## The Latino Vote: An Analysis Behind the Fastest Growing Voting Bloc in the United States

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*This research investigates if the factor of generational status has an impact on how Latinos vote in certain states during the presidential elections of 2016 and 2020. Unpacking four case studies, the paper focuses on California, Texas, Florida and Arizona to better understand Latino voters in these elections and if coming from a different generation influences how they vote for either political party. The case study analysis uses exit polling data and new sources from these states over the last two presidential cycles to contribute to my ongoing understanding of how Latinos across these four states vote and the factors that lead them to vote for one party over the other. The research finds that the issues of immigration and/or the economy were major factors for Latinos voters in the 2016 election. The research also finds that the 2020 election shows the possibility of generational status, along with identity, contributing to how Latinos in the states of Texas, Florida and Arizona.*

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## Introduction

For many years, scholars and political pundits have made the assumption that the Latino vote is a monolith because they support the Democratic Party. Some of the reasons for this logic was that the Democratic Party is considered to be the party of the working class, non-white voters and supporters of immigration reform. Another reason is that most Latinos are turned off by the Republican Party's strict policies on immigration. The 2020 election challenged this assumption. Despite Biden winning over 60% of the Latino vote, Trump increased his support among Latinos overall. He ended up performing better than Romney, McCain and Bush when they were the Republican nominees for president. To be more specific, Trump did better in South Florida and South Texas regions which were critical for him in winning those two states. Some pundits theorize that different factors played a role in how they voted. For this reason, my research will investigate the impact of generational status on Latino voters in four states with significant Latino populations. This research is important because generational status has not been discussed as a significant factor for how Latino votes and I want to see if it had an impact back in the 2016 and 2020 Presidential Election.

## Research Question

The question for this research topic is the following: What impact did different generations of Latino voters in California, Florida, Arizona and Texas have in deciding to support either the Democratic or Republican Party in 2016 and 2020? This research topic will focus on two casual relationships. The first one being Latino voters in the four states with significant Latino populations. The second one being the impact that different generations have on Latino voters. This idea that voters of different generations play a significant factor in which party they will support is important to understand Latino voters. The assumption that all generations of Latino voters vote the same way is inaccurate and wrong. This is why this factor about generations should be investigated further.

## Argument

The argument I will make for my question is that generational status does have a significant impact on how Latino voted in these states from 2016 and 2020. When it comes to how the different generations voted, I expect to see that the majority of first and second generation Latino voters were more likely to support the Democratic Party. The logic behind this is that most of these Latinos still have connections to their native home countries and as a result, have a more sympathetic view of migrants coming to the United States. It can be said that the anti-immigration rhetoric from the Republican turns off potential voters to support the Democratic Party. The other hypothesis is the majority of third and fourth generation Latino voters were more likely to support the Republican Party. The logic behind this is most of these Latinos are more assimilated to American culture and have little to no connection to the native home country of their parents and grandparents. As a result, they considered themselves to be more American. When it comes to immigration, they seem to have less sympathy for new migrants and would be more supportive of stricter policies. This can lead to many of them being supportive of the Republican Party that advocates for stricter immigration policies and a stricter vetting process of immigrants coming to the US.

For this research topic, I acknowledge that there will be competing arguments explaining how Latinos vote. One of the counterarguments that could be raised are that generational status does not have a significant impact on Latino voters. It can be argued that education, income level and religion are a bigger factor for Latinos when they vote. Another counterargument I expect to see is that not all first and second generation Latinos support the Democratic Party nor do all third and fourth generation Latino support the Republican Party. They can point out that many first generation Cuban Americans in Florida are strong supporters of the Republican Party as well as third generation Mexican American in California that still support the Democratic Party.

In the literature review for this thesis, I investigate the significance that generational

status has on the Latino community. This will give me a better understanding of how different generations were likely to vote for the Democratic or Republican Party. For the research design, I plan to prove my argument by looking for case studies that focus on the four specific states I picked. I plan to look for data such as exit polls from the 2016 and 2020 Presidential Election to see how different generations of Latinos voted in that time span, as well as newspaper articles.

## Literature Review

Generational status among Latino voters is important in understanding how Latino vote during the presidential elections in four states. The thesis contributes to the discussion of whether generational status has an impact among Latino voters in California, Texas, Florida, and Arizona during the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections.

This topic is important to discuss because of the recent coverage about how Latinos voted in the 2020 presidential election. This has led to a discussion if the Latino electorate will be a crucial voting bloc in future elections that Republicans can win in future elections or if Latinos will remain supportive of the Democratic Party.

The following literature review will begin by examining the subject of generational status in the Latino community and if other factors play a role in how they vote in elections. The rest of the literature review examines the four states under examination of this study. The California section contends with how Latinos were crucial in turning the state into a solid liberal Democratic state in the 1990s. The section on Texas will analyze the state's path from a solid Republican state to a potential critical swing state in future elections and how Latinos played a role in the 2004 presidential election. The Florida section will demonstrate how the Latino population, specifically the Cuban Americans in Miami, have played a role in the politics of the state since the 1980s. The section on Arizona section will demonstrate the possible factors of how Arizona transformed from a solid conservative Republican state to a swing state that the Democrats were able to win for the first time since the 1990s by

looking at recent history that occurred in the state. Before an in-depth investigation is done about these four states, this literature review begins with examining generational status in the Latino community and how different generations tend to vote to give the reader more context to the research question of this thesis.

### Generational Status

Studies done on how generational status has impacted Latino voters are few and are recent. According to Segura (2012), generational status, along with nativity and national origin play a role in how Latinos think and feel about politics. Segura found that later generations of Latinos are likely to assimilate to the dominant culture and cause changes in their political behavior. This indicates that since they lose their connection to their family's culture, they view themselves as Americans and could likely vote for Republicans.

In their book New Faces, New Voices: The Hispanic Electorate in the United States, Abrajano and Alvarez (2010) discusses how generational status has been an indicator of which political party a Latino would support. In their research, they concluded that second generation Latinos are more likely to identify as Democrat than first generation Latinos and less likely to identify as Independent (Abrajano and Alvarez, 2010). On the issue of immigration, they found that third generation Latinos were in favor of more restrictive immigration policy than first and second generation Latinos. However, on the issue of abortion, first and second generation Latinos were likely to favor making abortion illegal in all cases, while third-generation Latinos were in favor of abortion in certain instances (Abrajano and Alvarez, 2010). The study also demonstrates that other factors such as education, ethnicity/nationality and political ideology were crucial in identifying which political party a Latino would support (Abrajano and Alvarez, 2010).

The study conducted by Vega (2005) focused on the attitudes and perceptions of US Latinos by looking at a number of different factors including generational status. He found that first- and second-generation Latinos were more likely to identify as Independent, while third-generation

Latinos were likely to identify as Democrats. Only some second-generation Latinos were likely to identify as Republican. They found also that second- and third generation Latinos identified themselves as Americans while first-generation Latinos were divided in identifying themselves by their parent's nationality or adopting the "American" label (Vega, 2005). This is significant because depending how certain Latinos identify themselves, it is likely to determine how they view certain political issues and which political party to support.

