower had once visited the home of Jane Fonda. Fonda is often used as a symbol for the radical war protesters of the 1960s because of her visit to Hanoi during the Vietnam War. When pressed for details on the visit, Perry said that Hightower had visited Los Angeles, and that Los Angeles was the home of Jane Fonda.

Attack ads have developed into a fine art. Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, extended the art when he used his GOPAC political action committee to help "train local Republican candidates." In 1990, GOPAC mailed a glossary of 131 words to more than 4,000 state Republican candidates. This glossary included a list of "optimistic positive governing words" that Republican candidates should use to describe themselves and a list of "contrasting negative words" they should use to describe their opponents. Republicans are described as "having common sense" and Democrats as "big-spending liberals."

Candidates use these types of advertisements because most often they work to the candidate's advantage. They plant a simple message in voters' minds that those voters carry into the voting booth. Many citizens do not spend much time studying issues or candidates' backgrounds and often depend on advertisements for information. Although the news media (which receive most of the money spent in campaigns) often denounce such ads, they do not refuse to run them. But occasionally

these attack ads can backfire. They can come to be seen as illegitimate. Fact-checking organizations, such as PolitiFact, and fact-checking articles can minimize their impact. Or negative ads can unintentionally promote the candidate they are targeting.[74]

Then-senator Dan Patrick used YouTube to share political messages.

Source: Dan Patrick/ "Dan Patrick for Texas Lt. Governor-TV ad "Texas Goes Sacramento"/ YouTube

Digital Media

Candidates and campaigns purchase time and space on broadcast television, cable, radio, and print media outlets to provide citizens with information on their positions on issues. However, they have also begun to turn to digital media to create websites or social media sites, such as Facebook, YouTube, or Twitter, to share news and information with the public. Using these sites not only reduces the costs of campaigning but also gives them more precise control of what is covered, how it is covered, and who the message targets. By searching "campaign commercials" on YouTube, you can see a variety of these ads. To see how political ads have changed over the decades, compare recent ads with those for the 1956 Eisenhower presidential campaign.

Further, in a geographically large state like Texas, digital media present a huge opportunity to save precious campaign dollars for more direct, capital-intensive efforts to get out the vote. As long as a voter has Internet access, these media options let campaigns save money and allow the message to spread far and wide, with little regard for coordination with network television or commercial media outlets.

Digital Campaigning and Citizen Participation

As the Internet evolved and social media sharing sites emerged, research began to focus on the specific influence social media had on citizens and their interaction with each other and their government. As candidates began using the Internet more often, the role of professional campaign consultants (particularly those with technical training) has become significantly more important to ensure that the message is professionally created and managed. The Internet gives campaigns the ability to control their message, connecting directly with the public without the interference or interpretation of the traditional media.

Connecting with the public directly is the most important advantage provided by the Internet; however, increasing interaction between candidates and their campaigns with the public is still no guarantee of winning an election. There have been many competing claims about the role the Internet plays in political engagement and participation. Some have argued that political participation would be transformed, and the influence of groups and elites would be diminished.[75]

Perhaps even more important is the claim that the Internet could reengage citizens or encourage apathetic voters to reconnect to the political system.[76] The argument largely rests on the assumption that people create online communities that would not only share political information but also create pressure on the communities' members to vote. Additionally, the input of members of the public becomes much more central; that is, "user-generated content suddenly

became a far more potent campaign weapon than the slick ads created by media consultants."[77]

Facebook boasts over one billion users worldwide. Recent research seems to indicate that particular activities on Facebook, like other social media sharing sites, helped create online communities. Further evidence suggests that, for some individuals, these online communities increased exposure to and discussion of political issues and events, which had a positive impact on its users' political participation.[78]

News, however, is not the only reason people use social media. Politicians and candidates running for public office use social media to connect *directly* to the public and voters. Social media allow elected officials to convey their message, unfiltered, to the world.

Ted Cruz was solicitor general of Texas from 2005 to 2008. In 2012, he ran a successful campaign for the U.S. Senate against Texas Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst. Cruz had much less popularity, face recognition, and money than Dewhurst, but he ran a successful campaign thanks, in part, to his heavy focus on social media outreach. What did his campaign do? Politico notes the following:

> Weekly calls with supportive bloggers, who had access to the candidate throughout the race. Two full-time staffers focused on social media content, resulting in speedy responses to just about every tweet, Facebook comment and email. A microsite, cruzcrew.org, that empowered volunteers to take on tasks and print out campaign literature. The use of social media ads from the earliest days of the campaign to build a mailing list that is, in the words of Vincent Harris, the Cruz campaign digital strategist, "bigger than most of the failed Republican candidates for president."[79]

Those strategies have become the norm. Of course, just like all forms of communication, there can be backlash. The Internet does not forget (at least for a while), and candidates who make statements or post comments or images may wind up facing criticism as a result of an inappropriate or ill-timed comment.

Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick was exposed to national scrutiny in 2016 when he tweeted what many saw as an inappropriate Bible verse following the deadliest mass shooting in American history.[80] At a gay club in Orlando, Florida, more than 50 people were killed and 50 others were injured. Not long after, Patrick's Twitter account released a prescheduled tweet of Galatians 6:7: "A man reaps what he sows." Although the tweet was apparently not intended to suggest that gay people were responsible for the shooting, its timing was unfortunate, and Patrick experienced negative publicity as a result.[81]

In practical terms, the rules for communicating with voters have changed. In large part, this is due to the proliferation of social media. Candidates and their campaigns who fail to use the power of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter do so at their own peril.

CORE OBJECTIVE

Being Socially Responsible . . .

What responsibility do citizens have as social media participants within the context of political campaigns?

Media Bias

Learning Objective: Describe bias in the Texas media.

Perceptions of Media Bias

From the time of the founding of the national government, Americans have expressed varying degrees of trust in their government. However, research indicates that citizens' levels of trust in the media, like their trust in government institutions, has decreased in most Western democracies.[82] In fact, a recent Gallup survey indicates that trust in the media is the lowest it has ever been since Gallup began asking about it in the 1970s.[83] This distrust has roots in an overwhelming amount of conflicting information and individuals' uncertainty in discerning what's true and what's not.[84]

Maxwell McCombs, a pioneer of media research, posited that someone attempting to study **media bias** would need years to make sense of the available data and refine a methodology to study them. That does not seem to stop anyone from presenting studies that say the media are biased, generally favoring one political party over the other.[85] Political scientist Tim Groeling, who specializes in studying political communication, proposes that two very specific types of bias exist in the media: selection bias and presentation bias.[86]

media bias
The actual or perceived failure of the media to report news objectively

Selection bias results from several factors that affect media, including time, personnel, and budgetary constraints. The gatekeeping role of media is often what gives particular news sources their "slant." Many times, the media's selection of events may reflect partisan ideological positions on policy issues, matters of state, the economy, or the political parties themselves in terms of their decisions or actions taken.

selection bias
The systematic selection of particular news that presents a distorted view of reality

Presentation bias occurs as a result of how a story is written or presented. The tone of a news story is crucial to understanding the framing taking place. This is where discussions emerge about the "echo chamber," which proposes that citizens self-select news sources that are in harmony with their own ideological positions and attitudes about government and policy. Contrary to what one might assume, however, there is no firm evidence that partisan media are making ordinary Americans more partisan.[87]

presentation bias
The act of writing or presenting news stories that reflect a significantly distorted view of reality, favoring one party over another in the case of political parties

Still, according to Figure 8.10, in spite of perceived bias in the news, most Americans still believe that the media are what keep political leaders from otherwise behaving badly.

Reality of Media Bias

In a landmark 1986 survey of journalists, researchers found that, overwhelmingly, journalists perceived themselves as being more liberal than both the owners of the media and the public in general.[88] Other research points to bias as the result of journalistic norms, such as the dynamics of how journalists are expected to cover campaigns, the reliance on previous reporting to determine tone and information in subsequent work (for example, emulating other journalists), and pressures from market competition. Competitive editors of news outlets seeking to get the scoop can "make it all but impossible" for alternative framing of issues and candidates to break into the evening news or the front pages.[89]

