

Inheritance of Political Partisanship from Parent to Child: Case of Salvadoran Immigrants of the Civil War

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Introduction

My parents' political partisanship has been obvious to me since I was a little girl. While we would eat dinner as a family, the conversation would often drift to the war, to the journey to the states, to the struggle of being here, to the call for action in opposition to neoliberalism and United States intervention in our home. Their struggle to survive the violence and oppression of the Salvadoran Civil War resulted in them supporting left leaning parties and affiliating themselves with the Democratic Party because of how it sympathizes more with refugee communities in comparison to the Republican Party. The impact of these conversations from then to now seems clear to me as I have bubbled in the ballot on election day. My parents made a lasting impression on my political affiliation and has resulted in my registration to a political party as well as my voting patterns. My family is deeply rooted in a leftist mentality, but how did this impact me, and why? Since partisanship has an impact on how people vote it is important to trace back how people's partisanship is established and influenced. As the Salvadoran-American population continues to grow within the United States it is increasingly important that research focus on understanding how they vote.

To understand how the inheritance of political affiliation occurs I use visual analysis, political analysis, and ethnography. The visual analysis establishes the environment that the Salvadoran immigrants were in. The political analysis ties the environment to the policies implemented by the United States and El Salvador that created the diaspora of Salvadoran and the development of their partisanship. The interviews conducted provide more personal accounts about the civil war, the relevance of religion in politics, and the significance parents' political affiliation. This paper examines how Salvadoran immigrants of the civil war impact their

children's political partisanship, focusing on the relationship between family and religion, and how this is significant in how second-generation Salvadorans vote.

Partisanship and Religion

The research done for this paper revolves around two variables that impact political partisanship. This section will define what political partisanship means and how family and religion impact how people choose to affiliate themselves to a political party. Throughout this paper the terms political partisanship, political affiliation, political ideology, and party identity will be used interchangeably. The term political partisanship refers to, "the favorability of candidates and parties" (Achen and Bartels, 232). People's partisanship has a great impact on how they vote, because of people's loyalty to the parties that they affiliate themselves to. Partisanship is not only the expression of people's political ideologies, it is also considered an expression of their social identity. The moral and cultural values tied to the variables that influence their decision to choose a party identity. There is little evidence that proves that familial influence is not the dominant variable in the construction of partisanship, but it is important to note that public schooling could be a factor (Jennings and Niemi). Religion and family influence are the two variables discussed in this paper, however that does not mean there are no other variables that impact people's political partisanship. Given the research question, religion and family require a detailed analysis to better understand the relationship between parent and child in regard to political partisanship.

People's political partisanship is shaped by the ways in which politics are socialized to them. The traditional view of how partisanship is shaped is based on the influence of the family on the child because of the early dominance of family values on an individual. The inheritance of

political partisanship from parent to child is similar to that of religion. Its permeance is evident in a survey conducted by Gallup that stated that 7 in 10 teenagers, “say their social and political ideology is the same as mom and dads’ (Lyons). These statistics prove the relationship between parent political partisanship and their child’s, thus establishing the strong influence that family has on an individual’s developing political ideologies. Family has a significant impact on the development of political partisanship, because of the familial values that are instilled at an early age and throughout one’s life. Despite the possibility that other variables have more influence than family, there is still little evidence suggesting this, and the traditional view that partisanship is predominantly shaped by family will be upheld throughout this paper.

It is important to note that even though the durability of partisanship through inheritance is constant, there is still a possibility that people will shift their political affiliation. Religion is one of the variables that greatly shapes, or shifts, one’s partisanship. Despite the concept of a secular state, religion infiltrates laws and political campaigns. This is evident in both the United States and El Salvador, the two focus countries in this research. Looking back on President George W. Bush’s 2004 campaign, his platform was heavily supported by the endorsement of laws and regulations, such as the support for barring same-sex marriage, that aligned with large religious groups within the United States (Wilcox and Robinson). Due to people’s religious beliefs correlating with certain laws, political parties understand the need to cater to religious groups’ interests. Faith outreach is a strategy used by politicians during their campaigning to ensure that their party is appealing to religious groups because of their importance during election season (Wear). The Democratic Party tends to lack the support of religious groups more so than the Republican Party, due to their focus on ideological purity (Wear). This prevalence of

religion in politics emphasizes how important religion is as an independent variable within the political sphere.

