

**Examining How Socialization Affects People Who Are Either
Immigrants or First-Generation U.S. Citizens**

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the relationship between the upbringing of first-generation Americans and immigrants, and how their cultural ties influenced their political philosophy or ideology. I will explore different factors such as how an individual's ideology contrasts with their parents. The study mostly focused on students from the University of California, Merced (UC Merced), and people who are physically and financially independent. Factors such as age, gender, political party affiliation, political philosophy, and country of origin or country of parents' origin were considered in this study. While there is an emphasis on students of Latino or Hispanic origin, other backgrounds like Asian ethnic groups were also considered. Students of Asian ethnic backgrounds were relevant in this study as they similarly went through periods of assimilation to Western culture. This paper also compares my findings to the conclusions of Uhlaner & Garcia's (2016) essay on Latino partisan preference, Sapiro's (2004) study on how socialization affects political identity, and Kinefuchi's (2010) research on how assimilation affects political and social attachments. This paper looks at how parental influence, or the lack thereof, leads to the development of their children's political views while minding sociocultural and socioeconomic factors. This paper will consider how knowledge on socialization and political philosophy can influence current events like the political campaigns during the 2020 United States presidential election.

Examining How Socialization Affects the Political Philosophies of People Who Are Either
Immigrants or First-Generation U.S. Citizens

Introduction

In order to conduct a study on how political philosophy is influenced by socialization, I mostly focus on UC Merced students as I also attended the institution during the time the study was conducted. As a student of political science and as someone who is a first-generation U.S. citizen and has different opinions on politics compared to my parents who were raised in Colombia, I believe it is important to analyze how socialization influences the way people think and how they are shaped by society as it greatly influence's party identification and, therefore, is significant to political science. The students selected for this study were either first generation U.S. citizens or migrants who were foreign born and brought to the U.S. I also interviewed two people who no longer rely on parental financial support and have completed their education. I will set out to test whether factors such as age, English proficiency, gender, length of residence, and political philosophy correlate with the political philosophy of someone's parents.

Considering these factors, my hypothesis was that while parental influence shapes the initial values of their children, interactions and outside influences are the greatest determining factors that shape someone's political philosophy. During my research for a project on political identity, my findings on political socialization were based on how "children develop subjective partisan attachments at very young ages, typically reflecting parental socialization. Very importantly, people enter the political world in the context of their own particular socioeconomic and sociocultural context. Their demographic environment significantly structures their learning experiences", signifying that context plays an important role in the creation of political identity (Uhlener & Garcia, 2016) .

Methods

In order to reach out to as many students as possible while providing anonymity to participants and making the process of collecting data convenient for the participants; using apps, email, and UC Merced's course system to connect with students was the most practical method. I decided it would be most practical to utilize my connections to students on campus through the online course management system CatCourses, the UCM Discord Server, and the Wildfire app. Since I was enrolled in the TRV (Transfer, Returning, and Veteran) program, I could email all the other students involved in the program through CatCourses. I felt my biggest draw would be through the TRV program because many of the students appeared to have surnames that are Hispanic or Latino in origin. I started my survey with questions that gathered basic information on the participant themselves such as english proficiency, party affiliation, education level, and how long they've lived in the U.S. I also asked participants to rate how much they connected to their family's cultural values, how close their political values were to their parents', and what their parents' country of origin was. I emailed my survey to these students as well as others in order to be sure I met the required minimum number of twenty survey entries. Due to the same survey being distributed to different sources, I am not sure whether most of the responses came through students using Wildfire, Discord, or CatCourses. I sent out my survey on November 26th, 2019 around 7:00am using Google Forms and received thirty-two responses. By using a platform like Google Forms, I was able to maintain the privacy of my participants as they would not need to have a Google account to take the survey. Google Forms turned out to be very effective and I passed my minimum required number of responses which was twenty. To get another view on how the lack of socialization affects political philosophy when the individual is financially and

physically independent from parental or intimate cultural influences, I reached out to previous roommates and was introduced to two people who had recently finished their education and had entered the workforce. I theorized that the factor of education and being independent from a parent's financial stability may affect how someone views politics.