FINAL PAGES aptara EQA

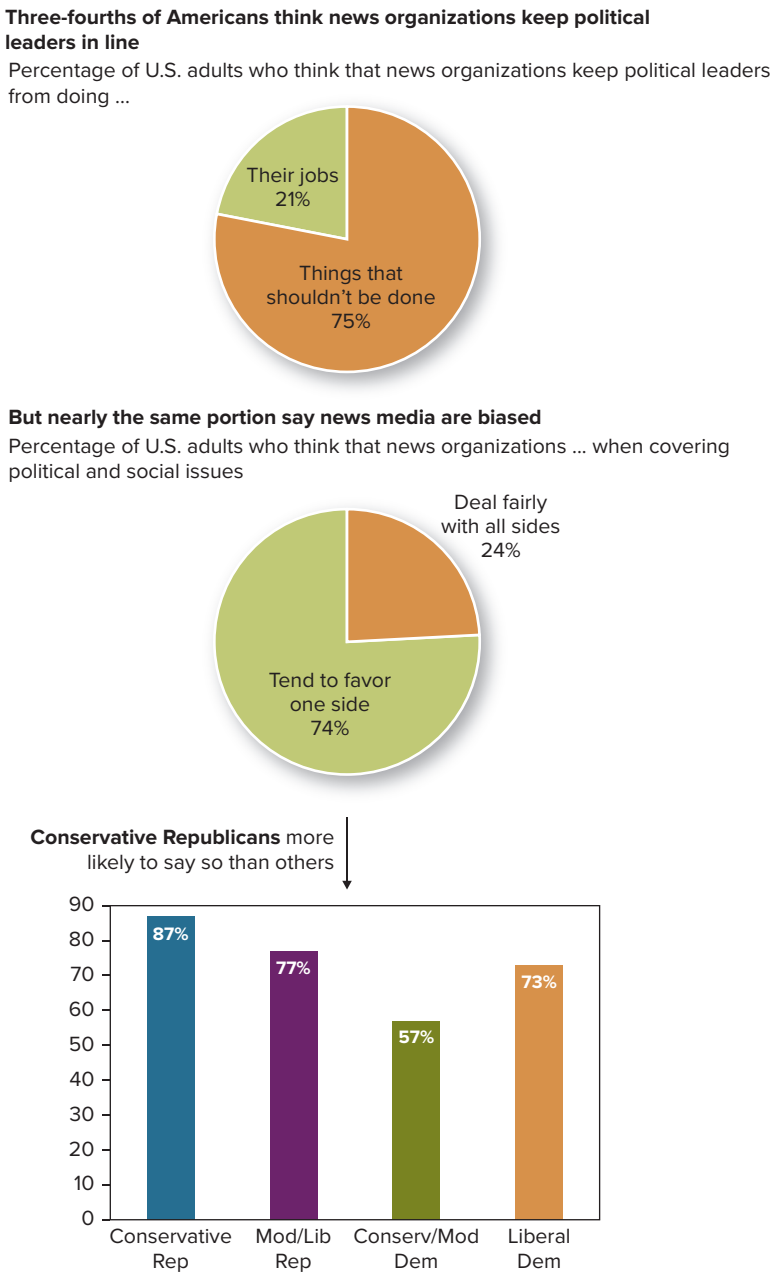


FIGURE 8.10 How Americans View News Organizations

Source: http://www.journalism.org/2016/07/07/the-modern-news-consumer/pj_2016-07-07_modern-news-consumer_2-02/.

Citizens consider information they receive directly from the media in light of their own ideological biases. Unfortunately, because individuals self-select news sources that are in harmony with their own perspectives and frequently reject those that are not, larger ideological gaps form among citizens. These gaps lead to ideological segregation in social networks, which serves to increase bias in the media as they seek to attract even larger audiences.[90]

mor12418_ch08_263-310.indd 294 11/22/18 11:54 AM

Selection bias in the media and selective exposure of individuals is a particularly important issue in Texas with many "red" (Republican) and "blue" (Democratic) outlets solidifying their audience's beliefs. The following "Tell the Truth! 2016" ad ran during the Republican National Convention in the 2016 primary campaign season, repeating a popular "red" media slogan.

2016 Republican National Convention Ad Campaign

Source: Media Research Center, MRC.org

Media bias plays a large role in the development of public opinion. It reinforces political beliefs and signals to audiences on matters of importance. At the same time, however, there are legal limits on what is considered reasonable political communication. There are limits on what the media can do, on the amount of bias displayed, and on citizens' engagement in the public sphere.

Regulating the Media

Learning Objective: Explain how the media are regulated in Texas.

Federal Regulation of Print and Broadcast Media

For the most part, print media are largely unregulated and given extensive protection under the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment. However, this same privilege does not exist for broadcast media. Traditional broadcast media use a specific and limited spectrum of analog airwaves available for radio and television, and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) limits who can obtain broadcasting licenses. With the advent of satellite and cable technology, as well as the Internet, regulation has changed over time.

Aside from laws that exist prohibiting the print media from printing **libelous** or factually incorrect and defamatory information, there is little else that impinges on print media's actions. The FCC is the regulatory body responsible for issuing **regulations**. The Communications Act of 1934, which created the FCC and empowered it to issue rules, also outlined how radio stations should handle political advertisements. Today, many of those same rules apply. As a consequence, and due to other factors, the public is often at a disadvantage when determining whether media information is accurate.

libel
A published false statement that is damaging to a private individual's reputation

regulations
Administrative rules implemented by governmental regulatory agencies to guide or prescribe specific conduct by industry or business

One problem for the public arises around political advertisements. Because of campaign laws, advertisements that media sell—whether in print, radio, or television—must be sold at the lowest available rate. Media outlets have very little control over the content of these ads, even if they are misleading or false. The exception to this are ads placed by third-party groups classified as 501(c)(4)s, or super PAC, groups. In the 2010 *Citizens United* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court held that corporations and unions have a First Amendment right to spend unlimited funds on campaign advertisements, as long as these ads were not formally "coordinated" with any candidate. This ruling basically meant that the political speech rights of Americans and corporate entities are

Stephen Colbert explains super PACs to viewers in easy-to-understand terms.

Source: http://deadline.com/2014/06/stephen-colbert-super-pac-study-738885/ ©*Mark Wilson/Getty Images*

indistinguishable. Notably, super PACs had raised over $1 billion for the year's election cycle.[91]

Although these third-party and super PAC ads can be rejected for false or misleading information about issues or candidates, most are not. In a 2012 study conducted by the Pennsylvania University's Annenberg Public Policy Center, an overwhelming majority of political advertisements aired during the 2012 presidential election cycle were categorized as deceptive.[92] In the interest of the public and their duty to provide accurate information, broadcasters could refuse to air these misleading advertisements by third parties and super PACs, but they seldom do.

