

A Border Divided: The Correlation Between California's and Texas' Political Affiliation and Latino Nationalism

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Abstract

Latinos, the largest minority group in the United States, have grown in civic presence in the national elections from 2016 to 2020. Alongside this growth, the political use of Latinos in post-2016 campaigning has shown how Latinos are seen as un-American in the United States. However, there existed a gap on whether this increase in connection to the United States through civic engagement, contrasted by that of an un-American political environment, has an influence on the culture of Latinos living on the U.S.-Mexico border. Looking at the trait of nationalism, this paper strived to answer if states' political affiliation impacted Latinos' sense of nationalism on the border in Texas and California. This was done through an exploratory sequential mixed-method analysis, where Instagram posts were coded for broad and specific feelings of 'Latino Identity' and 'Nationalism.' Contrary to the current belief that Latino culture is mostly Democratic as to reflect the popular notion that all minorities vote democrat, this research concluded that the Texan Latino culture reflected cultural values that mimicked the Republican party. Similarly, the Californian group reflected cultural beliefs that mimicked the Democratic party. This implied that the border Latino groups are non-homogenous and assimilating into U.S. political identity, as previously hypothesized in the literature. For the future of American politics, this provides backing for the possibility of more targeted political campaigning, and a decrease in un-American advertising. This research provides further proof of Latino culture assimilation on the southern border of the United States.

Keywords: Latinos, U.S.-Mexico Border, Nationalism, Cultural Identity

1. Introduction

In 2019, Latinos became the majority-minority group with a population of 10.9 million in the United States (Batalova, 2020, fig. 1). In Texas and California, which have greater Latino populations, the political conversation focused on Latino immigration and its presence on the border (Batalova, 2020, fig. 2). This political fixation, dating back to the pre-1950s, changed recently in regards to the discussion of Latinos and U.S. nationalism. Following the 2016 Presidential Election, a further disconnect has been observed between the 'Latino

identity' and the 'American identity' in media (Gonzalez, 2019). However, a gap exists in understanding how modern political extremism has affected Latinos' sense of American identity along the border.

1.1 United States Border Political Affiliation

Starting with President Trump, border political affiliation shifted in 2016 with a stronger national focus placed on border security, American nationalism, and Latino immigrants. According to Gonzalez (2019) in his research report published in

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the *Democratic Communiqué*, the 2016 election had a national influence on the way American media talked about Latinos; President Trump influenced an increased correlation between Latinos being criminals and ‘un-American’ through his speeches. This shift continued into the 2020 election cycle and reflected a voting stance taken by states across the border. According to Waldinger (2020) from the *American Sociological Association*: “Thus, while Republicans moved right, with business, pro-immigration voices stilled, Democrats moved left. That shift partially reflects the spillover from immigration to immigration politics” (para. 8). The immigration rhetoric influenced political polarization on the border, causing extreme Democratic views in states like California and extreme Republican views in states like Texas.

Moreover, states’ political affiliation was changed by the surge in Latino voting to both parties from the 2016 election cycle to the 2020 election cycle (Frey, 2021). In the 2020 election, Texas and California voted for Trump and Biden respectively, defining their Republican and Democratic status (Federal Election Committee, 2020). The growth in minority voter turnout led to a Democratic win for Joe Biden, but was challenged by an increased Republican vote by Latino men along the border (Sonneland, 2020).

Despite the national voting shift in 2020, it is important to note that political affiliation is also tied to geopolitical areas. While two people might identify with a party, where they live changes how much they agree with the political party’s beliefs, especially in relation to issues surrounding their state (Feinberg et al., 2017). On the border, this is seen in how Republicans are less “pro-wall” the closer they live to the U.S.-Mexico border (Gramlich, 2019). Based on this knowledge, studies about political beliefs must be limited to specific regions, as covering vast areas can introduce too much variation in regard to political status.

1.2 United States’ Stance on Latinos and Immigration

Since its foundation, the United States has passed legislation against Latino immigration. Modern important legislation controlling immigration in the United States began with the Immigrant and

Nationality Act of 1952 (Tienda & Sánchez, 2013, fig. 1). After its passing, most United States immigration strategies (1965-2001) focused on bringing in new immigrants, adding asylum status, and changing the number of visas allowed per country (Tienda & Sánchez, 2013). However, post-9/11 saw the discussion of immigration shift towards national security (Patten & Wade, 2011, p.8). Continued by Presidential Candidate Donald Trump, who spearheaded a campaign focused on harming views of Latino immigration (Gonzalez, 2019) and immigration as a whole (Anbinder, 2019), national motives focused on the security of the United States and how Latino immigrants were different from U.S. born citizens.

This stance has led to differing views of immigrants and the immigration system. According to a survey done by the *Pew Research Center*, 84% of foreign-born Latinos say that the U.S immigration system needs major or complete changes (Krogstad & Lopez, 2021, fig. 1). However, what needs to change varies most on immigration status, with naturalized citizens having the greatest difference in opinion from Latinos that have no green cards - believing in less versus more change, respectively (Krogstad & Lopez, 2021, fig. 4). This has affected the way U.S.-born non-Latinos view immigrants as well. A majority of U.S.-born citizens believe that most Latino immigrants are illegal immigrants (Gramlich, 2019). Moreover, the partisanship line splitting the Democratic and Republican parties sees a major divide among immigrants’ rights, border control, and the border wall (Gramlich, 2019).

