CHAPTER 21

The Social, Economic and Political Culture of Texas

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
After reading this chapter you should be able to

- Define the key terms at the end of the chapter.
- Describe the dominant set of core values in Texas.
- Explain the roots of Texas Culture and list the various ethnic backgrounds.
- Analyze and explain the strengths and weaknesses of the Texas economy.
- Differentiate between the various economies of the thirteen regions of Texas.
- Explain why the Texas economy is diversified today.
- Discuss the changing population culturally and numerically and explain how those changes will affect Texas in the future.

THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF TEXAS AND THE CHALLENGE OF DEMOCRACY

The opening vignette discusses the difficulties of the illegal immigrant problem in America, but especially in Texas. Texans have always been independent, and the thought of large groups of Texans patrolling the borders seemed to be inviting trouble. In an effort to head off these troubles, Governor Perry and Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison initiated some new programs to address the problems along the border. Although these new programs have yet to show any substantial benefits, they did stop most of the private patrols.

Texans have a long history of taking matters into their own hands, which has a lot to do with their individualistic spirit. At the same time, Texans take pride in their history and traditions. Today, Texas is a changing society. Years of Hispanic immigration has slowly changed the population of Texas. Within the next decade, the Hispanic population will become the new majority in Texas. These changes in population will have a profound impact on the nature of Texas society, culture, economy and political environment.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW
Texas society changes everyday. Immigration and natural population are already affecting Texas’ society and economy, and will eventually change its political environment. The core values of Texans has been shaped and molded from Texas’ history. Much of Texas’ history has been tied to Mexico’s history and the acts of early settlers. More recent history has been tied to the three major industries of Texas; cotton, cattle and oil. Currently, Texas has diversified its economy, but it is still struggling to make sure that all Texans have equal access to all the opportunities the state can offer.

The Political Culture of Texas
Based on the political culture theories of Daniel Elazar, Texas’ political culture embraces the values of both traditionalistic and individualistic cultures. Texans are traditional in expecting government to
maintain the status quo, and expect it to limit itself to very specific tasks. Texans are also individualistic in that we distrust government and rely on citizen initiatives to get things done. The Political Culture of Texas is a reflection of the deep and rich history of the state and its strong ties to Mexico.

Who We Are: The Changing Demographic Profile of Texas
Texan continues to change and grow even as you are reading this passage. Two major changes for Texas will occur in the next few decades. The Anglo population, which has always been in the majority, will be supplanted by a rising number of Hispanic Texans. Also, the population of Texas will recognize that it is an urban population, since 80% of Texas’ 23+ million citizens live in an urban area. Both these changes are already affecting Texas’ politics, economy and society.

The Texas Economy
The third largest economy in the United States, Texas generates an amazing amount of production and wealth. Although the Texas economy used to revolve around cotton, cattle and oil, it has diversified over the last 20 years. Today, Texas is a big producer of high tech equipment and has profited handsomely from NAFTA. Most of these economic forces in Texas are located in the Texas Triangle, a region centering on Houston, San Antonio and Dallas/Fort Worth. While it may be a great place to relocate a business, Texas can be a challenging environment for finding educated workers. Texas will need to do better, if it wants to attract more businesses to the region.

KEY TERMS
political culture
traditionalistic political subculture
individualistic political subculture
moralistic political subculture
patrón politics
gross state product
maquiladoras
tax abatement
colonias

RESEARCH AND RESOURCES
One rich source of commonly asked questions and links is the TexasOnline website, created by Governor Perry. <http://www.texasonline.com/> This portal was ranked as the best e-government website in America by Brown University. There are links to agencies and helpful information that most people want to know.

Another helpful site for information and to get a better feel for the political and economic culture of Texas is the Secretary of State’s website. <http://www.sos.state.tx.us/about/newsreleases/index.shtml> This site contains information on election results and procedures, state rules, corporate and uniform commercial codes, statutory documents and a section on the Texas Border and Mexican Affairs.