Another problem the public faces is that campaigns and interest groups can use newspaper stories or TV newscasts without permission as part of **fair use** even if they are presented in ways that distort their original intent. The danger here is when citizens see or hear the information in the news, and then see or hear the advertisement repeatedly, they will lose track of the original context and the new frame becomes the reality for viewers and listeners.

Yet another problem arises for the public when rules governing the media are not applied fairly. Several rules affect how the media treat political candidates and campaigns. The **equal time rule** requires broadcasters to provide equal air time to opposing views by candidates who seek the same political office. Broadcasters are prohibited from censoring anything said by the candidates or interests and, therefore, many media outlets choose not to provide airtime. The **right of rebuttal** states that a television or radio station cannot air an advertisement attacking a candidate without giving the target of the attack a chance to respond. This right, however, does not apply to print media. Media watchdogs groups such as Free Press and the Media Research Center have argued that the FCC has become lax in its enforcement of these rules, which is a disservice to the public. However, the

fair use
Law that permits the limited use of copyrighted material without acquiring permission from the rights holders

equal time rule
Provided that a broadcaster permitting one political candidate access to the airwaves must afford equal opportunities to all other such candidates seeking the same office

right of rebuttal
Candidates must be given an opportunity to respond to any criticism made by a media outlet

FCC would argue that there has been tremendous growth in the media as well as access to sources through cable, satellite, and the Internet, the latter of which are not subject to the same degree of regulation that network television is, and many of these provide sufficient alternative views to counter false or misleading information.[93]

Federal Regulation of the Internet

Although there have been attempts in the past to regulate content on the Internet through action by Congress, it remains largely unregulated. In 2015, the FCC proposed rules regarding **network (net) neutrality**, which would ensure Internet service providers (ISPs) treat all available information equally and not block or slow down the delivery of content sought by consumers. In 2014, the United States Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit struck down the FCC's Open Internet Order in the case of *Verizon v. FCC*.[94] This ruling effectively ended network neutrality by disallowing the FCC to issue rules regulating ISP behavior that can result in ISPs—Spectrum (formerly Time Warner Cable), AT&T, Verizon, and so on—blocking or interfering with traffic on the web. That means, for example, a company can slow down its competitors or block political opinions with which it disagrees. There were no protections, including privacy, for Internet users because, unlike Google or Facebook, ISPs have direct control over the connections to the Internet and the devices used to connect to it. In 2015, the FCC reclassified broadband Internet transmission as a telecommunications service, which allowed it to regulate businesses that provide Internet service to the public.[95] Returning to court again, the United States Telecom Association sought to

network neutrality
The principle that Internet service providers should enable access to all content and applications regardless of the source, and without favoring or blocking particular products or websites

Regulating "the Net"

©Newscast/REX/Shutterstock

have this decision overturned, but in June 2016, ironically in front of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, the court ruled against it.[96]

On December 14, 2017, however, those 2015 protections ended. The FCC, under Chair Ajit Pai, voted 3 to 2 to end the reclassification and remove the regulations put in place.[97] Still, the fight over net neutrality continues. As of this writing, 26 states have pending bills to reassert net neutrality protections, but Texas is not among them.[98]

Understanding Impact What are the advantages and disadvantages that would allow Internet service providers to regulate access and connection speed to certain sites on the web? Since the 2017 FCC action effectively ending net neutrality, have you had any personal experience, positive or negative, accessing sites through your service provider?

The Internet has also presented something of a conundrum for policy makers in terms of how to address obscene material because of the virtual impossibility of regulating it. The definition of what constitutes obscenity was originally established by the United States Supreme Court in *Miller v. California* (1973)[99]. After several failed congressional attempts during the 1990s, the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) became law in 2000. This act regulates the Internet through federal funding provided to elementary and secondary schools as well as public libraries. It requires these entities to ensure filtering systems are in place to prevent minors from gaining access to sexually explicit, obscene, or otherwise harmful materials online.

Many Internet service providers require users to agree to terms of service (TOS) that include general and specific prohibitions. This is true for social media sites as well. For example, Facebook cautions its users against posting material promoting a number of issues, such as direct threats, self-injury, bullying, sexual violence, or criminal activity.[100] Not only can Facebook administrators remove the content, violators can be put in "Facebook jail," which limits a user's ability to post or can result in account deletion. Twitter, YouTube, and other social media sites have similar statements for users.

State and Local Regulation

police power
The ability afforded states under the Tenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution to regulate behavior and enforce order within its geographic territory

While Article VI of the U.S. Constitution grants supremacy to federal laws over state laws, states do still have authority to regulate specific aspects of the Internet. Under its **police powers**, many state laws, including those in Texas, have been amended to reflect changes in technology that have afforded criminals opportunities to access our personal information, stalk or bully victims online, target individuals for financial gain, or lure children into unsafe situations.