I had originally planned to interview or survey members of Hermanos/Hermanas Unidos/Unidas but decided not to as I did not know anyone involved in the frat or club and was unsure how to involve the groups. Had I been involved in these groups I would have had more opportunities to create a focus group or interview and survey students one on one but the procedures I ended up using to gather participants was also effective. Since the methods I used to get survey answers were a bit random, I had to profile students a bit to determine whether I could use them for my surveys. When I had attempted to email students regardless of what their names and surnames were I found that the results of my surveys reduced my confidence in how reliable they would be in successfully targeting students who were migrants or came from migrant families. I found a few entries that had answers to some survey questions implied that the survey takers' parents were born and raised in the U.S and while these answers could mean that their parents are immigrants that were raised in the U.S, I couldn't be sure and decided to omit three responses. Additionally, I initially included my own answers in the survey results but to prevent contaminating the results I omitted those as well, bringing the total number of subjects down to twenty-eight.

The dependent variable for my research was the party affiliation or political philosophy of each participant while the independent variable was the political philosophy of the participants' parents. Since socialization shapes political identity, it would be natural for the

parents' political philosophy to be different from someone from another country. Existing evidence presented by Sapiro (2004) supports this hypothesis because by "age five or six the display the tendency to perceive and react to people through social group categorization, and that they are capable of developing social identities that are politically relevant", meaning that the political structure of the country my participants' parents originate from are independent variables. Since the results of this study are determined by looking for any correlation between socialization and political identity; and as supported by Sapiro's (2004) findings that "by a young age, children begin to be inducted into the intergroup relations that may be politically important in their environments", the resulting identity of a UC Merced student is dependent on both their upbringing and their socialization (plus time spent) in the U.S.

Results & Discussion

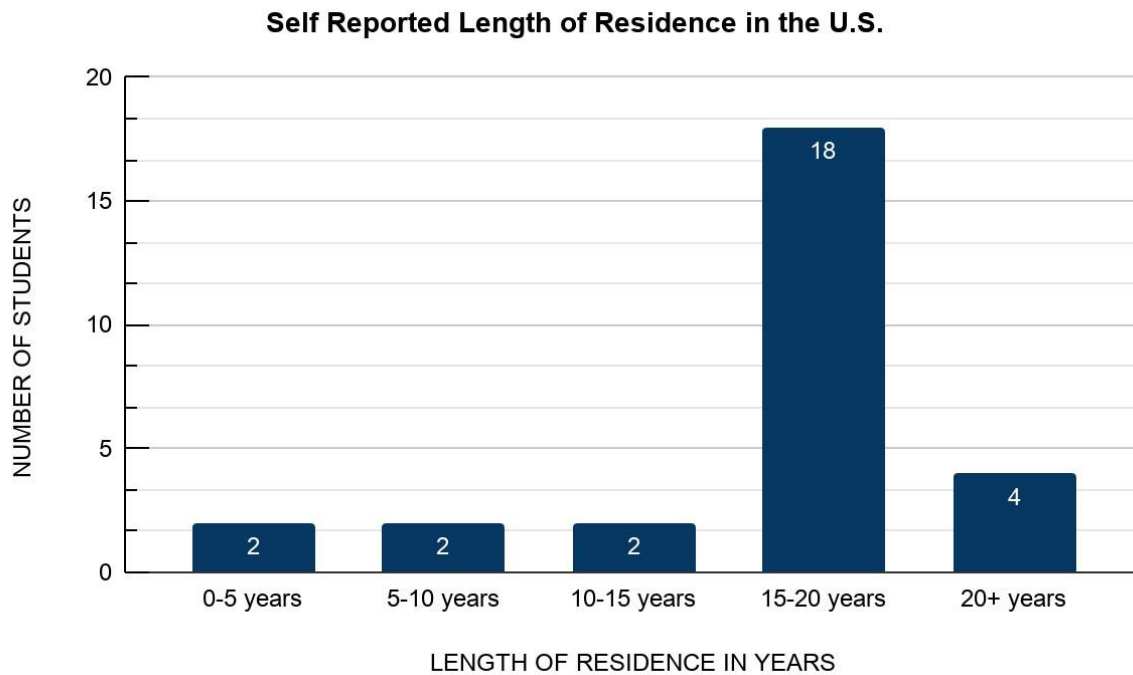
I started my survey by determining whether the self-determined scores in English proficiency would show patterns of correlating with conservative or liberal political beliefs. By surveying twenty-nine students, I have found fourteen rated their English proficiency level on a scale of one to ten as a ten. Four students ranked it as nine, eight ranked it as eight, two ranked it as seven, and one ranked it as one. There was no clear difference between the participants who rated their English proficiency a ten and those that rated themselves less than ten. In conclusion, most of my study group was proficient in English and gave too little information on whether students with low proficiency leaned toward certain political affiliations. As my survey was conducted using resources used by UC Merced students, the ages reported were not surprising since I expected the age range to fit in the average undergraduates age range which tends to range from 18-22 years old. To determine whether most of my group was eighteen years old or