Carlos (2018) focused on the partisanship of second-generation Latinos, who he explains undergo a "prolonged partisan socialization process" because of the absence of their parents shaping their political views at home. This results in many second-generation Latino Americans having to form their partisan identity outside of the home and later on in life. His findings also show that because of the lack of parental partisan transmission, second generation Latinos were more likely to not identify with either political party or identify as Independent (Carlos, 2018). This study demonstrates the impact that first generation Latinos parents have on the likelihood of second generation Latino Americans identifying with either political party or not becoming politically engaged.

Bejarano (2014) expands on the discussion of generational status after the 2012 presidential election by evaluating how gender in the Latino community can have an impact on their political ideology and political party support. Her findings contradict the assumption that first generation Latinas are liberal compared to fourth generation Latinas, who become more conservative through assimilation. She claims that first generation Latinas are conservative and that over time, the fourth generation Latinas become more liberal. She highlights the difference between the genders by saying that first generation Latinas are more likely to be conservative than Latino men, but fourth generation Latinas were more likely to become liberal than the Latino men. In terms of political party support, her findings are consistent with the theories that first generation Latinos do not identify with either party. She finds that later generations of Latinas are more likely to identify as Democrats compared to Latino men. This study suggests that a gender gap exists within the Latino community and that generation status and gender plays a role in how it shapes their political ideology and party support. The literature presented in this section discusses the impact that generational status and other factors could have on Latino voters in elections.

## California

Latino voters in California did not have a significant political impact until the 1990s after three different propositions were voted on. The first major ballot initiative that was passed was Proposition 187, which would restrict undocumented immigrants to have access to basic social services. At the time, proponents for Prop 187 argued that this would save the state billions of dollars and achieve fiscal balance if they denied undocumented immigrants social public services (Hui and Sears, 2018). Governor Pete Wilson used the ballot initiative to rally support for his reelection campaign and boost other Republicans for state office. He would win his reelection bid in 1994 with 55% of the vote (Robinson, 2015). This later led to the passage of two more propositions that targeted at undocumented immigrants. In 1996, Proposition 209 rejected affirmative action programs from being used in public education or employment. In 1998, Proposition 227 limited English Proficiency students from learning a language other than English. The long term effect of the initiatives was that it resulted in the decline in minority enrollment in California public universities and rejected bilingualism in the public school system in the state. The aftermath has led to debate among scholars about the impact of Prop 187 on Latino voters in California.

Scholars like Elizabeth Bergman, along with Gary Segura and Matt Barreto, argued that the passage of Prop 187 was a critical moment in the political development of Latinos in California since it led to a million new voters to register and vote for Democrats after 1994 (Bergman, 2014). DiCamillo (2014) agrees with this by highlighting the dramatic growth in voter registration, resulting

in Latinos share of turnout being 9% from 1992 to 22% (DiCamillo, 2014). The data in his study also shows that the percentage of Latino votes for Democratic presidential candidates increased from 58% in 1992 to 72% in 2012 (DiCamillo, 2014). It demonstrates a major shift in voter turnout among Latino voters and contributes to California's transformation from a competitive state to a solid Democratic state.

Pantoja (2001) theorizes that Latino citizens in California who became naturalized citizens at the time of the anti-immigrant rhetoric and events in the 1990s contributed to their participation in politics. The passage of ballot initiatives and state laws contributed to permanent resident Latinos to naturalize and enter the political process (Pantajo, 2001). His research also showed that the new naturalized citizens in a politically charged environment voted at higher rates than US born Latinos (Pantajo, 2001). This contributed to the idea that the passage of Prop 187 led to the increase of Latino voters to participate in the political process in California and vote in large numbers after the 1994 statewide elections.

However, scholars such as Iris Hui and David O. Sears (2020) claim that the assumption that Prop 187 was a turning point in turning California a Democratic state is not true. Their study showed that the passage of Prop 187 was not a catalyst that led to Latino voters to vote in large numbers for the Democrats (Hui and Sears, 2020). Their research shows Democrats were already starting to register new voters at a faster pace compared to Republicans in the beginning of the 1990s and that many unregistered Latinos were already unlikely to vote for Republicans prior to the passage of Prop 187 (Hui and Sears, 2020). They conclude that that the proposition only had a small role in California's path to becoming a solid blue Democratic state (Hui and Sears, 2020). Regardless of how scholars debate the effect of Prop 187, it can not be disputed that the ballot initiative coincided with the state of California shifting to a solid blue Democratic state. In the analysis section, I will be discussing how California Latinos have voted in recent elections, with the 2016 and 2020 presidential election.

## Texas

Latino voters in Texas have had a large presence for many decades. In terms of their identity, there are a variety of ways that Latinos in the state view themselves. Some view themselves as Mexican Americans, while others view themselves as assimilated Americans whose families lived in the state for generations. Connaughton (2004) found that many Texas Latinos' political party identity is complex; they have modest support for both political parties and their support of the Democratic Party is not as strong as news pundits might think (Connaughton, 2004). This study indicates that there is a complex process in how many Latinos view their identity and it can have a significant impact in how they vote in elections. Valenzuela concurs with this belief, finding that the connection between status, resources and national identity is more complicated for Texas Latinos (Valenzuela, 2016). This can be due to the fact that many Texas Latinos view themselves as American, Mexican or both, resulting in a superordinate identity being adopted (Valenzuela, 2016). This can result in Texas Latinos having a variety of views on a number of policy and social issues and not being firm supporters of the Democratic or Republican Party.

Laveriega Monforti does a case study where she looks at the significance of Tejanos (South Texas Mexican Americans) in the 2004 Presidential Election. Her study demonstrated a contradiction where the large community of Latinos who had the potential to swing the state in favor of the Democratic presidential nominee Senator John Kerry, ended up turning out in low numbers. Even with the low turnout, Senator Kerry narrowly won Texas Latinos over President Bush by 1 point (Monforti, 2010). The low turnout is due to the lack of outreach by both parties to these communities and resulted in voter turnout being depressed. Despite this, the study showed the Republican Party utilized the Catholic Church to promote their message of family values and moral issues across predominantly Hispanic areas in the state (Monforti, 2010). This strategy resonated with Tejanos who are considered to be socially conservative, but historically voted

Democrats. However, David Leal claims that the 2004 presidential election in Texas saw high turnout among Latinos voters and that John Kerry actually won Latino voters by a larger margin than most of the exit polls reported. While some exit polls suggested that Bush won the "Tejano"/Latino vote by a margin of 59% - 41%, Leal shows evidence that Kerry won in counties where the population of Latinos made up more than 80%, ranging from 55% to 75% of the vote (Leal, 2005). In addition to this, the study of these polls also showed that Kerry won over Latinos in the predominant-Hispanic precincts of Dallas by at least over 60% of the voter, except in one precinct (Leal, 2005). Leal's study debunks Monforti's claim that many Texas Latino voters supported Bush because of religion as polls suggests Kerry was able to win over both Catholic Latinos, 68% to 28%, while Bush won over Protestant Latinos, 58% to 33% and won other Christian Latinos by a smaller margin of 49% to 42% (Leal, 2005). It suggests that the strategy of the Republican Party's outreach in Latino Catholic and Protestants churches was not as crucial as some might think. Overall, the study concludes that it is estimated Kerry won over the overall Latino voter in Texas by a 2 to 1 margin (Leal, 2005). These two competing studies of the 2004 presidential election demonstrate that the complexity of Texas Latinos has proven to be a challenge to both parties who attempt to reach out to these communities. It shows that if either political party makes extensive effort of campaigning in predominant Latino areas in Texas and has a message that resonates with these communities' social, religious and political beliefs, it can make a difference in turning out Latinos. It also has the potential of either party gaining long term political support for future statewide and presidential elections. The analysis section will be discussing how Texas Latinos have voted in the 2016 and 2020 Presidential election. I will also see if the exit polls indicate that they will be crucial for the state to turn into a competitive swing state in the next few election cycles.