In 2009, the Texas legislature passed HB 2003, amending the Texas Penal Code to prohibit harassment, including "cyberstalking," "cyberimpersonation," and "cyberharrasment." The new law added criminal harassment through electronic means to include repeated, unwanted electronic communications that have the intent of "harassing, annoying, alarming, abusing, tormenting, embarrassing, or offending." As the use of social media increased, cyberbullying, particularly among adolescents, has increased. Across the country, there have been repeated incidents of teenagers being harassed to the point of suicide.

Notably, in January 2016, 16-year-old David Molak, a student at Alamo Heights High School in San Antonio, Texas, committed suicide after prolonged bullying, the second such case since 2002. As a result, Texas senator José Menendez and other members of the Senate Criminal Justice Committee met during the 2016 summer interim session to discuss existing law and how to balance the issues of free speech with new, more insidious forms of bullying through social media. Menendez created a draft bill and submitted it to the legislature, aptly named "David's Law," during the 2017 session. The bill became law on June 9, 2017.[101]

Regulation within State and Local Agencies

Although Texas does not currently have a social media privacy law in place,[102] state and local agencies are creating internal rules. Social media present a huge opportunity for them to connect with their communities, and they have needed to come up with a set of guidelines for proper use.[103]

CORE OBJECTIVE

Communicating Effectively . . .

Explain how the federal government regulates print and electronic media.

For example, Fuat Altunbas, for his dissertation at the University of North Texas, conducted a study on social media adoption and use by several police departments in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. He found that social media were increasingly used, and many departments take part in SMILE (Social Media, the Internet, and Law Enforcement), a national conference that aims to educate law enforcement on how to use social media and the Internet.[104]

In the past few years, more police departments have been using social media to help find criminals and provide updates on investigations and community events. Hewitt police department, for example, has #HewittHustle which is an ongoing reminder to help prevent car theft.[105]

Whose Media?

Learning Objective: Explain concerns about control of the media in Texas.

Who Owns the Media?

If, as James Madison said, "a marketplace of ideas" is what is required for a healthy democracy to function, how is that to occur if only a handful of companies serve as gatekeepers for information? Although the Internet certainly provides a vast array of information, recall that a majority of citizens still rely on television for their information and news. The 1996 Telecommunications Act, enacted under the promise of reduced costs to consumers, relaxed the limit on how many radio and television stations one company could own. The old limit was 12 percent of the

national market; the new cap was 35 percent. The consequence of this law was that it allowed giant corporations to own hundreds of media outlets, ultimately creating a monopolistic flow of information in Texas and the United States as a whole (see Figure 8.11 for an overview of media ownership today).

The act has allowed a select few conglomerates to emerge as major providers of information, acting as large umbrellas for both traditional and digital media outlets. For example, Comcast owns 18 major brands (including NBC, MSNBC, Universal, and Telemundo) and has stakes in Hulu, BuzzFeed, and more, with a market cap at roughly $190 billion. Disney has a cap of $163 billion. Time Warner, a huge conglomerate in its own right (HBO, Warner Brothers, and more), is currently in negotiation to be incorporated into AT&T. In November 2017, the Justice Department filed a lawsuit to block the deal. The trial is still pending as of this writing (February 2018).[106] Most of what we see and hear can be traced back to these large national and international umbrella organizations.[107]