older, I gave three different options to choose from. Fourteen of my subjects were in the range 0-18, and fifteen were either closer to nineteen or younger than thirty. None of my survey takers were over thirty. By choosing these three groups I was able to analyze students who recently left their households to attend university and therefore had new independence. Students in the older group likely had more life experience, had voted in a major election, and may have been more confident in their political beliefs due to exposure to other students on campus. However, in either of these groups there could have been outliers who did not fit into the reasons I listed. I also gathered information regarding gender, age, and length of residence in the U.S. Gender itself is not a big factor in my study, but I did ask in case the country of their parents' origin has or had severe laws regarding gender. If gender is significant in my participants' identity, then this could influence their political identity as liberal and conservative political philosophies tend to have different opinions on birth control and abortion. Mostly females answered my survey and I found that I had to narrow my categories of gender identity to only male, female, and not specified. Because the average age of my participants is in the twenties, this means their parents may have grown up in countries where other genders were not recognized. The findings showed that nineteen students were female, eight were male, and two declined to state. Lastly, before I gathered data on their political affiliations, I asked how long they had spent in the U.S. Since I couldn't do a longitudinal study to examine whether political affiliations change over time, I simply looked at whether certain affiliations were common among participants who hadn't spent much time in the U.S. versus those who lived in the U.S. for the majority of their lives. The results of the participants' length of residence are listed below in Figure 1. As displayed, most

participants have spent the majority of their lives in the U.S, not giving me much data on those who have spent less than half their lives in the same country.