A great way to get a real “feel” for Texas culture, especially if you haven’t been there, is to visit the Travel Texas website. This site has information about all the different regions of Texas, including history, attractions, major cities and links to many of the places and sites mentioned. <http://www.traveltex.com/Index.aspx>
USING YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Using the resources suggested above, try to find out how your county voted in the 2006 state elections. After perusing the data on who your county voted for, can you get a sense of the politics of your county. Make sure to look at the major races, like governor, lieutenant governor and attorney general, but also look at the race for your state representative and state senator. Are you surprised by the results of these elections. Can you discern a general pattern?

2. The Travel Texas website allows individuals thinking of visiting Texas to look at where they are going and what they can do when they get there. It is also a good resource for history about specific towns, cities and regions. This site divides up Texas into seven different regions, go look at three of these regions and read about how different they are. How are the three regions that you looked at different, and how are they the same.

GETTING INVOLVED

Traditionally, Texas politics has been the playground of the upper class, but it’s not that hard to play. You could start by attending a local City Council meeting, or County Commissioners. Find out what they are doing and let them know what you think about it. You can easily e-mail your mayor or City Council, or you could address them at their next meeting. If you have the time, you could volunteer to serve on a City Advisory Committee, where your input would be valued and acted upon.

SAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. What vital element(s) of our political culture must be produced in order for it to be perceived as legitimate?
   a. colonias
   b. inherent power
   c. goodwill and public trust
   d. public policy consistent with culture
   e. stability, economic health and strategic vision

2. Which of the following two subcultures are dominant in Texas?
   a. pragmatic and individualistic
   b. traditional and individualistic
   c. moralistic and traditional
   d. pragmatic and moralistic
   e. traditional and pragmatic

3. What Mexican state did Texas use to be a part of back in the early 1800’s?
   a. Nuevo Leon
   b. Sonora
   c. Zacatecas
   d. Veracruz
   e. Coahuila
4. According to T.R. Fehrenbach which two adjectives would best describe the early Texas settlers?
   a. rash and headstrong
   b. self-motivated and self-reliant
   c. self-absorbed and militaristic
   d. proper, yet productive
   e. productive and visionary

5. What would be the best description for both the Mexican and African American subcultural heritage in Texas?
   a. traditionalistic
   b. pragmatic
   c. moralistic
   d. militaristic
   e. individualistic

6. The “Texas Triangle” consists of the region in between the cities of Dallas/Fort Worth, San Antonio and what other city?
   a. Austin
   b. Brownsville
   c. Corpus Christi
   d. Houston
   e. El Paso

7. Most of the recent growth in Texas’ population is due to which of the following?
   a. immigration
   b. natural population growth
   c. adoptions
   d. disaster relief efforts
   e. naturalization

8. One of the main reasons Texans can pay lower prices is due to which of the following?
   a. the Texas government
   b. higher oil prices
   c. large labor pool
   d. better education
   e. diversified economy

9. Which of the following describes the current status of average Hispanic American in the United States today?
   a. Almost 40% of Hispanic child live below the poverty line.
   b. Almost one-third of Hispanic children dropout of high school.
   c. Hispanic homeownership lags behind white homeowners by almost 30%.
   d. Over one-quarter of all Hispanics are without health insurance.
   e. all of these are correct.