## Florida

Florida has always been considered to be a swing state for presidential and midterm elections. However, the last presidential election has indicated that the state has been leaning towards the Republican Party. This could be due to the influential Cuban American voters who live in the South Florida area. They are a crucial voting bloc that determine which way the state's Latino population will vote, despite showing consistent support for the Republican Party. According to Gouigin (2021), one of the main reasons why Cubans have remained supportive of the party stems from their antisocialist sentiment, their support for "law and order" policies and their desire for the United States to take a tougher stance against Cuba. Bishin (2008) agrees, showing that the origin of Cuban's support for Republicans came from the Kennedy's administration botched Bay of Pigs invasion and the Republicans' strong opposition to communism and the government of Castro (Bishin, 2008). His study also demonstrated that despite the media's portrayal of Cuban Americans as hardline conservatives, there is evidence that younger Cubans and Cuban women hold social liberal views and it is possible for the Democrats to make inroads with them in future elections in the state of Florida (Bishin, 2008).

The impact of Cuban and other Hispanic voters in Florida extends all the way back to the late 20th century, in which Marisa Abrajano (2010) details how Ronald Reagan developed a specific campaign to court the Florida Latino electorate in the 1980 presidential election. As a result, despite Carter winning 60% of the Hispanic voter nationwide, Reagan was able to win 80% of Hispanic voters in Florida (Abranjano, 2010). In the 1984 election, he increased his support of Florida Latinos to 82%, despite only receiving 32.6% of the Hispanic vote nationwide (Abranjano, 2010). Reagan's performance with Latino voters in Florida demonstrated that the Republican Party's outreach campaign in 1980 and 1984 were effective in the state by emphasizing his anti-communism position towards Cuba and highlighting his leadership skills, as well as the benefits his policies would have on Hispanic voters (Abranjano, 2010). The 1992 election between incumbent President Bush

and Clinton resulted in Bush winning 70% of the Hispanic vote in Florida and narrowly winning the state by 1 percentage point. The 1996 election saw President Clinton be the first Democratic since 1976 to win the state of Florida. In terms of the Florida Latino electorate, he made serious inroads with Cuban voters and he was able to win 35% of the Latino vote, a 15% point increase from his 1992 campaign (Abranjano, 2010). It can be argued that the strategy of Clinton's 1996 campaign in Florida resulted in Democrats adjusting their messaging to win Latino voters in the state.

According to Bergad (2016), since the 2000 election, Florida has been an important state in presidential elections and Latinos have played an important role. George Bush was able to win the state by 537 votes and in the process, won 49% of the Latino vote in the 2000 election (Bergad, 2016). He would increase it to 56% in 2004. Obama was able to win 57% of the Latino vote in 2008 and increase his margin to 60% in his 2012 reelection campaign in the state (Bergad, 2016). While Cuban American voters remain a key voting bloc in Florida, the emergence of Puerto Rican and other South American Latino communities have resulted in the Cuban vote decreasing over time. There will be a discussion in the analysis section about how Florida Latinos have voted in the presidential elections of 2016 and 2020, with a main focus on Cuban voters since there was more information about this specific community. I will also see if the exit polls indicate that they will be crucial for the state to turn into a Republican-leaning state in the next few election cycles.

## Arizona

Despite having a significant population size in the state of Arizona, the mobilization of Latino voters in the state was dormant for many decades, resulting in many of the presidential elections being decided by the white population in the state. However, their electoral impact began to emerge as an important swing vote in the 1992 presidential election. Avalos (1993) discusses how Latino population grew to nearly 20% by the 1990s and made up a largest percentage in

the two largest counties in the state, with 50% of the population in Maricopa County and 23.7% of the population in Pima County. In addition to the request of 70,000 early voting ballots in Maricopa County, the 1992 pre-election trends indicated that Latinos would be crucial in helping Bill Clinton win the state. Despite Bill Clinton winning over 70% of the Latino vote and all precincts with high Latino population in Maricopa County, President George H.W. Bush won the county with 40.1% of the vote versus 32.1% of the vote (Avalos, 1993). This would lead to President Bush winning Arizona by 2 points, the closest presidential election result in the state since the 1964 election. Avalos theorizes that low turnout from the Latino community and the Democratic Party's lack of financial support led to Arizona Latinos not being able to swing the election in favor of Clinton.

The impact of Latino vote in the state would not reemerge again until the 2004 presidential election. Avalos (2010) explains how Latinos in Arizona began to be politically active and mobilized in the wake of the passage of Proposition 200 in 2004. This was a controversial ballot initiative that would have denied undocumented immigrants from accessing public services. Similar to California's Prop 187, the ballot was made in response to economic recession in the state economy and the influx of Hispanic immigrants to the state. Despite backlash to the content of Prop 200, President Bush won the state by 211,000 votes (Avalos, 2010). According to Alavos, there is no evidence to suggest that there will be a political impact on Latino voters in the short term and it will take longer before there can be an increase in naturalization and political participation from the Latino community in the state (Avalos, 2010).

By 2010, the question of how Latinos would respond to threats to their community and if they would mobilize to vote would be asked again. That year, Republican Governor Jan Brewer signed SB 1070, a controversial law that allowed police officers to identify, arrest and deport anyone suspected of being an undocumented immigrant in the state. This led to significant backlash from many national Democrats who called the bill anti-Hispanic because in their view, the law seemed

written in a way that would target undocumented Latinos. Supporters of SB 1070 called the bill as necessary in tackling the issue of illegal border crossings in the state and as a response to the federal government's inaction to the issue of immigration. Many provisions of SB 1070 would end up being overturned by the Supreme Court in June of 2012, with the exception of the provision that allowed officers to probe the immigration status of a person stopped, detained or arrested (Espino, 2013). Despite the controversy created by this law, Rodoflo Espino (2013) argues how the passage of SB 1070 did not mobilize Latinos in Arizona to vote. He explains that despite the backlash and surveys showing Arizona Latinos overwhelmingly opposed SB 1070, Latino voters did not come out to vote in the 2010 midterms. Two reasons that were given in the ASU/NAU/NCLR Survey were their belief that the state Democratic Party did little to prevent the passage of SB 1070 and President Obama's decision to pursue climate change legislation instead of immigration reform before the 2010 midterm elections (Espino, 2013). This resulted in many Arizona Latinos to turn off from mobilizing to the voting booth.