1.3 Latino Border Culture versus United States Border Culture

Latino culture has existed on the U.S.-Mexico border since the 1500s (Korrol, 1996, p. 2). The development of Latino culture in the greater United States stemmed from the border, where Latinos from various countries would come seeking economic prosperity, land, safety, or other needs (Korrol, 1996). Today, the Latino border culture has changed in regards to its impact on the United States’ culture and politics. The increase in Latinos on the U.S.-Mexico border, along with the increase in the percentage of

refugees from war-torn Latin American countries, has created a political-cultural environment where Latinos are more active in demanding pro-immigrant change (McCaughan, 2020). This development has also been supported by the change in the political sphere surrounding Latinos, where Latino immigration is now a central topic of U.S. policy. This shift in Latino culture and border politics has changed the way border Americans view Latinos, with non-Latino Americans closer to the border feeling worse about Latinos in comparison to other Americans; this is inverse to Mexicans-Americans, who when living closer to the border, think higher of Americans (Chwe, 2017, fig. 1). This new development of border culture and border relationships shows how Latino-American culture and politics are intertwined through immigration, policy, and cross-ethnicity relations. However, the current body of research fails to define how this has directly impacted Latino culture and its trend for political and cultural growth in the future.

1.4 Nationalism in the United States and Latino Identity

Nationalism, defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2019), is “a feeling that people have of being loyal to and proud of their country often with the belief that it is better and more important than other countries” (para. 1). This definition is represented differently in every culture, with some of the most common identifying markers being pride in a country’s democracy, social systems, fairness, or systems of equality (Mubotter, 2021). These common identifying markers have become a part of the American identity, with the backbones shifting from party to party and race to race, but encompassing the ideas of freedom, liberty, and pride (Dawkins, 2019).

On the border, this identity has shifted as an increase in Latino immigrants make permanent residents in the United States, changing the culture of the U.S. border and the values of the “American Identity.” The drastic increase in Latino immigration has caused a shift in Latino culture as well; one of the new markers noted is an increase in assimilation into United States culture (Ramírez, 2021). It is noted that, while this increase in assimilation is occurring

among border Latinos, it has a relevant impact on their political beliefs and interactions in the United States. This theory, previously proven by the public policy research facility *CATO Institute*, states that Latinos who identify themselves as Republicans are more likely to hold more “American” ideologies, such as voting against Latino immigration reform that would help undocumented immigrants, because these are popular stances in the Republican party (Nowrasteh, 2020). This shows that in order to be seen as more American, Latinos are willing to vote against their cultural self-interests. However, the overall political-cultural body of research regarding Latino immigration currently lacks clarification on how border zones and their political influence, especially with the modern change in Latino and U.S. culture, influence Latinos’ perspective and willingness to feel nationalism in the U.S.

1.5 Gap Statement

Within the scholarly body of geopolitical and sociological research, the studies lack a clear connection between the political (nationalism, state affiliation, voting trends, and political law) lens and the etho-social/cultural (Latino culture, United States culture, the impact of laws on Latinos) lens (Dawkins, 2019; Feinberg et. al., 2017; Krogstad et. al, 2021; Gonzalez, 2019; Sonneland, 2020; Tienda, 2013). Currently, no study focuses on the connection between political affiliation and nationalism in Latinos on the border, merging the previously stated political and etho-social/cultural lenses in order to provide a human perspective on the immigration crisis and Latino identity. So, the goal of this paper, through the question of “How does state political affiliation affect Latinos sense of United States’ nationalism in Texas and California?”, is to examine the connections between political affiliation and nationalism. Through this paper, the researcher aims to provide a human narrative to the political research body.

2. Materials and Methods

In order to reach further conclusions about the connections between state political affiliation and the

nationalistic identity of the involved Latino communities, an exploratory sequential mixed-method analysis was performed. This type of analysis was chosen because it starts with qualitative data and transforms it into quantitative data. With one of the research goals being to connect the etho-social/cultural and political lenses, the researcher believed that incorporating qualitative perspectives (quotes, pictures, etc.) would help to showcase the cultural lens in the political data better than pure quantitative data. This analysis was done over social media, where Instagram posts were coded for themes of nationalism in order to derive feelings of identity. Social media was chosen as a sampling method for this study because of its ease of use. Because of the limitations presented during A.P. Research, the researcher was unable to leave New Jersey or obtain approval from an IRB. By using social media, the researcher was able to gain human opinions from Texas and California without directly visiting Texas and California

A general outline of this method is as follows: insert coded hashtags (Table 1) into Instagram, find Instagram posts, following needed location and scope criteria, sort the Instagram posts into Texas and California groups, code the caption, picture, and related hashtags by following the coding diagram (Table 2), graph data for analysis.

First, as per step one, the researcher downloaded Instagram and created a new account. A new account had to be created to avoid the algorithm from taking data from the researcher's previous searching history. Instagram was chosen because of its popularity as a social media platform, with over 1.3 billion worldwide users and 170 million users in the United States of America (Dean, 2022). In comparison to other social media platforms, Instagram gives multiple areas to express one's identity and opinion in a post (picture, hashtags, caption). This allows for the most available data per post and the most availability for cross-referencing, which is important for steps 2 and 3. Once the platform was downloaded, all of the hashtags were inserted one by one into Instagram.

As shown in Table 1, the generated hashtags were based on nationalist words that were drawn from the body of political literature in relation to nationalism. These words were chosen from keywords, graphs, or

tables from these studies. Then, they were combined with the scope of the research question, which includes Latinos, Texas, and California in order to create high-frequency hashtags. Hashtags with over 1000 posts were selected in order to ensure diversity among the responses.