10. Which of the following is LULAC’s top concern for the Hispanic Community?
    a. political access
    b. education
    c. civil rights
    d. health
    e. economic power
11. What political term do we use to describe the total value of all goods and services produced in the state?
   a. average daily balance
   b. quantified economic assets
   c. gross domestic product
   d. gross state product
   e. total accumulated quantity

12. What economic term describes the production of raw materials exported to other markets?
   a. patrón economy
   b. colonias economy
   c. perpetual economy
   d. colonial economy
   e. material economy

13. When OPEC stopped selling oil to the U.S. in the 1970’s, what did that do to the oil industry in Texas?
   a. depressed it even further
   b. initiated a slight resurgence
   c. reinvigorated the entire industry
   d. destroyed what was left of Texas oil industry
   e. allowed it to hang on a while longer

14. Which sector of the current Texas economy generates over three-quarters of the wealth?
   a. construction sector
   b. education sector
   c. technology sector
   d. health sector
   e. service sector

15. Many businesses consider Texas a good place to do business, because of no income tax, no corporate tax, no strong labor unions and what?
   a. no governmental regulation
   b. generous tax abatements
   c. no environmental regulations
   d. liberal exceptions and grandfather clauses
   e. generous labor benefits

16. What does Texas consider to be its greatest challenge to its economic future?
   a. oil industry
   b. health
   c. education
   d. welfare
   e. all of these

17. Which region is the largest in Texas, encompassing 41 counties still centered around producing oil, gas, cotton and cattle?
   a. High Plains
   b. Northwest Texas
   c. West Texas
   d. Upper Rio Grande
   e. South Texas Border
18. Which county has doubled in population over the last 30 years and accounts for 20% of the state’s employment and over 25% of its GSP?
   a. Metroplex
   b. Alamo/San Antonio
   c. Coastal Bend
   d. Gulf Coast
   e. High Plains

19. Which regions is composed of 20 counties and centers its economy around a large military base, state universities and a number of high-tech research and manufacturing interests?
   a. Gulf Coast
   b. Upper East Texas
   c. Metroplex
   d. Alamo/San Antonio
   e. Central Texas

20. Which region encompasses 16 counties and is the major financial and banking center of Texas?
   a. Metroplex
   b. Alamo/San Antonio
   c. Gulf Coast
   d. Capital
   e. Coastal Bend

21. How does median income in Texas compare to the rest of the nation?
   a. Just about even with the national average.
   b. Several thousand above the national average.
   c. A few hundred above the national average.
   d. Several thousand below the national average.
   e. A few hundred below the national average.

22. Although Suburban Texas is quite wealthy, how does that compare to the state’s border regions?
   a. Just about the same.
   b. Way above the suburban areas.
   c. Just above the suburban areas.
   d. Way below the suburban areas.
   e. Just below the suburban areas.

23. What political term do we use to describe the subdivisions along the Texas-Mexico border and lack basics services, like water and electricity?
   a. patrón communities
   b. colonias
   c. meagervilles
   d. haciendas
   e. waypoints

24. What term do we use to describe the result of stagnant wages for low-skilled workers and vast increases in wages for the better educated and highly trained workers?
   a. economic stagnation
   b. income inequality
   c. wealth gap
   d. improper pay scale
   e. monetary misalignment
25. When you compare Hispanic and African-American populations to the white population, which of the following is true?
   a. The incomes of African-Americans and Hispanics are roughly one-fourth that of whites.
   b. The incomes of African-Americans and Hispanics are roughly one-third that of whites.
   c. The incomes of African-Americans and Hispanics are roughly one-half that of whites.
   d. The incomes of African-Americans and Hispanics are roughly two-thirds that of whites.
   e. None of the above

**Essay Questions**

1. What are the core values of Texans and what does this mean in real terms?
2. What is going to happen to the Texas population over the next 30 years and how is that going to affect the social and political landscape of Texas.
3. Explain what the Texas economy used to be based upon and what the Texas economy is based upon today.
4. Explain the regional variations throughout Texas and how this helps or hurts the Texas economy.
5. Compare and contrast the average Texan to the citizens of other states. What kinds of weaknesses and advantages does Texas have over other states?
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ANSWERS TO MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. d
2. b
3. e
4. b
5. a
6. d
7. a
8. c
9. e
10. b
11. c
12. d
13. c
14. e
15. b
16. c
17. a
18. d
19. e
20. a
21. d
22. d
23. b
24. b
25. d