Scholars like Robinson (2015) have traced the mobilization of Arizona Latinos to the passage of Senate Bill 1070 in 2010 by the state legislature. The study begins by suggesting that Arizona Latinos been a key factor to why the state has remained a reliably conservative state since 1952. With the exception of the 1996 presidential election, Arizona has voted for the Republican Party by wide margins, while the turnout rate among Latinos has been low for Democrats in the 2000s. It was not until the 2012 presidential election that 72% Latinos in Arizona turned out to vote for President Obama, which was higher than 56% in 2004 and 58% in 2008. Robinson argued that similar to Proposition 187, there is a possibility for a change in voting behavior by Latino and white voters in the state. His study used a model that simulated the two party presidential vote from 2012 to 2032 under different scenarios. The model showed that if the population of Latino continues to grow and mobilize more eligible voters, it will result in the

Democrats being able to win the state as soon as 2016 (Robinson, 2015). It also predicts that if the state does not shift to Democrats by 2016, the state can become a swing state by 2020 and Democrats can have an opportunity to carry the state. By 2032, assuming the population trends for Latinos in the state continues, the model predicts that Arizona will become a solid Democratic state. Similar to California, a change in voting behavior and the mobilization of Latino voters will be crucial in converting Arizona from a solid conservative Republican state to a solid liberal Democratic state.

However, the model also concluded that if white voters in Arizona continue to vote overwhelmingly for the Republican Party, the mobilization of the Latino vote will not be enough and the Democrats will have no chance to carry the state in a future presidential election after 2032 (Robinson, 2015). Similar to what California went through, a possible change in voting behavior and mass mobilization of Latino voters will be key factors in changing the political dynamics in the state of Arizona. In the analysis, a discussion of how Arizona Latinos have voted in the 2016 and 2020 Presidential elections will be conducted. In addition to this, I will also see if the exit polls indicate that they will be crucial in turning Arizona into a competitive swing state in the next few election cycles.

### Conclusion of the Literature Review

This paper argues that the generational status is one main factor that contributes to Latinos in California, Texas, Florida and Arizona voting and supporting the Democratic or Republican Party. This research intends to dive deeper into how being part of a different generation in the Latino community had an impact in recent midterm and presidential elections. The paper argues that generational status in the Latino community has become a major indicator of how they vote in recent elections.

### Methodology
#### Introduction

In order to understand if generational status was a significant factor for Latino Americans when they vote in presidential elections, the

following study was a mixed method study with a combination of case studies and data analysis. The reason why this research question is important is because generational status has not been discussed as a significant factor for how Latinos vote and I want to see if it had an impact in the 2016 and 2020 Presidential Election. I chose the qualitative research design of case studies because it was an effective way to understand the Latino electorate in four different political environments given the limitations of the Senior Thesis. The data analysis part was crucial for this research study because it was important that explanations about the data from the scholarly articles and exit polls were presented for the reader to comprehend what this data was saying.

### Descriptive of Variables

The unit of observations were the following four states: California, Florida, Texas, and Arizona. These states were chosen for this research study because each of them have a predominantly large Latino population. They were also chosen because they are significant states in presidential elections and the amount of scholarly and news sources that discuss these states. According to the US Census Bureau, the United States has a population of about 332 million as of July 2022. The Latino population comprised only 18.9% of the nation's overall population. California is the largest state in the United States with a population of 39,029,342 (US Census). The Latino population makes up nearly 40.3% of the overall state population (US Census). Texas is the second largest state in the country with a population of 30,029,572 and the Latino community makes up 40.3% of the state population (US Census). Florida is the third largest state in the country with a population of 22,244,823 (US Census). They have a Latino population that comprises 26.8% of the overall state population (US Census). Arizona has a population of 7,359,197 with a Latino population that represents 32.3% of the overall state population (US Census). The study focused on two presidential election cycles with the 2016 and 2020 presidential election. This was chosen to see if there has been a shift in the Latino voters'

support of either political party in the four chosen states during a 4 year span. The results will give a better understanding of how different generations were likely to vote in these elections. The research study will also add more to the discussion about the public's understanding of Latino Americans as a voting bloc.

### Plan of Analysis

In the literature review section, this research study relied on sources that discuss the concept of generational status and its impact on different generations of US born Latino Americans and Latino immigrants. The other set of articles focused on each state and explained how recent history has led to potential changes in the Latino electorate. The articles also touched on how these changes have affected the competitiveness of these states in these presidential elections. The other sources in the results sections came from news articles from each of the state's major newspapers such as the LA Times, Texas Tribune, Miami Herald and Arizona Republic. Only articles that specifically discussed the Latino electorate were discussed for this research study. These articles were important because they presented first-hand accounts of how members of the Latino community voted in these states. In addition to those newspapers, exit polls from Latino Decisions that presented information about how Latino voted in the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections in those states. These sources were important because they presented data and statistics that can either prove or disprove my hypothesis that generational status was a major factor of which political party Latino voters support for these elections.

### Weaknesses and Bias

The potential weaknesses of my methodology is that it contained a high internal validity, which refers to the ability of the research design to conclusively prove a causal relationship without systematic bias. Because of this, the results found in California, Texas, Florida, and Arizona will be difficult to replicate in states with a similar Latino population such as New York, Georgia, Nevada, or Colorado. The information and findings

from the four states do not present a conclusion about the overall Latino electorate in the United States. This research only focused on these states and made no broad assumptions about how all Latinos vote in this country.

Another potential weakness of the methodology is that the analysis could have some level of subjective interpretation, which can have some effect on the reliability and validity of the results and conclusions. In this study, I will acknowledge that the reader will not be able to see all of the results or conclusions from each source. For the purpose of the thesis, only information that is relevant to the research study was discussed and analyzed. There is also an acknowledgment that this study showed that there were competing arguments that explained how Latinos vote such as the factors of education, income, religion and regional differences.

## Results
### California

For the state of California, I argue that Latinos in the state voted in favor of the Democrats because generational status was the defining factor for the 2016 and the 2020 presidential election. However, the results show that the hypothesis was incorrect, as generational status was not seen as a factor in either presidential election.

In the 2016 election, Hillary Clinton won the state of California by a 30 point margin against Donald Trump (Mihalik, et al., LA Times). Among Latino voters, Edison Research exit polls indicated that Clinton won California Latinos 71% to 24% (Pedraza and Wilcox-Archuleta, LA Times). Another exit poll from Latino Decision indicated that it is possible Clinton won Latino voters, 83% to 11% (Pedraza and Wilcox-Archuleta, LA Times). When compared to the national Latino voters, Clinton still outperformed among Latino who supported her over Trump, 66% to 28% (Pedraza and Wilcox-Archuleta, LA Times). These results indicate that Latinos in the state overwhelmingly supported the Democratic nominee over the Republican nominee compared to the average Latino voter in the nation.