Figure 1

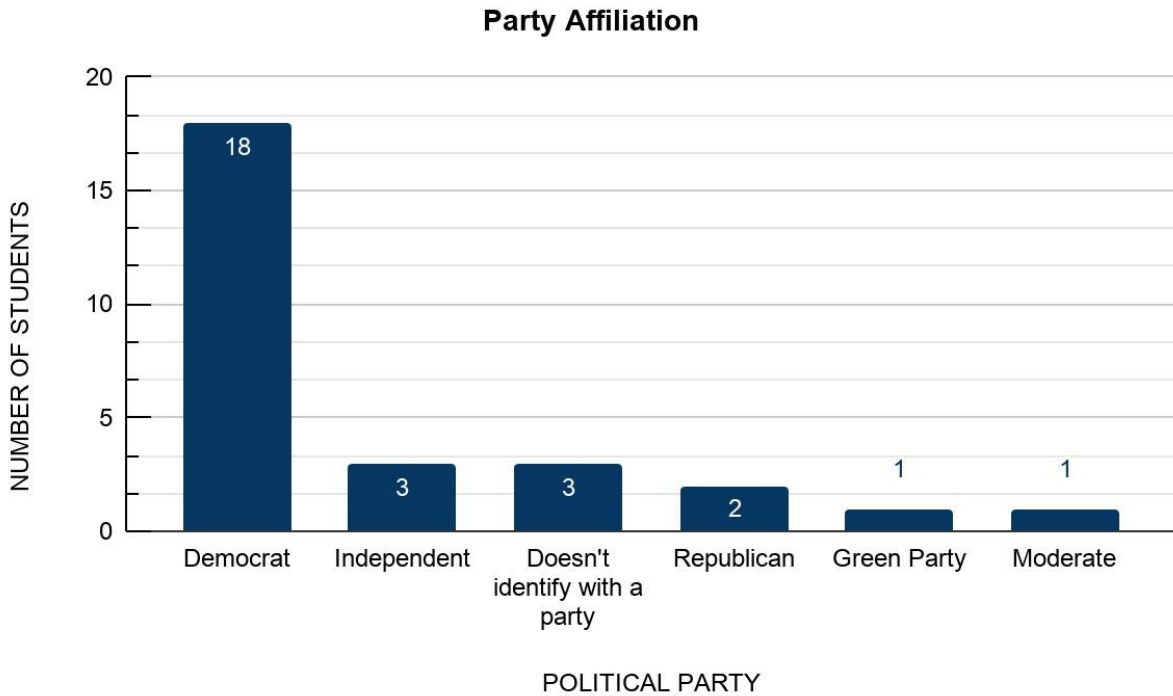
Illustration of reported participants length of residence



Next, I asked participants to identify their political affiliation if they had one. Most did identify with a party and the main party identified was democrat (see Figure 2). This was not unexpected as Uhlaner & Garcia (2016) found that despite most immigrants leaving their countries due to conflict and eventually identifying as democrats, Cubans typically aligned themselves with the Republican Party due to the party’s anticommunist image and their experiences under Fidel Castro’s regime. The data shown in Figure 3 indicates that although most participants were Hispanic or Latino, none identified as Cuban.

Figure 2

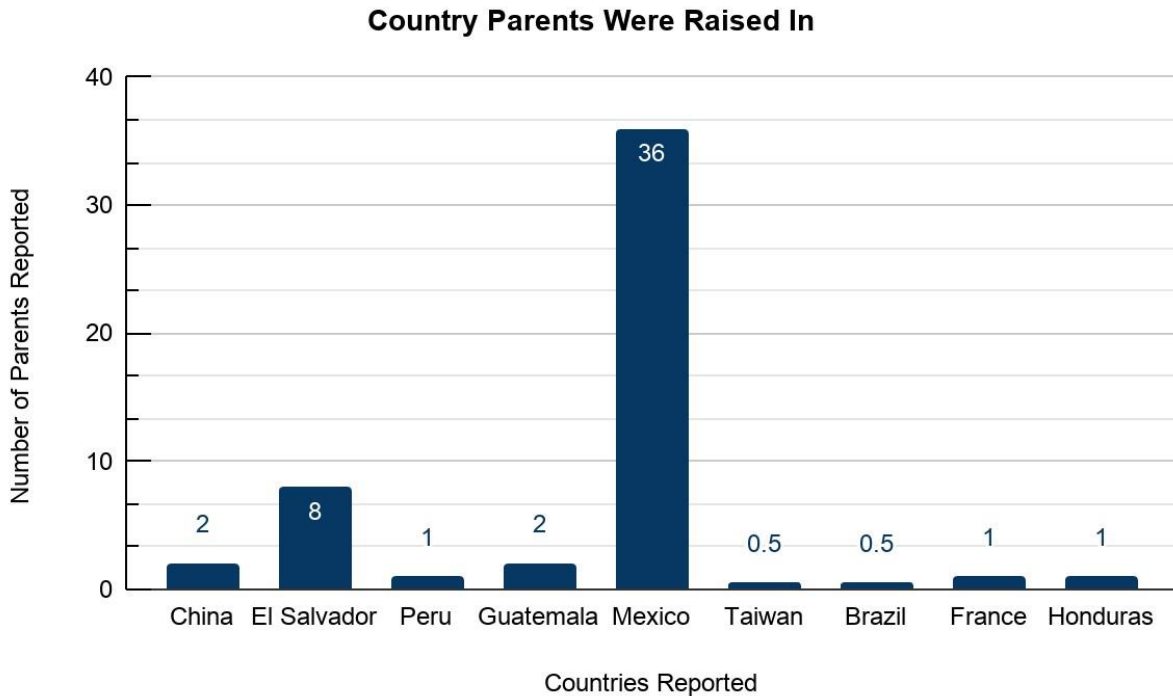
Illustration of party affiliations reported by participants