Table 1: Keywords and Their Formulated Hashtags

Keyword	Hashtags (greater than 100 posts)
pride	#latinopride #latinopower
nationalism	#nationlism #southernnationalism
patriotism	#patriotism #patriotismo #latinosunidos
freedom	#freedom #chicano
conservative; republican	#latinoconsesrvative #latinorepublican #latinosfortrump
democrat; liberal	#latinoliberal #latinodemocart #latinolivesmatter #latinosforbiden
political (general)	#latinopolitics #USlatino #texaslatino #californialatino

Table 2: A List of Criteria for Post Selection

Criteria	Location in Instagram post to find information
1. Made by a Latino, Latino, or Latinx	username, biography
2. Posted in Texas or California	location tag, photo, caption, hashtags, biography
3. Relates to Latino culture, politics, or identity	photo, caption, hashtags
4. Contains an image, caption, and hashtags	photo, caption, hashtags
5. Made between June 18, 2019* and February 1, 2022**	post date

*: June 18, 2019 was chosen because of its indication as the start of the 2020 campaign cycle (Taylor, 2019), and thus indicating when this study can call Texas a Republican state and California a Democratic state based on the 2020 election

** : February 1, 2022 was chosen as the cut-off data to create a finite number of posts for the researcher to examine

Then, Instagram posts were selected. A plan for 60 posts was implemented in order to gain diversity among the responses. With 30 responses from each group, one response would not be statistically significant and thus one input will not drastically

change the results, leading to more accurate trends. These posts were selected following criteria created to match the parameters of the research gap and research question.

The researcher selected these criteria in order to ensure the research gap was adequately answered with the complexity of Instagram posts. This is similar to creating closed questions in a survey; however, the responses of Instagram have been predetermined and so this method of criteria allows for the correct responses to be selected so that the themes of nationalism and identity will be present in these responses. In this way, the researcher had to plan for avoiding sampling bias by sampling from all of the provided hashtags and avoiding taking responses that only aligned with any predetermined ideas of what would be correct.

For example, a post that was selected was:

Post Identification Number: T10

Location: Texas

Image: A picture of a hand holding an 'I Voted' sticker.

Caption and Hashtags: No matter what political views you have you need to do your civil duty and vote #proudrepublican #makeamericagreatagain #latinorepublicans

This post was selected because it met the five requirements for analysis. It was made by a Latino in Texas and is related to voting rights. It has a codable image and caption and was made in between the required data scope.



A post that was not selected was:

Post Identification Number: N/A

Location: Oaxaca de Juárez

Image: A picture of a Latino man holding a piñata heart and sitting next to a pinata figure of a skeleton for Day of the Dead

Caption and Hashtags: Don't keep your heart safe, be vulnerable... ♥#HappyHalloween from southern Mexico, where they celebrate #DayOfTheDead to help support the spiritual journey of the dead.

  #mexicoculturayorgullo #cocovibes #fridakahlo #viveoaxaca #diadelosmuertos (: @Mexico_CulturaYOrgullo). #loveislove #halloween #happyhalloween2018

#visitmexico #visitoaxaca
#mexicocultureandpride #remitlysignificamas
#remitly #promisesdelivered #aeromexico
#ammoments #ammomentos #volamoscontodo
#mco #oaxaca #coco #frida #celebrandooaxaca
#oaxacavive #travelvlogger #eldiadelosmuertos
#joseresendez

This post was not selected because, despite meeting the requirements for analysis, this post does not meet the scope requirements. This post was made by a Latino who lived in Texas but was spending extended time abroad in Mexico. Because the posts were not made in Texas or California, it could not be counted.

After all of the posts were collected, they were sorted into groups by location. All Instagram posts that were selected must have a location tag, an indication in the hashtags, photo or caption, or a location marker in the biography of the user that states whether the post was made in Texas or California. The researcher used these markers and Google Slides to sort the posts into Texas and California groups. Google Slides was chosen because it allows for text and pictures to be easily imported into the software, as well as its availability as a free software.

After the posts have been sorted, the researcher coded for the caption, picture, and related hashtags by following the coding diagram in Figure 1.

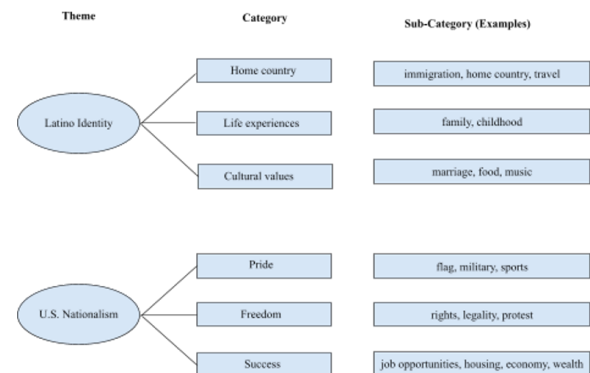


Figure 1: Coding Flowchart for Selected Instagram Posts

Following the diagram, the posts were coded by asking a series of yes/no questions in relation to the theme, category, and sub-category of the caption,

picture, and related hashtags. First, the caption was given a theme of Latino Identity or U.S. Nationalism. For example, a post discussing political structure in the United States would fall into nationalism. A post discussing Latino heritage in the United States would fall under Latino identity. Then, once given a theme, the posts were sorted into a more specific category, and then a subcategory. The category stated for the post was what was specifically being discussed that made the researcher choose that theme. For example, if the political structure of the US was being discussed, if that structure impacted human rights, the post would fall under freedom. If that structure discussed the economy, it would fall under success. Finally, a subcategory was chosen. This was the specific item that the post discussed, such as the economy, voting rights, etc.