Despite both candidates being the most unpopular choices in the 2016 election, Latinos gave their support to Clinton in what was known as the "Trump Effect". According to Gabriel Sanchez, the top issues for Latinos in California were the issues of immigration (39%), followed by the economy (30%), education (18%), health care (10%) and anti-Latino discrimination (10%) (Cargile, Morin, and Pantoja, Pg. 114). The concern about immigration stems from then-candidate Trump's anti-Latino rhetoric during the 2016 campaign. Among the many comments that Trump made, he called Mexican immigrants "drug dealers", "criminals" and "rapists", he called for building a wall on the US-Mexico border, as well as repealing President Obama's Executive Order on the creation of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) and creation of a task force to deport all 11 million undocumented immigrants (Cargile, Morin, and Pantoja, Pgs. 113 - 114). It shows that Latino voters in California were concerned about their community under a potential Trump presidency with the threat of anti-immigrant policies being passed. Additional data showed that Latinos that are first-generation, as well as second-generation and above supported Clinton 78% to 19% and 88% to 10% (Latino Decisions). It can be argued that different generations of Latinos voters were also concerned about how President Trump would affect the Latino community and favored Clinton over him. Unfortunately, this poll does not specify how third and fourth generations Latinos voted in 2016, leading to questions about if the later generations would have voted for Trump or Clinton. However, there is no evidence suggesting that generational status played a major role in how Latinos in California voted in the 2016 election.

The 2020 Election saw former Vice President Joe Biden overperform Clinton's margin of victory in California by winning the state, 63.7% to 34.4% (Kambhampati, LA Times). Among Latino voters, 75% of them voted for Biden over 22% who supported Trump (Latino Decision). According to a study conducted by the UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative in 2021, it showed how California Latinos voted in the largest counties of the state, which included

Los Angeles County, Orange County, San Francisco County, San Mateo County, San Diego County and Alameda County. In the high-density areas where Latinos made up more than 85% of the population, Biden won the Latino vote over Trump, 79.0% to 17.2% (Domínguez-Villegas, UCLA Latino Policy & Politics Institute). Latino Decisions also indicated that the top three biggest issues facing the community were the COVID 19 Pandemic (57%), job and economy (36%), and health costs (29%). This shows that Latinos in California continue to support the Democratic Party in large numbers. It can be argued that the passage of Prop 187 in 1994 continues to have a profound effect on Latinos in the state since it resulted in many of them feeling alienated by the Republican Party. In the case of generational status, no evidence indicates that this factor had a major impact on how Latino voters in the state voted. It can be argued that California Latinos rely on the major issues facing their community to vote in presidential elections. Unfortunately, there were no newspaper articles from the LA Times or scholarly articles that focused on California Latino voters since most of the sources either focused on Latinos in other states such as Texas and Florida or they focused on how voters of all races in the state voted. A possible explanation for why this happened is because California is a solid Democratic state, many journalists in the LA Times believed it is a foregone conclusion how Latinos in the state voted and decided not to cover California Latino voters.

## Texas

The argument for the state of Texas is that Latino voters used generational status as a reasoning for voting in the 2016 and 2020 presidential election. The results demonstrate that in 2016, generational status was not a factor for Texas Latinos as they were more concerned about other political issues. However, in 2020, a combination of generational and identity seem to play a role for some Texas Latinos how they voted.

The 2016 election saw a major development occur within the state of Texas. While Trump was expected to win Texas, he only won the state by a 9 point margin (Daniel and Batheja, Texas Tribune). This was considered to be surprising since Texas has voted for the Republicans by large margins since 1980 (Daniel and Batheja, Texas Tribune). This result marked the first time in almost 20 years that a Republican presidential nominee won the state of Texas by a margin of under 10 percentage points (Daniel and Batheja, Texas Tribune). Among Latino voters, exit polls showed that Hillary Clinton won them over Donald Trump, 68% to 28% (Pedraza and Wilcox-Archelta, Pg. 171). In the case of Trump, he slightly underperformed compared to Romney's 29% support of Latino voters (Mccullough and Ura, Texas Tribune). The 1% difference between both Republican presidential nominees suggests that Trump's anti-Latino and anti-immigrant rhetoric did not hurt him among Latinos in the state. Latino Decisions exit poll further demonstrates this when they surveyed Latinos of first generation and second generation and above. They found that while Clinton won first generation Latinos, 88% to 8%, Clinton won Latinos of second generations and above, 77% to 20% (Latino Decisions). This shows that Latinos of later generations were more supportive of Trump compared to recently arrived Latinos. This can be due to the fact that they are assimilated to American culture and felt more connected to Trump's policies compared to Clinton's. It can also be argued that the reason for why Clinton did not have a large margin of support from Latino voters was because of low turnout in counties where Latinos made up more than 90% of the population. In Webb County, where 95.6% of the population is Latino, where the turnout rate increased by 0.5% compared to 2012 (Mccullough and Ura, Texas Tribune). Two predominant border counties, El Paso and Hidalgo County, increased by 3.6% and 2.4% compared to 2012 (Mccullough and Ura). Overall, the overall turnout of Latino voters in these counties increased by 1% (Mccullough and Ura, Texas Tribune). According to the polling firm Latino Decision, they found that the two most important issues facing the Latino community were immigration reform/deportation (39%) and fixing the economy/jobs and unemployment

(29%) (Latino Decision). Once again, the polls show that immigration and economy were the biggest issues for the Latino community in the 2016 election. In the polls and newspaper articles, there was no evidence to suggest that generational status had an impact on how Latino voters in this election cycle.

There were two major storylines that came out of the 2020 election in Texas. The first was that Trump underperformed in the state against Joe Biden by only winning by 6 points (Samuels, Texas Tribune). As of 2023, this was the closest election result in Texas since 1992 when President George H.W. Bush won the state by 3.5 points over Bill Clinton and Ross Perot (Daniel and Batheja, Texas Tribune). This suggests that

Texas will become a competitive state for both political parties in the next presidential election in 2024. The other storyline was that despite Joe Biden winning the overall Latino vote in the state 67% to 29%, Trump performed well among Latino voters in Texas, specifically in South Texas where the Rio Grande Valley is (Latino Decisions). In border counties that had a large Latino population, they voted for Trump and resulted in him either reducing his 2016 margin of defeat or flipping counties in his favor. For example, in 2016, Webb County voted for Hillary Clinton by 60 points; four years later, Joe Biden won the county by only 5 points (Herrera, Texas Monthly). Another example was seen in Zapata County, where Clinton won by 33 points in

**Figure 4: Graph of the percentage of each state's population that was Democrat leaning plotted against the percent of that state's population that voted to pass legalization**
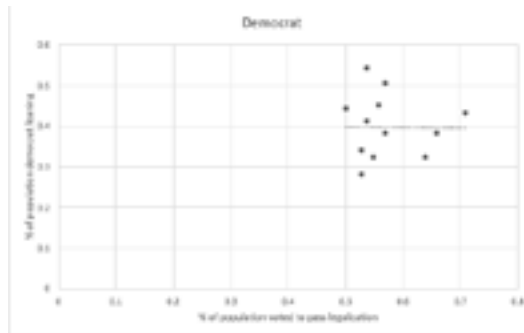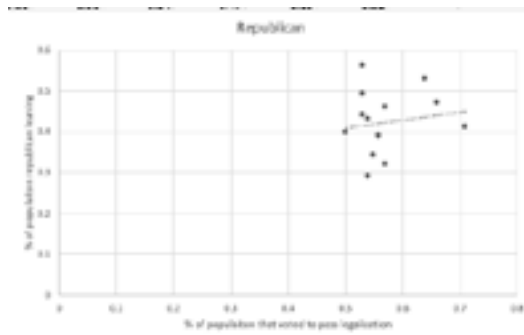


**Figure 5: Graph of the percentage of each state's population that was Republican leaning plotted against the percent of that state's population that voted to pass legalization**

2016, four years later, Trump was able to win by 5 points, becoming the first Republican in 100 years to win the county (Herrera, Texas Monthly). It can be argued that the gains that Trump made in the South Texas regions negated some of the gains that Biden possibly made in the urban and suburban areas in the rest of the state among other Latino voters.