To get a better understanding of how my participants' philosophies were shaped by their parents, I asked what their parent's country of origin is. Assuming participants had two parents and excluding ones who listed a parent as from the U.S, my findings show that most of my survey takers listed their parents as growing up in Latin American or Hispanic countries.

Figure 3

Illustration of reported parents' countries of origin

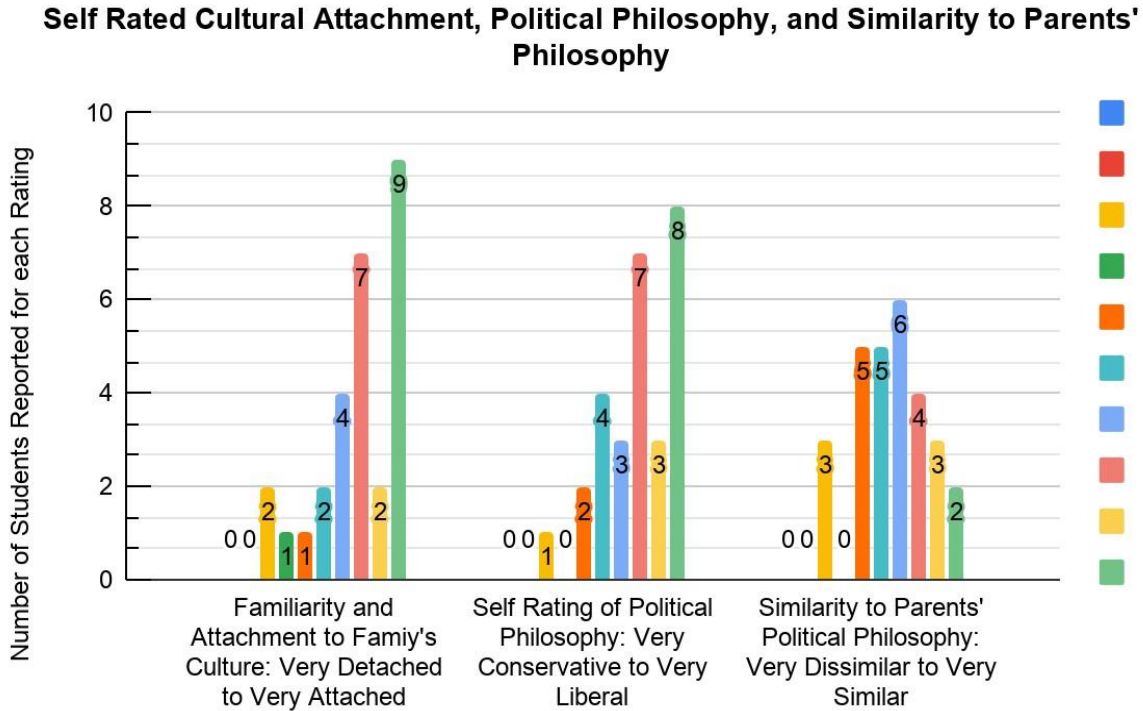


Note. Countries reported in the survey by participants are interpreted as representing two parents and not a single individual unless stated otherwise. Taiwan and Brazil represent one parent who is half Taiwanese and half Brazilian.