Focusing on the impacts of religion on people's political affiliation is important to this research because of the shift in religious affiliation within the Latinx population throughout Latin America and the United States (Hunt). This research concentrates on the political parties in the United States and their corresponding positions. However, it is also important to acknowledge the shifts in religious group affiliations within the United States and E Salvador to understand the overall Salvadoran population's stance. In the 1990s onward there has been a shift from Catholic to non-Catholic within the Latinx community, mainly to Protestant. Catholics are considered cross-pressured voters because of the Church's aligned views socially with democrats and culturally with republicans, specifically in regard to abortion and social welfare (Hussey and Layman, 7). Despite their cultural values they still tend to lean more towards affiliating with the Democratic Party. Hispanic Catholics are also more accepting of controversial issues such as same-sex marriage, 60% of Catholics approved, compared to Hispanic Protestants who are more opposed to it, only 42% of Protestants approved (Liu, 1). This establishes some of the different viewpoints that these religious groups have that translate into political opinions.

Table 2 Percentage of population by affiliation and year

	1988	1998	2009	Change 1988–2009
N	1,010	1,210	1,260	
Practicing Catholic	35	29	30	–5
Nonpracticing Catholic	32	26	21	–11
Protestant	17	21	38	+22
Unaffiliated	15	22	9	–6

Note: Percentages do not add to 100 due to a small group of respondents who indicated “other” when asked about religious affiliation.

Source: Christian, Patricia B, et al. “Protestant Growth and Change in El Salvador: Two Decades of Survey Evidence.” *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 50, no. 1, 2015, pp. 140–159., doi:10.1353/lar.2015.0012.

The table above illustrates the clear decline in practicing Catholics within the Salvadoran population, in research conducted by the Latin American Research Review (Christian et al. 142). The study represents the civil war and post-civil war religious affiliation. This trend in a declining number of Salvadoran Catholics correlates with the general Latinx population within the United States. From 2010 to 2013 there was a 13% drop in non-Mexican Hispanics in the that consider themselves Catholic in the United States (Liu, 1). Since party identification and religion are so closely related it is necessary to acknowledge how these changes take place and their impact. Examining the two dominant political parties in the United States, the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, there are clear differences in agenda, and some of their stances on specific issues cause conflict within religious groups.

A very polarizing issue that points out the clear differences in party stance, but also religious stance, is that of abortion. Catholics tend to side with the Democratic Party, despite the church’s anti-abortion stance, whereas Evangelicals, and conservative Catholics, side with the Republican Party (Achen). Considering the presidential race of 2016, it is clear that the Catholic Latinx voting community still holds true to voting blue, with 67% voting for Hillary Clinton, in

contrast to the white Catholic voting community which voted only 37% for Clinton (Smith). Catholic Latinx are more loyal to the Democratic Party than their white Catholic counterparts. Evangelicals of all races affiliate with the Republican Party due to the more conservative approach specifically to abortion and LGBTQ rights (Tam).

Due to El Salvador's history as a Spanish colony, many of its political structures are lenient to the Catholic Church's beliefs. Long after its independence from Spain, El Salvador remains loyal to its Catholic roots. When looking at the laws that still exist in El Salvador, it's clear that the Catholic church's anti-abortion stance had a heavy hand over the government's extremely strict abortion prohibition laws. Although religion and politics are not completely secular in the United States, they do not have the same power that they hold in El Salvador, which could explain a possible reason why party identification shifted for some Salvadoran immigrants. Without the same permeance of religion in government, people now had to side with a political party that not only represented their opinions on the economy and politics, but also their connections to religion. Within the United States there is a clear division based on religion for Latinx populations and their partisan affiliation. According to Gregory Smith's analysis at the Pew Research Center, "eight-in-ten religiously unaffiliated Latinx and seven-in-ten Catholic Latinx are Democrats or lean towards the Democratic Party" in comparison to Evangelical Latinx who lean five-in-ten. The Catholic and nonreligious Latinx community holds much stronger ties to the Democratic Party than Evangelical Latinx communities (Taylor, 6).

Although religion has an important role in constructing a person's partisanship, it is not the only variable. Specifically, in the case of Salvadoran immigrants, one has to take into account the political climate that people had to live through before and during the civil war. The history behind the civil war and the relationships between the Salvadoran government, the population,

the guerrilla groups, and the United States government all contribute to the political affiliation of Salvadoran immigrants.