For example, a caption that was coded was:

Post Identification Number: C2

Caption: #WeStandUnited 🇲🇪 🇺🇸 🇧🇷

50th Anniversary of the Chicano Moratorium.

🗣️ *“El pueblo unido jamás será vencido”*

Theme: U.S.Nationalism

Category: Freedom

Sub-Category: chicano, division, unity

Keywords: Chicano, unido

This was repeated for the image and related hashtags in the post.

Finally, all of this data was graphed and prepared for analysis. This study planned to use a mixed-method sequential approach to analyze the raw data. First, the frequency that each of the themes, categories, and subcategories were chosen per state was graphed. Then, the subcategories was analyzed for possible connotations and relations to identity and nationalism.

This method is limited because it cannot verify that the statements made on Instagram are true. This study assumes that all posts that are being coded match the opinion of the poster and are truthful. If posts seemed to be fictitious, they were discarded by the researcher.

The goal of the analysis will be to find deeper similarities and differences between the two regions based on this data. This method allows for an overall exploratory analysis, with no finite “yes/no” answer to the proposed research question.

3. Results

The following graphs depict the opinions of the posts presented under nationalist hashtags found on Instagram. A total of 54 posts were collected: 27 from Californian Latinos and 27 from Texan Latinos. First, demographic information was created in order to ensure that the averages of the survey aligned with that of the average Instagram sample. Overall, a majority of Latinos in this study did not identify a specific country of origin, so that data will not be considered for further analysis.

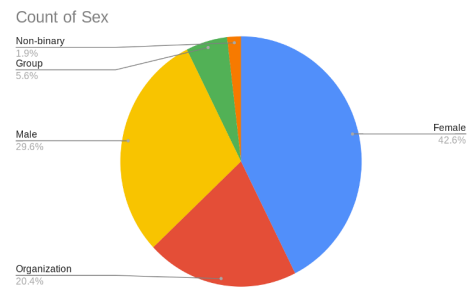


Figure 2: Percentage of Reported Gender and Grouping

The largest sample group by gender was females (42.6%), followed by males (29.6%), organizations (20.4%), groups (5.6%), and non-binary individuals (1.9%). While the percentages are not completely balanced, the researcher deemed them diverse enough to continue with the analysis. For the purpose of this research, organizations were defined as a page owned by more than one person where the specific identity of each person was not known. Groups were defined as a page owned by more than one person where the specific identity of each person was known. For both groups and organizations, every individual had to be Latino in order for the page to be considered.

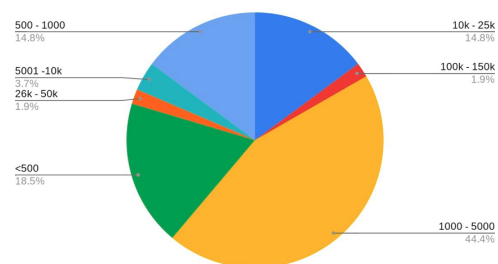


Figure 3: Percentage of Followers

The largest sample was from individuals who had 1000-5000 followers (44.4%) followed by those who had less than 500 followers (18.5%), and between 500-1000 (14.8%). In order to avoid the presence of ‘bots’ and ‘trolls’ on Instagram, which pose like real humans but produce fictitious opinions, this study tried to avoid large amounts of accounts that averaged low follower numbers (Ledford, 2020).

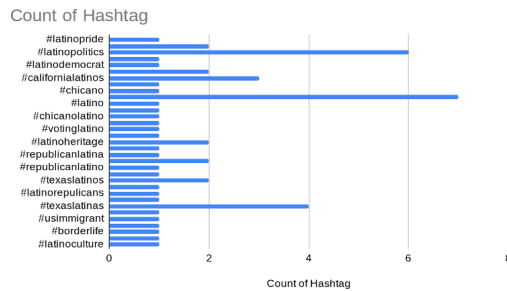


Figure 4: Hashtags Used to Search for Included Posts

This study aimed to use various hashtags in order to avoid pulling from one area of the Internet. These hashtags were either derived from the methods section or changed slightly in order to fit the updating format of Instagram (slight changes to spelling, word order, etc.).

Next, the posts were sorted into main themes of either ‘Nationalism’ or ‘Latino Identity’. The data was broken up into results for the captions, photos, and hashtags, and then further divided into overall results and then results for California and Texas.

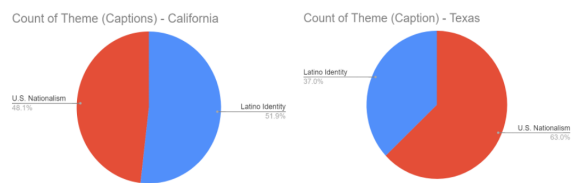


Figure 5: Themes of the Captioning

In the captions, there is a 23.7% increase in nationalism between Texas and California.

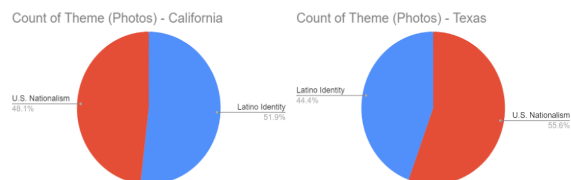


Figure 6: Themes of the Attached Photo

‘Nationalism’ and ‘Latino Identity’ remained the most consistent between the two photographs, with a smaller percentage difference than in Figures 6 and 8. However, Texas still saw a 13.5% increase in ‘Nationalism’.