In order to determine whether there was a relationship between cultural attachment and the political similarities between participants and their parents, I asked participants on which direction of the political spectrum they lean, whether they feel connected to their cultural roots, and whether they feel their political views match their parents (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Illustration of self-reported scores of cultural attachment, and similarity to parents



Note. Each of the three categories on the x-axis reports results of each ranking 1-10 whether participants chose the rating.

My findings show that most of my participants have views on politics that are like their parents. A majority of my participants were either immigrants from Mexico or descendants from Mexicans, so it is safe to assume that they make up the majority of data that skew the political philosophy graph toward liberalism. My data reinforces Uhlener & Garcia's (2016) findings which state that due to "Mexican American attachments to the Democratic Party during the New Deal Era. . . [the attachments] replicated themselves in later eras due to parental socialization which then created a foundation for [future disadvantaged groups] favoring the continuing

activist, pro-social services of the Democratic Party”; additionally, “the position the party has taken on civil rights and equal rights" contrasts with the Republican Party which has a history of “attacking affirmative action, bilingual education, and immigrants’ rights,” all of which directly affect these groups (Uhlener & Garcia, 2016). While participants from non-Latino or Hispanic ethnic backgrounds also identified themselves as having liberal beliefs, they make up a smaller population in my data. While I feel these results partly support my hypothesis, the outliers I found in the surveys give my hypothesis additional support.

One of the outliers was a participant who listed her parents as from El Salvador, reported different answers in terms of what her political stances were and how connected she was to her culture and parents’ political philosophies. She listed herself as an eight in terms of how liberal she was with a similarity of five to her parents’ philosophies. However, she did claim she was not very connected to her family's cultural values and had lived in the U.S. for most of her life. While her family's culture may not have influenced her liberal beliefs, socialization through her parents could have been a factor. In comparison, my other Salvadorean participants mostly rated themselves slightly lower than the outlier on the scale of liberal they were. However, they felt their beliefs were fairly similar to their parent’s beliefs and were fairly attached to their family’s cultures.

Another outlier from China spent the least amount of time in the U.S. (0-5 years), had limited English proficiency, was fairly liberal (an eight on the scale), was connected to their culture, but ranked their political philosophy as five on the scale of how similar it was to his parents. Whether this is due to exposure to a system far different from China’s or the opportunities of newfound freedoms as a student, I am not sure. The time this subject spent in the

U.S. was on the low end but perhaps his liberal values are due to influences from other students at UC Merced. Another subject who had a parent who was both Brazilian and Taiwanese and labeled herself as moderate in her political views while her parents were either moderate or republican. However, she did state she was not very connected to her family's culture.

In order to gain more insight on how education, financial independence, and distance from family affects individuals who come from migrant families, I used my interviews as an opportunity to learn how my interviewees felt toward their families regarding politics and culture when they were no longer dependent on them financially or physically as many students are. As I was attending UC Merced and my interviewees were in the Bay Area, I conducted the interviews through text in order to allow my participants enough time to formulate their thoughts. I did not do interviews over the phone or through video chat as I did not want to put my participants on the spot when discussing their families. I found that both my first interviewees tended to avoid discussing politics with their families in order to avoid conflict due to different opinions. My first interviewee stated that while there have been some arguments regarding the politics of his family's home country and the family's religious beliefs, he has been fairly free to choose and believe what he wants. Political issues that affect immigrants did not affect his family very much but since he grew up in a predominantly white neighborhood, he did not feel like he was part of a larger ethnic minority or circle until he returned to Taiwan as he felt it was "soothing" to be surrounded by people who looked like him. If any issue affected his political status, it would have been finances. This was an issue that my other interviewee echoed when discussing issues family faced. Because his family was lower middle class, he felt that they leaned toward the liberal side of politics. The acknowledgment that his family's economic status may have

influenced their political stances shows similarities to how Mexican Americans have democratic attachments due to “economic and affirmative action experiences” (Uhlener & Garcia 2016) . He also felt he was Americanized in contrast to his parents. While he was comfortable being about other Taiwanese people and briefly seeing the country, he did not feel particularly attached to it.