In interviews conducted by the Texas Tribune showed that there were multiple reasons for why Latinos in South Texas voted for Trump. Some like Roberto Barrera, a Zapata County resident who worked in the oil and gas industry, cited his concerns that Biden would transition from oil and gas for clean energy if he was elected president. In his own words, he could not vote for Biden and the Democrats because "The way I see it, they'd cut my job…What else can I say?" (Ferman, Texas Tribune). Others like Ernesto Alanis III, a land surveyor in Rio Grande City, cited the region's close ties to the military and law enforcement made people vote for Trump. He said "My Border Patrol agent friends say

the wall works, and helps them do their job…If anyone would know if a wall worked, it would be them, right?" (Ferman, Texas Tribune). Others like Jay Peña said that the Democratic Party he remembered growing up has changed and decided to vote for Trump in 2016 and 2020. He said "I'm one of those that was a lifelong Democrat and brought up Democratic because of our roots here…Like basically everyone here in the Valley, the Democratic Party was ingrained in our childhood…I used to consider myself left of center…I don't anymore" (Ferman, Texas Tribune). One common theme that most of the interviewees gave for the reason ties back to their identity as Tejanos. As Democratic Congressman Henry Cuellar, whose district represents Zapata and Starr County, explains "Aside from Hispanic heritage, most of the Rio Grande Valley and South Texas have similar demographics to Trump's strongholds in rural communities across the country…It's homogenous, deeply religious, pensively patriotic, socially conservative, and it's hurting economically" (Ferman, Texas Tribune).

**Figure 6: Histogram of the number of states that passed laws legalizing medical marijuana usage by year the law was passed**
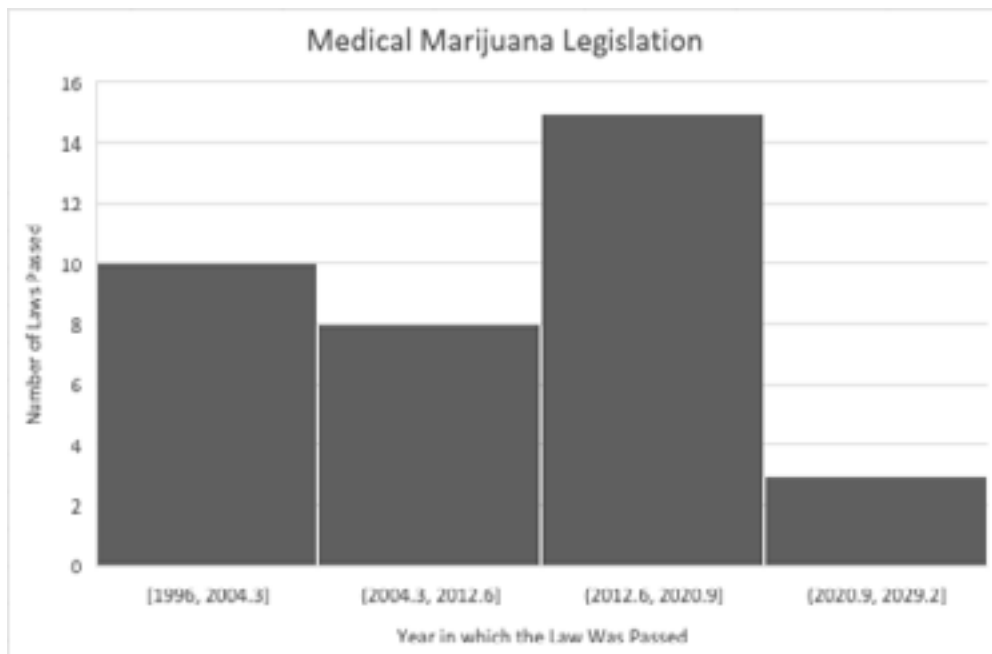
The identity and generational aspect of these Tejanos demonstrates a factor for how many Texas Latinos voted in the 2020 election. The fact that they have lived in the region for multiple generations has resulted in the creation of a homogeneous, patriotic and socially conservative identity that distinguishes Texas Latinos from other Latinos across the country. The difference among Tejanos in the Rio Grande Valley and first- and second-generation Texas Latinos in urban and suburban areas is significant and suggests that there is a possible political realignment ahead of the 2024 presidential election. There are major questions of whether the Republicans can build on this coalition of voters and expand their outreach among Latinos in Texas beyond the Rio Grande Valley. There are also questions if the Democrats can regain the support of these Latino voters in the region and be able to turn Texas blue in the next presidential election.

### Florida

The argument I came up for Florida is that generational status played a major role in the Latino community when they voted in the 2016 and 2020 presidential election. In 2016, Florida Latinos of different ethnicities had different sets of priorities when voting between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. In 2020, it seems many voters who voted in favor of President Trump used their generational status and their identity to explain their decision for why they voted for him.

In the 2016 election, Florida voted for Donald Trump over Hillary by a 1.4 point margin (Mazzei, Miami Herald). This made him the first Republican nominee to win the state in a presidential election since George W. Bush in 2004. Despite Hillary Clinton winning 65% of the overall Latino vote in Florida, the data shows there is a possible reason why Trump was able to win the state (Bishin and Klofstad, Pg. 205). In 2012, President Obama was able to win 71% of the Latino vote and won mainly Hispanic populated Miami-Dade County by 208,000 votes (Bishin and Klofstad, Pg. 205) (Jacobson, Tampa Bay Times). Four years later, Clinton underperformed Obama's 2012 results in the state overall by 5%; however, Clinton expanded

on his performance in Miami-Dade County to 290,000 votes (Jacobson, Tampa Bay Times). Florida's Latino population consists of a diverse electorate that includes Cubans, newly arrived Puerto Ricans and South American migrants. Exit polls show that among Cuban voters, Trump won their support 52% to 47%, while Clinton was able to win Puerto Rican voters 72% to 26% and won other Latino voters 76% to 21% (Bishin and Klofstad, Pg. 206). The results show that Cuban American voters were still an important voting bloc in Florida, even as the first-generation Cuban Americans continued to vote in large numbers for Republicans and younger Cubans became more liberal and voted for the Democratic Party. The results also showed that the arrival of Puerto Rican and South American migrants in the state can play a role in future presidential elections. When it comes to generations, Latino Decisions found that among first-generation Florida Latinos, Clinton won them over Trump, 65% to 33% (Latino Decisions). For Latinos who said that they were second generation or higher, they supported Clinton over Trump, 68% to 29% (Latino Decisions). Out of the four states researched for this thesis, Trump had the highest percentage of support among Latinos of different generations in Florida. This can be due to the older generations of Cuban Americans continuing to vote consistently for the Republican Party and the experience of many younger Florida Latinos growing up in conservative Latino households have influenced them to vote the same way as their parents and grandparents.