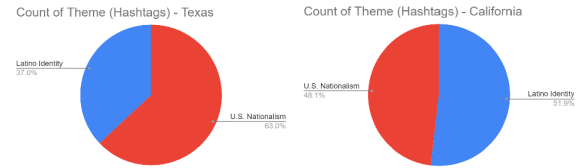


Figure 7: Themes of the Related Hashtags (Not Including the Searched Hashtag)

Within Figure 7, Texas still had higher levels of reported ‘Nationalism’ than California with a 23.7% increase. Equal to Figure 6, the theme graph for California has a relatively even divide between the ‘Nationalism’ and Latino Identity posts.

Overall, Texas has a consistently larger ‘Nationalist’ commentary than California, averaging 60.53% and 48.1% respectively between Figures 5, 6, and 7.

After overarching themes were chosen, posts were given categories. ‘U.S. Nationalism’ was broken into the subcategories of freedom, success, or pride. ‘Latino Identity’ was broken into the subcategories of home country, cultural values, or life experiences.

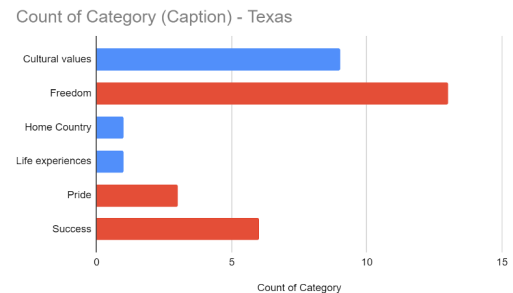
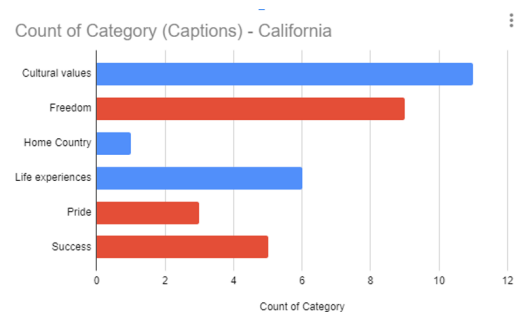


Figure 8: Categories for Captions

For captioning, Texas and California had similar values for all markers except for life experiences. California had an 83% increase in posts that reported life experiences that were a direct result of being a part of Latino culture. Texas had an 31% increase in posts that reported freedom as a focus of life as a Latino-American citizen. For captions, all six of the measured categories were reported.

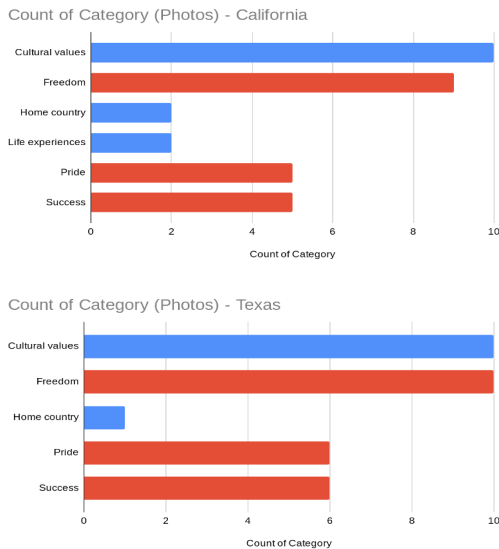


Figure 9: Categories for Attached Photo

California indicated high levels of cultural values and freedom, with ten and nine reported posts respectively. This continued the trend of a high median average for cultural values and freedom, with the median value for California being 5 and cultural values sitting at 10 and 9, 100% and 80% higher respectively.

For photos, Texas and California had similar values for all markers except for life experiences. Texas reported no posts with life experiences while California reported two.

Shown in Figure 10, Texas has a 20% increase in reported freedom and a 40% increase in reported pride in comparison to California. Similar to Figure Texas in Figure 9, Texas does not report posts with life experiences in Figure 10. Posts without life experiences for Latino culture were more frequent among the Texan posting group than the California posting group.

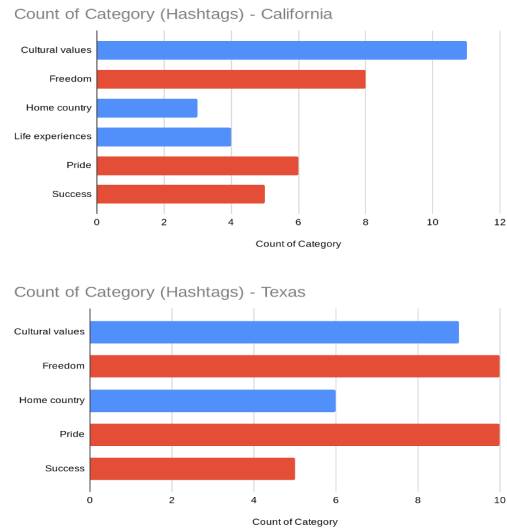


Figure 10: Categories for Related Hashtags

As shown in the figures above, Texas and California have similar levels of nationalist categorical markers (freedom, pride, and success). However, while Texas and California have similar levels of cultural values, Texas consistently shows less prominence for life experiences.

Next, posts were coded for their subcategories. These subcategories were chosen from major imagery, repeating keywords, contextual words, or emotionally charged language. Only words with two or more repetitions were graphed.