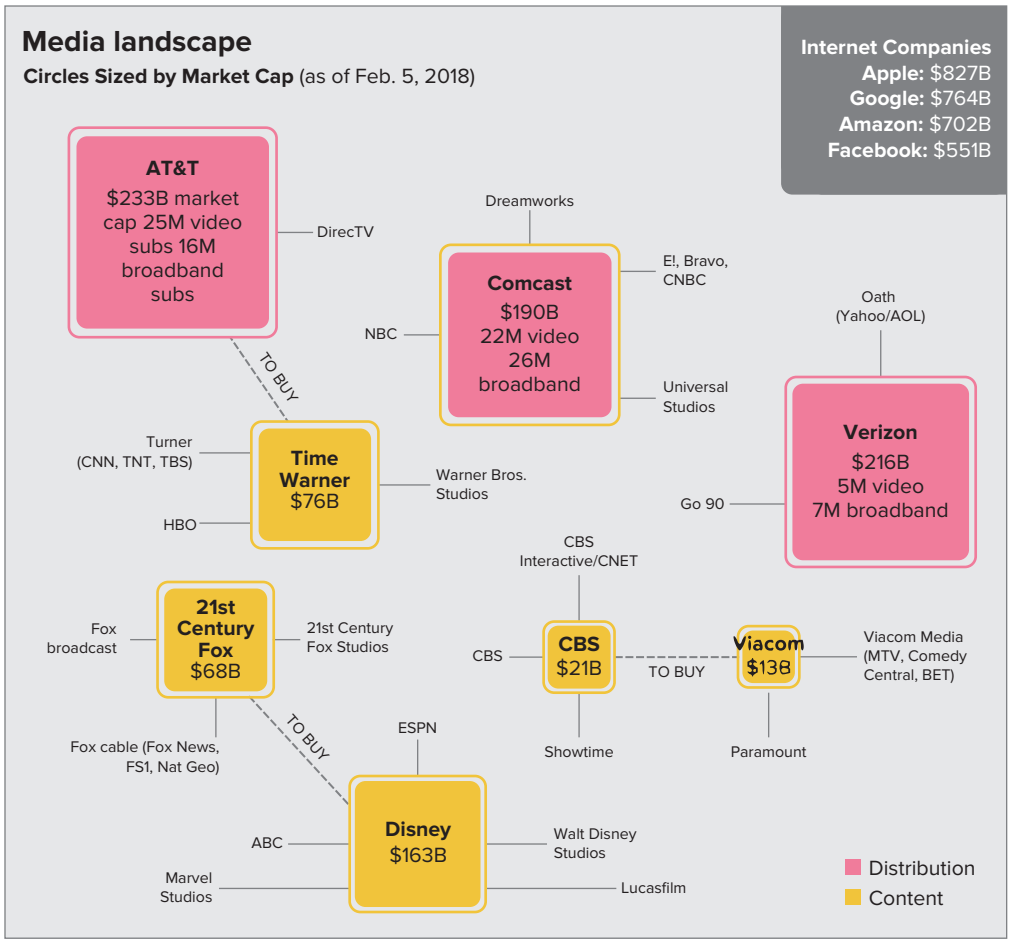


FIGURE 8.11 Who Owns the Media?

Source: Rani Molla and Peter Kafka, "Here's Who Owns Everything in Big Media Today: It Probably Won't Look Like This for Long," January 23, 2018, *Recode,* https://www.recode.net/2018/1/23/16905844/media-landscape-verizon-amazon-comcast-disney-fox-relationships-chart (accessed February 16, 2018).

Not only is concentration happening nationally, but large conglomerates have also bought many Texas-owned media outlets. This overall concentration of ownership has consequences for Texas and for the news content Texans see.

In 2013, Dallas-based Belo Corporation sold its news stations to Gannett/Tegna (a media conglomerate also based in Virginia), including Austin's KVUE-TV, Beaumont's KFDM-TV, Dallas-Fort Worth's WFAA-TV, Houston's KHOU-TV, and San Antonio's KENS-TV. In 2014, Virginia-based Media General, Inc. bought Austin-based LIN Media, leaving the city without any locally owned, or even Texas-owned, television news sources. This situation is happening across the state. What does it mean for the media (especially news media) that Texans consume? Most likely, it means less local news and a selection bias that is increasingly slanted toward national issues.[108]

The Future of Media

In February and March 2016, for the first time, both the Republicans and Democrats simulcast presidential debates in Spanish. With the Telemundo-CNN Republican debate, cohosted by Maria Celeste Arraras, the candidates faced questions that were of specific importance to the Latino community. These included President Obama's executive order for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) as well as the GOP's failure to appeal to Latinos on other issues. It was estimated that more than 500,000 viewers watched this debate through Telemundo's live stream. Univision's "El Debate Democratica," hosted in Miami at a local community college, was viewed by more than 2 million on Univision alone.[109] The question of media ownership is not about just ownership itself; it is also about who is consuming it. Consumers drive content as much as owners and producers do.

Telemundo is increasing its American viewership and ratings, edging out Univision in some markets.