According to Bishin and Klofstad, the issues that were considered to be important to Latino voters in Florida varied among the different nationalities. For Cuban Americans and Puerto Ricans, the economy was their top priority at 36.9% and 32.3% respectively, followed by immigration (22.2% and 20.8%) and terrorism (5.5% and 2.9%) (Pg. 202). Meanwhile, among South Americans and Mexican Americans, the issue of immigration was the main priority at 38.1% and 36.6%, with the economy being their second priority at 18.8% and 27.9% (Bishin and Klofstad, Pg. 202). This is consistent with how

Latino Democrats said that immigration was their top issue with 31%, while Republican Latinos said the economy was their top issue with nearly 37% (Bishin and Klofstad, Pg. 202). It shows that the economic and immigration issues were a major factor in how the Latino community voted in the 2016 election, rather than generational status.

The 2020 presidential election saw President Trump win Florida again by a 3.4 point margin over Joe Biden (Fins, et al., Palm Beach Post). Compared to 2016, Trump outperformed his 2016 results by increasing his margins of victory in many counties across the state. The key takeaway from Trump's victory in Florida is his performance among Latino voters. While Biden won the overall Latino vote in the state and won Miami-Dade County, he underperformed Obama and Clinton's margins of victory. The Palm Beach Post reports that Biden only won the overall Latino vote 52% to 47% and only won Miami-Dade County by a 7 point margin (Fins, Rhodes and Anderson). Meanwhile, Trump was able to gain 200,000 more votes in the county than he did four years ago (Fins, Rhodes and Anderson, Palm Beach Post). In other counties, Trump gained support among areas with large Hispanic populations. For example in Osceola County, while Biden won in the county's heavily Puerto Rican cities of Kissimmee and Poinciana by over 60%, Trump won 43% of the rest of the county. (Leibowitz, Weider and Osasio, Miami Herald). This is a 7 point increase from his 2016 performance in the county. Among Cuban American voters, Trump increased his support from 2016. The Latino Decision exit poll suggests that Trump's support among this community in 2020 increased to 55%. However, some strategists suggest that Trump gained as many as 69% of the Cuban vote (Torres, Miami Herald). The numbers suggest Cuban American voters have returned to become a solid Republican voting bloc after 12 years of the Democratic Party making significant inroads with them with Obama and Clinton in 2008, 2012 and 2016.

Despite the exit polls indicating that the coronavirus pandemic (52%), jobs and economy (44%) and health care costs (28%) were the top

issues in the 2020 election, there was an underlying factor that could explain Florida Latinos' shift to the Republicans (Latino Decisions). In interviews conducted in Miami Herald and Palm Beach Post, many Latinos that voted for Trump said it was due to anti-socialism sentiments. One of strategies conducted by the Republican Party was tying Joe Biden and the national Democratic Party to the socialist governments of Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua. In addition, Trump promoted this idea at his rallies and social media that Biden would implement socialist policies if he was elected. This disinformation resonated with many voters like Juan Filo, a Miami Cuban American, who said that Biden was considered to be suspicious to Cuban Americans and other conservative Hispanics in the state. He said "Not every Democrat is a socialist, but every socialist is a Democrat" (Fins, Rhodes and Anderson, Palm Beach Post). Others like Miami-based human rights activist Muñeca Fuentes believed Trump was the only person to stop the spread of socialism in the United States. She said "I believe Trump can stop socialism…I don't want us to become another Nicaragua, Cuba or Venezuela" (Fins, Rhodes and Anderson, Palm Beach Post). Jose Edgardo Gomez, a Venezuelan American resident, explains that he saw no difference between the Democrats and socialists. He said "I voted for Trump to prevent the United States from resembling countries like Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela. Biden is basically the same" (Viglucci, Miami Herald). He continued by saying "We want the United States to continue being free and to continue having a true democracy. We are surprised to see how many Americans don't understand the threats that socialism poses. We have lost our freedom in our countries, and the same can happen here" (Viglucci, Miami Herald).

These interviews suggest that there is a possible trend in the Florida Latino community, where generational status and identity played a major role in which candidate they voted for in the 2020 election. With older Cubans Americans, Central and South Americans remembering their experiences under left-wing socialist governments in their previous home countries, this led many to view Biden and the Democratic Party as embracing

socialism. As explained in the literature review section, Cuban Americans have been a consistent Republican voting bloc since the 1960s with the community mainly voting for the Republican Party because of their strong anti-communism sentiment and their tough stance on the Cuban government. They also blame the Democrats for not doing enough to stop the Castro regime after the failed Bay of Pigs invasion. Meanwhile, the same voters also view Trump and the Republican Party as defending democracy and capitalism. As a result, this led them to resonate more with the policies of the Republican Party and vote for Trump in the 2020 election. Future presidential elections will determine if the Latino vote in the state will continue to support the Republican Party and present a blueprint of how national Republicans can court the Latino community around the nation. There are also questions if the Democratic Party can regain support among this diverse Latino community under a new message that resonates with their identity and generational cohort like they did several years ago when President Obama was the party's standard bearer.

### Arizona

The original argument that was created for the state of Arizona was that Latinos were influenced by generational status when they were voting in the 2016 and 2020 presidential election. The 2016 election showed that the Arizona Latinos did not rely on generational status to vote since they were concerned by the top political issues at that time. In 2020, it seems that generational status and identity were major factors in how Latinos voted and resulted in Biden winning the state.

In the 2016 election, it was expected that Arizona was going to be won by Donald Trump, given the fact that Republicans have won the state every presidential election by big margins after World War II, except in 1948 and 1996 (Nowicki, Arizona Republic). However, in 2016, Trump only won the state of Arizona 49% to 46% over Hillary Clinton (Sanchez and Nuño-Perez, Pg. 231). This was an underperformance compared to Romney's margin when he won the state 54% to 44% over President Obama in the 2012 election. Among Arizona Latinos, exit polls from the day

before the election suggested that 61% of them voted for Hillary Clinton, while 31% voted for Donald Trump (Sanchez and Nuño-Perez, 2016). Another exit poll from Latino Decision suggests that 84% of Latinos voted for Clinton, while only 12% of them voted for Trump. The Arizona Republic reports that in a study of 1,269 of the 1,469 precincts in Arizona found that it is possible that 80% of Latino voted for Clinton, which suggests that the media exit poll was inaccurate compared to the exit poll conducted by Latino Decision (Nuño and Wilcox-Archuleta, Arizona Republic). Among first generation Latinos, Clinton won them over Trump, 90% to 7%. Those who identified as being second generation and above, voted for Clinton over Trump, 81% to 14% (Latino Decisions). This shows that different generations of Latinos overwhelmingly supported Clinton in 2016. However, this poll fails to demonstrate how third and fourth generations Latinos voted on their own, leading to many questions if they voted similarly to the first and second generation in supporting Clinton or were more supportive of Trump. According to Gabriel Sanchez, immigration was the top issue for Arizona Latinos in the 2016 election. The Latino Decisions Election Eve Poll showed that 29.9% of respondents felt immigration reform/deportations were of big concern to the Latino community in the state. This issue resonated with them when comparing it in a separate survey that showed 63% of respondents knew someone who was undocumented. The second major issue among Arizona Latinos that was the economy. The polls showed that 27.5% of respondents thought fixing the economy, jobs and unemployment were one of the most important issues facing their community. Once again, the data shows that Arizona Latino shared the same concerns as other Latino communities in California, Florida and Texas in the 2016 election, citing the economy and immigration as their top issues.