In my second interview, I interviewed a woman from a Vietnamese family whose older members are republicans while the younger members are democrats. She believes that the older members are too stubborn and set in their ways to change, but this is perhaps due to age, inherited cultural values, or political awareness influenced by one of Vietnam’s prominent parties, the Communist Party of Vietnam. She also stated that she never really felt like she was affected negatively or positively due to her race or ethnicity and when she got the chance to explore Vietnam, she found that she does not hold much attachment to the country and feels more of a sense of belonging in the U.S. due to upbringing and influences such as the media she consumed growing up.

Ethical Implications

My survey was completely anonymous and did not ask for identifiable information like an email or phone number (unless the survey taker desired to leave their email for a follow-up interview). I asked for general information regarding their social group and political ideology but did not require anyone to tell me if they were U.S. citizens, immigrants, or of illegal status in an attempt to keep their identities safe. Additionally, the questions I asked on the survey did not ask for any information that could be incriminating or used against the survey takers. Some of the questions I asked during my interviews are a bit personal, but I do not believe they invaded anyone’s privacy. By personal, I meant I asked questions that could have made the interviewees

uncomfortable sharing with someone who was not their close friend. While I am aware of the interviewees identities, I made myself clear during my interviews that if the interviewees felt uncomfortable at any time, they could skip the question or give an answer as to why they chose not to answer. Additionally, my questions were based on the interpretations of the interviewee's relationship with politics and cultural aspects of their families. Fortunately, both interviewees were very comfortable talking about their families and culture and while I did not need to follow any forms of procedures, I did make sure to leave out identifying information of family members who did not agree to the interview.

Unrelated to the survey created for the participants and the interpretation of the results, is the use of the term "Latino" and not "Latinx" throughout this paper. Although the term "Latinx" was created in an attempt to be gender-inclusive, the Spanish interpretation for the term "Latino" is gender neutral when referring to groups. The use of the "x" in Latinx, while has good intentions, "violates Spanish orthography," and is impossible to pronounce in the language (Torres, 2018). As the term "Latino" derives from the Spanish word latinoamericano and the majority of participants are of Hispanic or Latino descent, in an attempt to stay respectful toward the language and culture, the term "Latino" is used as there is no official consensus on using the term "Latinx" in research.

Conclusions and Interpretations

I have found while there is much data that support the theory that parental influence, such as an upbringing that values certain beliefs influences someone's political philosophy, the lack of parental influence has a similar effect. When going through my surveys and interview answers, I realized that while most of my data came from students who stated they were very connected to

their ethnic cultures. Those who felt connected to their cultural groups tended to have similar political values or philosophies as their parents'. In contrast, those who did not feel very connected to their families' cultures tended to have different political views from their parents. When reading through my interview answers, I found that while some people felt disconnected from their families' cultures, this disconnection likely gives them the opportunity to develop their own political philosophies. These philosophies and identities devoid of family or cultural influence could have been shaped by the growing influence of social interactions, social media, and the traditional media.

My findings reflect what Kinefuchi (2010) concludes when studying the Montagnards; a Vietnamese minority group that migrated and built a community in North Carolina, "home, in short, consists of emotional, relational, sociocultural, and political spheres, and it is through the workings of these spheres that identity is formed," and as the political identities of my participants were formed through socialization by their families, other factors like cultural disconnection (possibly due to immigration or cultural assimilation) influenced how dissimilar political philosophies between my participants and their parents were. My participants who reported they were attached to their families culture support this conclusion the most as they were more likely to have a higher similarity ratings in regards to their parents' political philosophies than participants who did not feel as attached to their ethnic culture, signalling that they were more likely to have their identities formed in the spheres described by Kinefuchi. As shown in Figure 4, this data is shown in the skewed charts indicating strong cultural attachment and somewhat skewed chart. While I am not sure what their families believe to be considered their home, the influences and cultural factors create their children's ideologies. Through my

research done throughout this project and my data collected in this paper, I found that my hypothesis is only partly true. Yes, parental influence shapes the initial values of their children, but interactions and outside influences are mostly significant factors when cultural inclusion or parental influence are absent.