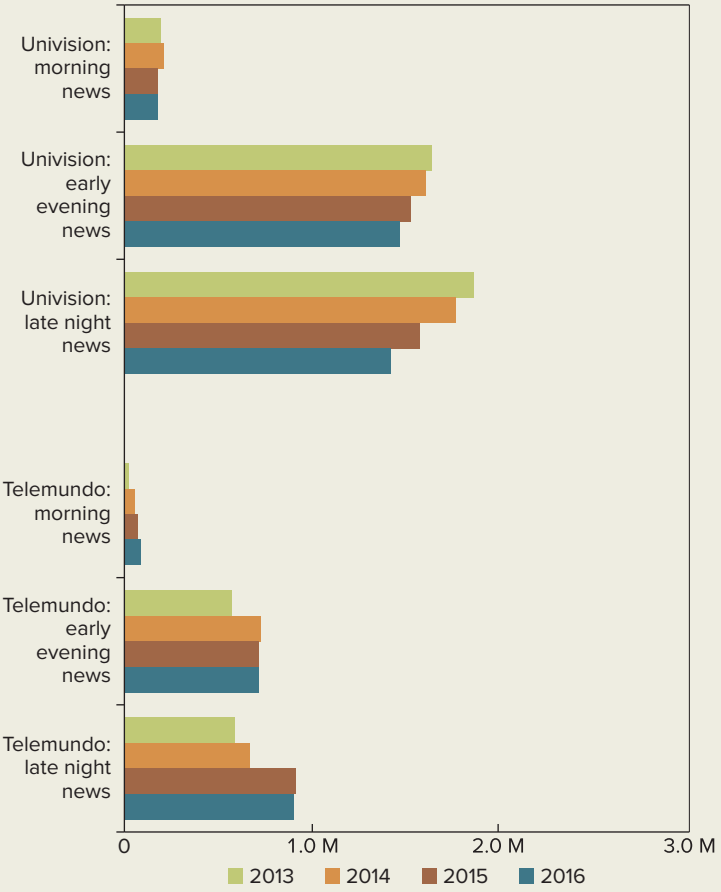
©Ken Wolter/Shutterstock

Focus On

Using the Media to Appeal to Hispanic Voters

The growing Hispanic population in the United States has finally caught the attention of both major political parties in America. Latinos make up approximately 17.8 percent of the U.S. population and 39.1 percent of the population in Texas. A little over 46 percent of Texas's Latino population is eligible to vote.[110] Spanish is the primary language in nearly 40 million homes across the United States, and in Texas, 29.6 percent of households speak Spanish. More specifically, 11.9 percent of Texas households speak primarily Spanish with limited English.[111]

Average viewership for Univision and Telemundo affiliates, by time slot



Note: Numbers represent viewership for affiliates for the four sweeps – February, May, July, and November. Time slots are morning news: 5–7 a.m.; early evening news: 5–7 p.m.; late night news: 11–11:30 p.m.

FIGURE 8.12 Univision and Telemundo Local Affiliates Viewership, by Time Slot

Source: Pew Research Center, "Hispanic and African American News Media Fact Sheet," State of the News Media 2017, http://www.journalism.org/fact-sheet/hispanic-and-african-american-news-media/ (accessed February 16, 2018

Both George W. Bush and Al Gore stumped in Spanish while on the campaign trail in 2000, enlisted Spanish-speaking relatives to campaign on their behalf, and maintained Spanish-language websites, clearly attempting to capture the Latino vote.[112] Barely two years later, Texas's Democratic gubernatorial debate between Tony Sanchez and Dan Morales marked the first time in U.S. history that a major political debate was held in Spanish, indicating that the Democratic Party acknowledged a clear understanding of the importance of the Latino vote, particularly in Texas.[113]

Telemundo, owned by NBC/Universal, and Univision represent the two largest Spanish-language programming providers in the United States. Telemundo owns 18 stations along with 54 affiliates[114] and competes with Univision's 23 broadcast stations and 38 radio stations. See Figure 8.12 for a comparison of their viewership numbers in the United States.

In the fall of 2015, Telemundo unveiled its multiplatform voter information campaign #yodecido to target younger Spanish-speaking voters. The campaign's website (http://www.telemundo.com/noticias/yo-decido-2016/comunidad) provided a full complement of election coverage, focusing primarily on the 2016 presidential election. Using the #yodecido platform, Telemundo created a series of public service announcements and voter registration drives on a countrywide tour. These events were meant to provide spaces for interested young Hispanics to get involved, talk about their concerns, and discuss the candidates running for president.

In the spring of 2016, Univision launched "Destino 2016." Like Telemundo's venture,

(Continued...)

"Destino 2016" was envisioned as a means to provide information and inspire young Latinos across the country to vote in the 2016 presidential election. One of the special projects for "Destino 2016" was "United Stories of America," a weekly broadcast that followed 16 Latinos across eight battleground states. These stories were presented by Jorge Ramos and Maria Elena Salinas, two of the most respected television personalities in the Hispanic community, and provided viewers a unique perspective on the lives of Latino and Latina Americans and the issues they faced as the country neared the presidential election.

The Future of Univision and Telemundo Media Networks

When discussing Univision's projections for 2018, CEO Frank Lopez-Balboa warned of a possible downturn in revenue. He cited the Winter Olympics as well as an increasingly expensive "longterm programming agreement with leading Mexican broadcaster Televisa," which provides them with content.[115] However, the network has signed deals with Netflix to create five shows, two of which will be in Spanish and one that will be a documentary. These will debut over the next few years.[116]

Telemundo, while having overall slightly lower viewership than Univision, has been increasing its audience among the 18- to 49-year-old demographic. It has a huge slate of programming geared toward them and plans on increasing ad revenue from Hispanic TV in general. Senior Vice President Dana Bonkowski noted recently that Telemundo "[has] been loyal to [its] plan of targeting a younger, bilingual audience."[117] Indeed, in late 2017, Telemundo launched Fluency Plus, a bilingual digital production studio. Its content will include "a range of English- and Spanish-language offerings, including web and social-first series, miniseries, alternative, comedy and 360-degree virtual reality experiences."[118]

Critical Thinking Questions

1. How effective do you believe the use of Spanish-language media outlets will be to target youthful Latino and Latina voters? Explain your answer.
2. How does the use of social media increase the likelihood of attracting Latino and Latina youth to the polls?