The 2020 presidential election showed a major development in the state of Arizona. For the first time since the 1996 presidential election, a Democratic presidential nominee was able to win Arizona (Domínguez-Villegas, UCLA Latino

Policy & Politics Institute). Joe Biden won the state by less than 11,000 votes over Donald Trump, making it one of the closest election results in the 2020 election (Leingang, Arizona Republic). Among Latinos, Biden won this community over Trump, 71% to 26%, improving on Clinton's performance in 2016. The key to Biden's victory in the state was Maricopa County, where 60% of the population of the state lives. In precincts where more than 75% of the population was Latino, Biden won 73.3% of the vote over 23% of Trump voters (Gonzalez, Arizona Republic). According to grassroot organizations, the turnout among Latinos in the state was 10 years in the making in the aftermath of SB 1070. They began to register and empower the community by educating them on the significance and power of their vote (Náñez, Arizona Republic).

In this election, polls found that the top three issues for the community were the coronavirus pandemic (59%), jobs and the economy (46%) and healthcare care costs (32%) (Latino Decisions). In interviews conducted by the Arizona Republic, Latino voters explained why they voted in favor of Joe Biden. Yasser Sanchez was a Republican who campaigned for the late Arizona Senator John McCain for president in 2008. In 2019, he announced that he was leaving the Republican Party and registering as an independent to campaign for Biden. He cited the direction that the Republican Party has gone since Trump was elected President and felt that there was no place in the party for a person like him. He said "There was no alternative voice within the GOP…Being pro-life means to me more than being anti-abortion, it means pro-human, pro-humanity. For the pro-immigrant, pro-faith, pro-refugee, there is no such thing as a compassionate conservative within today's GOP" (Náñez, Arizona Republic). Others like Stephanie Maldonado, a campaign director for Living United for Change in Arizona (LUCHA), cited the passage of SB 1070 back in 2010 and her experience growing with undocumented immigrant parents for wanting to motivate Latino voters to participate in the 2020 election. She explains that "People came together, people made the decision to fight and to starting asking the questions around the people in power

who are not representing us" (Náñez, Arizona Republic). She continued by saying that "We never gave up hope …We saw losses, but we knew that empowering our community, registering our people to vote and really sharing the stories, connecting them to their power, walking them through that process, that's what got us here" (Náñez, Arizona Republic). Others like 21 year old Arturo Rivera said that he voted for Biden in the 2020 election because of his family, who were undocumented and are ineligible to vote. He said "My family is all undocumented … My parents said I have to vote for them" (Náñez, Arizona Republic). He also cited his personal belief that President Trump did not do anything for Latinos and wanted to vote for a president who would be more compassionate towards immigrants and pass more humane immigration policies (Náñez, Arizona Republic).

Latinos were critical for Biden and the Democrats in Arizona. Because of how close the result was in the state, it can be argued that Latinos were responsible for Biden winning Arizona and turning the state from a reliable Republic state to a critical battleground state for the next presidential election. While there were other factors that led to this shift to occur, such as traditional Republicans and Republican-leaning independents deciding to vote for Biden, there is no denying that turnout among Latinos played a role in reshaping the landscape of the state's politics (Leigang, Arizona Republic). Like Florida and Texas, there is a possible trend where identity and generational status played a factor for Latino voters in the state as many of them felt that their community was being targeted by politicians through laws like SB 1070.

### Results Summary

The data of each of the states provided mixed results in how generational status had an impact on Latino voters during the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections. In each state, the 2016 election demonstrated that generational status did not have an impact on Latino voters, as they were more influenced by issues of that time, such as immigration and the economy. In the 2020 presidential election, a possible trend was seen in

Texas and Florida where generational status with a combination of identity played a role in how they voted for Trump. This possible trend was also seen in Arizona and it may have played a role in helping Biden win the state.

## Conclusion

The thesis aimed to prove that generational status was an important factor for Latinos in California, Texas, Florida and Arizona when they were voting in the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections. The literature suggested that depending which generation a Latino belongs to, it plays a factor in how Latinos form their political ideology and affiliation. From this literature, I argued that generational status would play a role in how Latinos in four different states would vote in two different presidential cycles.

After looking through each of the four states' newspaper articles and looking at exit poll data from Latino Decisions, I reached an inconclusive two-part answer to my research question. For the 2016 election, there was no evidence to suggest that generational status played a major role in this presidential election. Despite exit polls showing that Hillary Clinton won Latinos of different generations across the four states, this was not a major factor in how or why they voted. The newspaper articles and polling data suggest that the Latinos community were more concerned about the issues of immigration and the economy in that election. However, the 2020 election presented a different story. While the data showed that Biden won the majority of Latino, Trump made significant gains in the community. In the cases of Texas and Florida, there was a possible trend of generational status and identity as Latinos in those states contributed to Trump winning both states. Arizona showed a similar possible trend that contributed to Biden winning the state. California was the only state where this possible trend was not shown, leading to a lack of interviews and information from newspapers in the state to corroborate this claim. In Florida, many Latinos relied on anti-socialism sentiments, which connected them to their experience of living under these governments. This resulted in many Latinos from the previous generations and recently arrived Latinos who experienced socialism to resonate with the messages put out by Republicans that tied Joe Biden and the Democrats to this ideology. Texas Latinos in the Rio Grande Valley show that their identity as assimilated Americans influenced how they voted. Despite holding conservative views and historically voting for the Democratic Party, these Latinos connected more with the Republican Party in the 2020 election. The same thing could be said in Arizona that helped Biden win the state. Many Latinos in the state relied on their identity and their connections to those in their community who are undocumented immigrants to vote in favor of Biden over Trump. The research conducted here also concluded that each election cycle is different for voters. In the case of Latinos, there were different reasons and motivations for why they voted in the 2016 and 2020 elections.

My conclusion confirms my belief that more literature needs to be produced on the topic of generation status among Latino voters. Given that they are the largest minority group and voting bloc in the country, they are going to be crucial for future presidential elections, as well as midterm elections. I acknowledge that there were limitations in this research on the polling data suggest that the Latinos community were more concerned about the issues of immigration and the economy in that election. However, the 2020 election presented a different story. While the data showed that Biden won the majority of Latino, Trump made significant gains in the community. In the cases of Texas and Florida, there was a possible trend of generational status and identity as Latinos in those states contributed to Trump winning both states. Arizona showed a similar possible trend that contributed to Biden winning the state. California was the only state where this possible trend was not shown, leading to a lack of interviews and information from newspapers in the state to corroborate this claim. In Florida, many Latinos relied on anti-socialism sentiments, which connected them to their experience of living under these governments. This resulted in many Latinos from the previous generations and recently arrived Latinos who

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