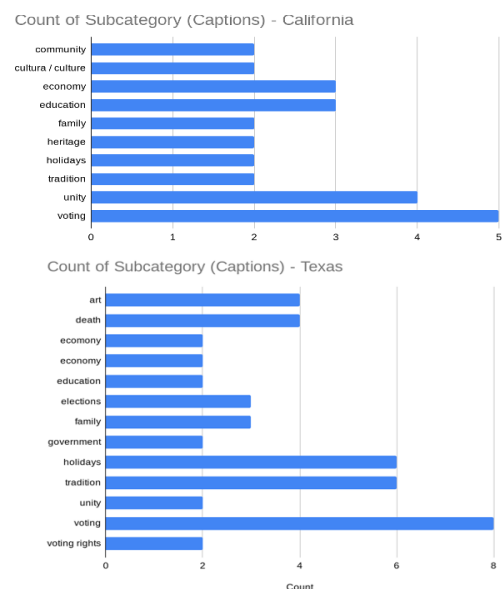


Figure 11: Subcategories for Captions

Words not included - California: art, celebrities, Chicano, church, coming of age, Democrat, discrimination, division, elections, family past, food culture, gente, housing, identity, immigration, independence, mask, progressive, protest, raza, registration, religion, Republican, roots, U.S. Flag, work ethic

Words not included - Texas: action, amendments, American pride, bigotry, border patrol, community, conformity, COVID, GOP, happiness, human rights, immigration, justice, leadership, love, military, power religion, representation, Trump

California's most common repeating words for subcategories include voting, unity, economy, and education. In regards to unity, the word was most commonly used in a political context to discuss voting.

Texas' most common repeating words include voting, tradition, holidays, family, elections, art, and death. Between both groups, the only common high-frequency repeating word in the captions category was voting.

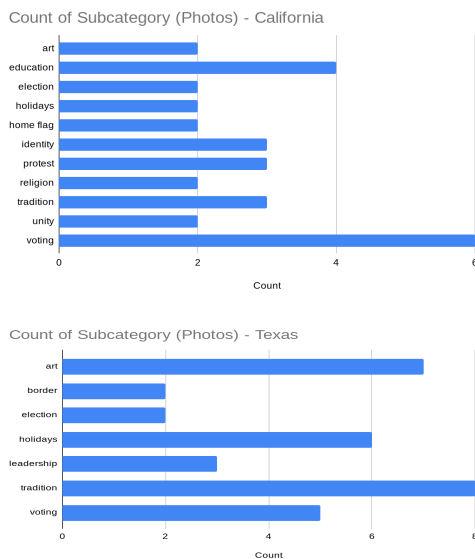


Figure 12: Subcategories for Photos

Words not included - California: business, Chicano, church, climate, clothing, coming of age, community, conservative, cultura, cultural, pride, economy, family, feminism, food culture, freedoms, housing, immigration, leadership, liberty, living things, media, Newson, newspaper,s political

association, registration, skin tone Words not included - Texas: American football, business, candidacy, clothing, DACA, death, economy, education, family, flag, GOP, government, history, hope, human rights, immigration, justice, military, murals, presidents, pride, protest, representation, Trump, U.S. flag, unity, voting rights

California's most common repeating words include education and voting.

Texas' most common repeating words include art, holidays, and tradition. The word tradition was most commonly used to refer to Latino cultural tradition. Also, the world holidays was most commonly used to refer to Latino holidays.

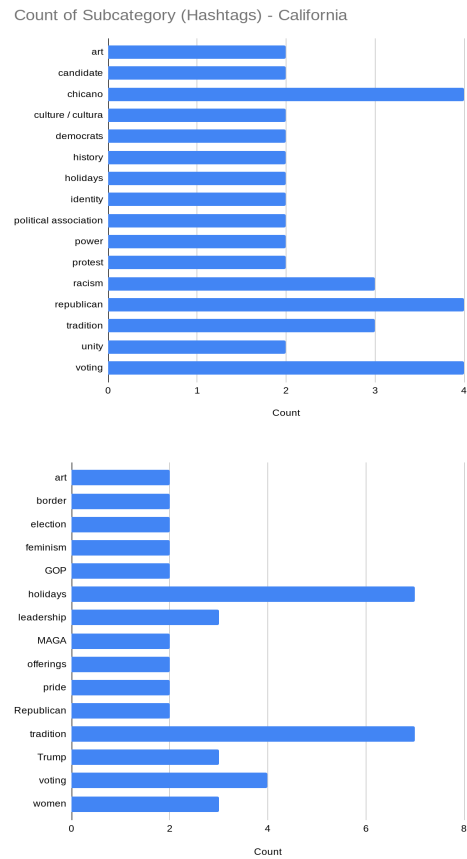


Figure 13: Subcategories for Related Hashtags

Words not included - California: border, church, climate, community, country, cultural pride, education, employment, family, food economy, freedom, immigrants, independence, liberty,

literature, patriotism, photography, policing, pride, raza, registration, religion, success, wall

Words not included - Texas: Biden, candidacy, capitalism, color, conservatives, DACA, Democrats, education, “flip Texas blue”, history, Jesus, justice, La Catrina, LGBT, love, murals, party, patriot, peace, pets, pride, protest, sports, Texas, unity, voting rights

California’s most common repeating subcategorical words include Chicano, Republican, tradition, voting, and racism. In the context of these posts, when discussing Republicans, it was more frequently spoken by members of the community that are Republican.