Conclusion

At its most basic level, public opinion is the aggregate (sum) of attitudes and opinions of individuals and groups on a particular topic. Individuals form political opinions through a process called political socialization, learning political attitudes and opinions through agents of socialization, such as family, education, religious institutions, generational effects, and the media. Public opinion is typically measured through surveys and focus groups using statistical methodology. It is important for government to know public opinion because when conflict arises (such as on marijuana use and other political issues), public opinion can help determine policy.

The media are part of our daily lives; media provide us with information and entertainment and help shape public opinion about what is or is not important in society. However, the role of media as adversary to government also requires accurate, substantive news. The media have evolved over their short history and continue to shape perceptions in the way they both select and present content to viewers. Even as the types of media sources available to citizens have expanded, there is rising concern about the consolidation of media outlets and the problems associated with bias as fewer and fewer outlets control more and more news information. Citizens rely on media to share information about what the government is doing in their communities, their states, their nation, and the world.

The media, both traditional as well as the new platforms provided by social media, have changed how political campaigns and politicians connect to citizens and voters and how governments at all levels share information with them. Today's citizens have a wealth of ways to access information and news.

To some extent, media can be regulated, but there are limitations on what government can prohibit or limit. Printed news is afforded very strong First Amendment protections, unlike its more heavily regulated contemporaries in broadcast and radio. Because the Internet contains elements of all of its predecessors, its regulation is the most difficult of all, given that we now live in a global community. The Internet (particularly with the birth of social media, which allows citizens to share share information in printed forms) has given rise to new forms of journalism. For better or worse, it is clear that people are no less hungry for news today than they were a century ago.

Summary

LO: Explain the role of public opinion in U.S. and Texas politics.

There are five broad definitions of public opinion: aggregation of individual opinion, majoritarian, interest group conflict, media/elite opinion, and fiction. Individuals form political opinions through a process called political socialization; that is, learning political attitudes and opinions through agents of socialization such as family, education, religious institutions, generational effects, and the media. Public opinion is typically measured through surveys and focus groups using statistical methodology. It is important because when conflict arises (such as on marijuana use and other political issues), public opinion can help determine policy.

LO: Explain the functions of media in U.S. and Texas politics.

Media's primary role is to serve as a means by which citizens obtain information, news, and entertainment. The media prime, frame, and set the agenda for citizens as they consume information and news. Both hard and soft news provide readers, viewers, and listeners with a variety of stories that shape perceptions of the world around them and affect their daily lives.

LO: Describe the various sources of media in Texas.

The media include traditional forms of media, such as newspapers, magazines, broadcast outlets, and radio outlets. Cable and satellite television and radio emerged as alternatives to traditional media sources and have eroded viewers and readers. The Internet has brought new sources of media to citizens, including podcasts, blogs, social networking, and streaming audio and video.

LO: Explain the role of the media in Texas political campaigns.

The media shape and frame the processes and discourse of political communication as well as the society in which that communication takes place. Media have allowed more citizens to become active participants in political events and processes. Campaign advertisements are an important part of the election process and can affect how citizens vote. Negative attack ads can harm targeted candidates or backfire and benefit the targeted candidates.

LO: Describe bias in the Texas media.

Charges of media bias exist, but there is disagreement about its effect on the public. Selection bias, which reflects which stories are chosen, and presentation bias, which refers to the perspective from which a story is told, can both affect the substance of the information the public receives. There is some evidence to support the idea that bias in media is really a result of consumer demands and the self-selection of sources of information.

LO: Explain how the media are regulated in Texas.

Print media are the oldest form of information, and as such they receive significant protection under the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment. Television and radio are more heavily regulated because of the limited resources available for broadcasting their messages to the public. In terms of content, there are laws in place that regulate content with respect to obscenity, but political speech is more heavily regulated among broadcasters because of the nature of the medium and the speed with which information is provided. The Internet is the least regulated of all forms of media; however, there are laws that specifically reference criminal behavior, such as cyberbullying, stalking, harassment, and specific types of fraud. Attempts to regulate content contained on the Internet have been largely unsuccessful.

LO: Explain concerns about control of the media in Texas.

Six companies now control almost 90 percent of all prime-time viewing in the United States, and media consolidation is a concern for citizens across the globe. With media consolidation, there is a concern that there will be fewer alternative viewpoints shared with citizens and that media will be less able to fulfill the role of adversary to the government.

Key Terms

agenda setting
agents of socialization
citizen journalism
CNN effect
critical journalism
electronic media
equal time rule
exit polls
fair use

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framing
gatekeeping
hard news
information
investigative journalism
libel
mass media
media bias
network (net) neutrality
news
podcasts
police powers
political communication
political socialization
presentation bias
priming
print media
public opinion
public sphere
push polls
referendum
regulations
resonance
right of rebuttal
selection bias
socioeconomic factors
soft news
straw polls
streaming services
traditional media

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