An example of how culture affects upbringing and political philosophy can be seen in the 2020 election by looking at how Latinos and Hispanics voted. While Joe Biden won the Latino vote overall, Donald Trump had gains compared to his 2016 results, primarily due to his campaign messages. Speculation that the use of the term “Latinx”, campaigns on social media to defund the police, and the backlash toward Goya foods pushed away some Latino voters because of how disconnected the issues democrats were bringing attention to, were to blue-collar workers who perhaps had different priorities. These could have been seen as non-issues or even threatening to Latino voters who believe that hard work is the only way to achieve personal success, not through activism. Reflecting on the information shared by my interviewees who while were not Latino, came from migrant households, and while they also had different political and cultural views from their parents, their families showed more concern for finances than any cultural or social issues that could be used as talking points for liberal groups. Since their families, along with most Latinos, make up the working class, by bringing attention to issues like taxes, riots, or socialism growing in the U.S, Trump was able to control communities that left countries with dictatorships and guerillas by using their fears against them (Caputo, 2020). While further research needs to be done on how young Hispanics and Latinos voted in the 2020 election, the early results show that while culture is important to these communities, avoiding the

problems that plagued their countries of origin and protecting their businesses is more of a priority.

In order to determine how political identities change over time in different age groups and ethnic groups who immigrate to the U.S, a prospective cohort study would provide insight in how likely continuous exposure to western culture and education can affect an immigrant or first generation American's political philosophy. Participants who are first generation American's would give further answers to how cultural upbringing, or the lack thereof, affects their identity in comparison to their parents, whose political socialization was through their ethnic cultures or country of origin. I do not believe my research brings up any issues, but I do wish I had factored in more variables that could have influenced my conclusions. Additional factors could have been asking my survey takers what political issues they identify with the most. I also could have asked what attracted them to the party identity they chose. This could be studied further since attracting the minority vote in swing states during elections has always been crucial. As mentioned by Hudak and Stenglein (2016), "Over the past several election cycles, minority voters have played an increasingly important role in determining who is elected president. That trend is likely to continue as turnout rates among minority demographic groups increases and political strategists note the importance of tailoring messages to such groups to gain an electoral advantage"; with the rise of awareness interest based on social, economic, as well as racial issues, it is critical for politicians to know their audience as policy making requires the understanding of issues facing the population they are reaching out to. As seen with the 2020 presidential election, the debate between what determines the difference between voters who support the GOP and the

Democratic Party was put in the spotlight as Latinos were increasingly voting for Trump. While it was earlier mentioned that fear of socialism and failing businesses affected voters, the connection between blue-collar jobs and education can't be ignored. Considering how important it is to gain the youth vote, knowing how much influence education and economics has on minority groups who feel connected to their values and ideologies could help create discussions regarding policies that directly affect these groups. This study provided a glimpse into how studying socialization can answer why certain generations of cultural groups are more likely to support political parties and vote on policies that affect their communities, as well as how certain messages entice voters.

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Appendix A

Template & Survey Responses

<https://ucmerced.box.com/s/unpmngyojhqtbha8q6nxldtbc7xqsdk>

This is a link to an excel sheet with thirty-two survey responses I received using Google Surveys.

Appendix B Interview Questions
and Answers

<https://ucmerced.box.com/s/qxeq1xhkfctr4n3wksldl66d8q4ziefm>

This is a link to the two interviews I did with Kenny Wang and Melissa Tran. Both answered the same questions and grew up in the same city.