As shown above, both Texas and California have matching words such as art, holidays, tradition, and voting. When referring to the words holidays and tradition, the majority of the posts were discussing Latino holidays and traditions.

Finally, the keywords for the post were chosen. Keywords were not divided, so information for all posts could be drawn. Each post was given two to four keywords, with each word being written or shown through visual imagery in the post. When coding this information, similar words were combined (ie. unity, united, unite, and unido were all grouped together). Only words with two or more repetitions were graphed.

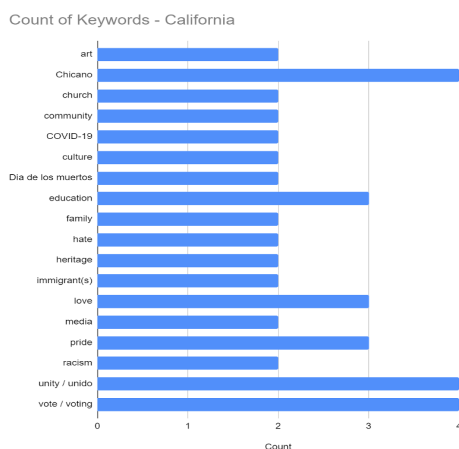


Figure 14a: Keywords (California)

Words not included - California: America, Bernie Sanders, border wall, “Brown lives matter”, customs, “Democrats destroy”, Dominican, election, employment, equality, fire, First Amendment, Goya,

handouts, Hell, housing costs, identity, illegal alien, Independence, justice, liberty, lungs, mask, Mexico, mierda, movement, newspaper, opportunity, over-policing, painting, political science, polls, power, protest, race, Republican, Selena, sin, taxpayer

California’s highest frequency keywords include unity/unido, vote/voting, chicano, and education, love, and pride. All of these words show Californian Latinos lean towards a more politically progressive and united sense of community.

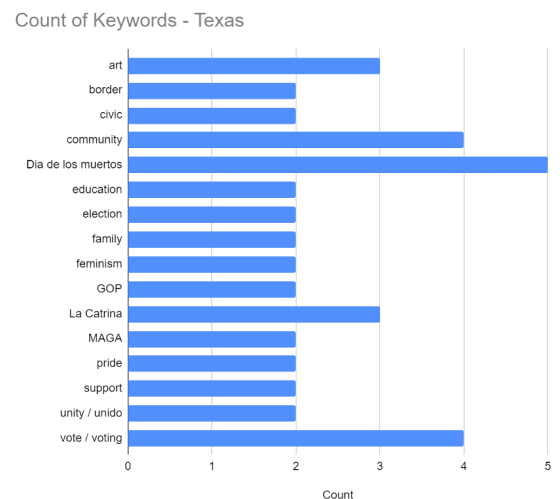


Figure 14b: Keywords (Texas)

Words not included - Texas: action, amendments, Biden, bigot, cages, capital, capitalism, chicana, color, COVID-19, creative, DACA, death, Democrats, “do not comply”, Dreamers, faith, football, governor, heart, heritage, history, immigrants, Jesus, Joe Rogan, Justice, legislature, LGBT, love, media, Mexican, mural, Obama, party, patriot, peace, Republicans, skulls, soldier, sports, Ted Cruz, Trump, voting rights

Texas’ highest frequency keywords include art, community, “Dia de los muertos”, La Catrina, and vote/voting. Through these keywords, Texan Latinos show a deep appreciation for tradition and the continuation of the practices in their community and home-country culture in the United States through art, holidays, and stories.

Overall, most posts contained a theme of community, culture, or change, with all keywords having themes that relate back to those three

categories. The highest frequency repeating keywords (vote/voting, Chicano, community, unity/unido, “Día de los Muertos”) were words that stem back to themes of tradition or change within the Latino border community.

To show additional information about the feelings of the Latino community, the tone of the posts was collected. The tone of a post was based on overall markers such as connotations of words, facial expressions, present symbols and imagery, use of explicit language, and use of punctuation.

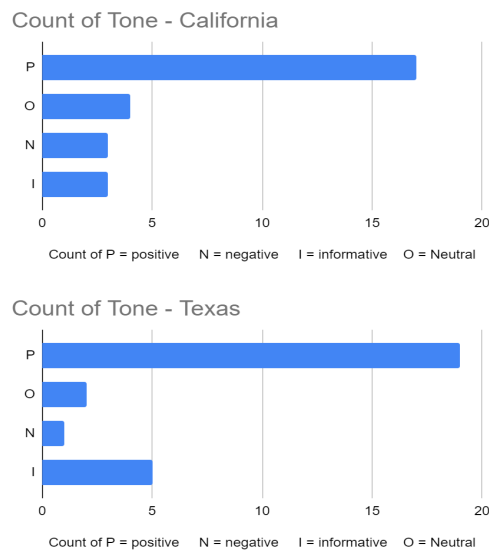


Figure 15: Tone

Both Texas and California had an overall positive tone throughout their posts. When speaking of their culture and the United States, both groups used words with positive connotations and inviting imagery (flowers, hearts, etc.) over negative imagery (fire, chains, etc.) to promote ideas of freedom, change, pride, love, and diversity.

4. Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate how in the border states of California and Texas, political division between the Democratic and Republican parties has divided the Latino populations' feelings on nationalism and cultural identity on Instagram.

4.1 New Understanding

Found in Figure 5 through Figure 7, California

Latinos demonstrate lower levels of nationalism than Texas Latinos. This aligns with a common value of the Republican party which is to be more nationalist and proud of the United States than the Democratic party (Nowrasteh, 2020). Moreover, Texas Latinos show stronger feelings of traditionalism, U.S. pride, and feelings towards traditional culture, holidays, and religion; California Latinos show stronger feelings towards liberalism like increased education and LGBTQ+ pride (Figures 8 - 10, 11 - 13, 14a, 14b). Thus, this study has found that within the Latino community, the Californian and Texan sub-communities have a stronger cultural alignment with the values of their respective political parties, despite Latinos as a whole voting Democrat in the 2020 election (Sonneland, 2020).

However, both sub-cultures have unifying factors that bring them together as one border Latino community. The two groups have a strong sense of community, unity, and feelings towards voting (Figures 11 - 13, 14a, 14b). This shows that despite the sub-cultures moving in different directions with the growth of the Latino community, both of them want a strong community that is represented within the United States. Within both of their keywords, the two groups showed a desire for positive change for the next generation; however, they disagreed on what that change was and which party would achieve it.

Finally, neither culture reports large feelings of self-hatred (Figure 15). With immigration policy moving towards the removal of immigrants within the United States and strong, anti-immigrant and un-American rhetoric (Gonzalez, 2019), the researcher hypothesized that there would be some level of self-hating behaviors forming among the border Latinos. However, according to Figure 15 (California) and Figure 15 (Texas), both California and Texas Latinos showed higher levels of positivity than negativity when discussing aspects of their cultural identity and nationalism in relation to their culture.

4.2 Relationship to Body of Research

Within the concepts of the literature review, this paper helps to narrow down the Latino border community into more specific groups and identify the

parallel changes that are occurring within the Texan and Californian communities. Previous research by Feinberg et al. (2017) theorized that political identity was shaped by a person's geographical location. This study furthers the conclusions of that research by finding that along the U.S.-Mexico border, a person's cultural identity is shaped by their geopolitical location. Further, this study helps to prove that the border is its own distinct culture separate from mainstream U.S. culture (McCaughan, 2020); however, these cultures are closely linked, especially in the ways that they view each other and how those views shape each other's identities. Finally, this study helps to verify the theories of Ramírez (2021), who said that political assimilation was occurring on the border. This study helped to prove that assimilation was occurring on a political-cultural level as well.

4.3 Future Implications

The future implications of this research could affect the Latino community during U.S. elections. In regards to the researched participants, this study could affect how those Texan and Californian Latinos are treated in media and election spaces. In political research and media spaces, Latinos are treated as one group along the border. This research sheds light on how the Latino community is broken up politically, and how those who live in Republican states could be more inclined to vote Republican than previously thought. For future major elections, Latinos in Republican border states could become a more targeted group by candidates. This research could affect the general American populous by further changing the trends of voting in the Latino border community. As this is a growing community, if campaigning becomes more targeted, that will affect all Americans, especially those living along the border. The change in media tonality could also affect the way the average non-Latino American views the Latino border population.

4.4 Limitations

The main limitations of the study relate back to the use of Instagram during the methodology. This study used Instagram as a sampling tool, so the

conclusions might be limited to just social media. However, because of the frequent use of social media by the Latino population, the researcher believes this data can be extrapolated. According to the *Pew Research Center*, 52% of Latinos have used Instagram, which is above the national average for all ethnicities of 45.33% (Auxier & Anderson, 2021, fig. 3). This percent provides a statistically significant number of responses where it can be inferred that the Latino population on Instagram accurately represents that of the United States.

Moreover, this study had to make the assumption that all posts were made by real accounts and not bots (fictitious accounts posing as real individuals). In order to avoid this issue, the study collected samples from accounts with a consistent and long-standing post history, a follower-count that was either average or higher than average, and a face and/or name that could be traced throughout the post history. The follower count was important to this limitation because the average real account has a follower total of approximately 150, while bots will have a significantly lower number (Ledford, 2020). Thus, this study looked for accounts that were around or above 100 followers, only choosing accounts below 100 followers if they had a posting history that could help to verify the profile. However, this limited the study to its number of participants and could have increased the margin of error by reducing the sample to only people with a higher-than-average follower count. Moreover, this method could have introduced a sampling bias because the researcher coded for posts with certain qualifications, including the follower count. Subconsciously, the researcher could have then been sorting the posts. If this study is to be replicated, this is an area for further research or improvement.

4.5 Guidelines for Future Research

For future research, this study can be used as a framework in order to find more specific information about the Latino border community. With Texan and Californian Latinos showing differences in overall culture, future research can break down these cultures by age, country-of-origin, distance from the border, city population, or generation/years removed from

their country-of-origin. Moreover, this study could be reconducted with a larger sample of people both on Instagram and on other social media platforms to guarantee that when increasing the sample size, the overall trend of the data remains consistent. Also, further in-person interviews should be conducted in order to gain more in-depth information about the nuanced feelings of the participants and gain a further, fuller understanding about the connections between political association and nationalism. Other states along the border should also be considered in future research to see if the same pattern emerges or if this pattern is isolated to California and Texas. Thus, conclusions could be drawn if the shift in feelings of nationalism are based solely on the political party or are also influenced by state culture.

5. Conclusions

Thus, this study helped to prove how in the U.S.-Mexico border states of California and Texas, a differing political climate has changed the Latino culture to match that of the political parties in their states. In the future, this could influence elections and campaigns towards the Latino population, which would become more effective if it targeted the specific differences in these cultures. For continued research, different sub-groups within the Latino community, along with different border states, need to be examined to see if this trend continues or is limited.

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