Political Climate in El Salvador and the World

Cold War

The civil war in El Salvador officially started in 1980 and ended 1992. It sprouted from the mobilization of *campesino* groups demanding for land redistribution. The duration of the war overlaps the Cold War which was the United States' main focus at the time. The Cold War was an arms race between the Soviet Union and the United States that took place between 1946 and 1991 (National Archives and Records Administration). However, it was not limited to these two nations, the influence they had over their neighbors was strong. The Soviet Union was operating under a communist regime at the time, and this was a huge threat to the United States' capitalist system due to the opposing nature of the two political and economic systems. Both nations intervened in their neighbors' governments and militaries in order to increase their reach and power in the region. The United States was especially concerned that there would be a rise of communism in Latin America resulting in a domino effect, meaning if one country were to fall to communism, its neighbors were all more likely to fall as well.

This became the foundation for most of the United States' foreign policy during the Cold War, as a means of containing the contagiousness of communism (Leeson and Dean). This extended attempt to contain communism extended to El Salvador and much of Latin America. The United States wanted to ensure that any insurgencies that were left winged and supported the communist agenda, did not become the official government. This was their justification for supporting many right-wing regimes in Latin America including El Salvador. In 1980 under

President Jimmy Carter's administration, the government received financial and military aid. Despite the violent actions the state was taking against the people, and a letter from Saint Oscar Romero, the United States remained supportive (Gettlemen et al, 56). Saint Oscar Romero became a voice for the people throughout the violence that they endured before and during the civil war.

Historical Context

El Salvador prior to the Civil War

In order to understand why there was a massive diaspora of Salvadorans into the United States, one must know the details behind the Salvadoran Civil War. El Salvador's Civil War began shortly after the assassination of Saint Oscar Romero and ended following the Chapultepec Peace Accords in 1992 in Mexico City. The rise of the rural working class is where talks of a coup began, due to the growing inequality and underrepresentation of these people. One of the most influential factors was the economy and people's positions within it.

Saint Oscar Romero's Impact

Saint Oscar Romero's assassination on March 24th, 1980 by the government was a catalyst for the civil war. Saint Romero believed it was the church's duty to protect and advocate for those who were oppressed, also known as liberation theology. Romero did not follow the traditional role of the Catholic Church during his role of archbishop, instead of supporting the legitimacy of the government's actions, he denounced them due to the injustice and violation of human rights it was committing (Lee 86, 101). This defiance towards the government was not an immense risk due to the oppressive government at the time, especially because of how open Romero was in his opposition.

During his last sermon he ends with a powerful plea to the Salvadoran military, “You are killing your own brother peasants... The church, the defender of the rights of God... cannot remain silent before such an abomination” (Romero). He directly points out the atrocities that the military is committing and stands by his statement because he believes it is the Church’s duty to do so. Despite the risk he was taking he continued to advocate for the people, and because he sought justice for the people, he was assassinated (Lee 133). His efforts for the people did not go unnoticed and on October 14th, 2018 he was canonized and officially given the title of Saint (Povoledo). He is a household name for Salvadorans and known as a martyr for the oppressed and poor. Romero wanted to stand side-by-side with the people no matter what the cost was, refusing any kind of privileged protection, in the face of death threats he was receiving (Lee 138). The people understood this dedication he had to standing up for them and using his platform to help them, while using his ties to religion to bridge the gap between the people and the government.

Unfortunately his death was only the beginning of a horrifyingly violent civil war that would last twelve years. Many Salvadorans made rash decisions in effort to survive, much of it leading to a massive diaspora of refugees seeking asylum in the United States.

US Immigration Policy

The year that the Salvadoran Civil War started in 1980, the United States passed an act, The Refugee Act of 1980. The act explicitly defines the term refugee as, “any person who is outside any country of such person’s nationality... and who is unable or unwilling to return to, and is unable...because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion” (U.S. Cong. House). Defining the term refugee like this allowed a wider

application of the term, which created a more welcoming border to those fleeing from the collateral damage caused by the Cold War in their home countries. However, this bill only really applied to those fleeing from countries that were not allied with the United States and had communist regimes in place, such as Cuba and Nicaragua. This is evident with the Immigration Reform Act of 1986 which granted amnesty to those who undocumented immigrants that had arrived to the United States prior to January 1, 1982 (USCIS). Unfortunately for many Salvadorans this did not mean much because most of the Salvadoran diaspora took place during the 1982 through 1989 when the war was at its peak (Cordova). It is clear the United States wanted to make it difficult for Salvadorans to immigrate through the immigration system in place, most likely in the effort to curtail immigration and avoid accountability.

The United States' strong support financially of the Salvadoran government, resulted in not granting asylum to those who were fleeing. If they did it would contradict the efforts made in El Salvador that were supposedly helping the country by eliminating socialist and communist ideologies. Even after the war ended in 1992, Salvadoran refugees found constant obstacles trying to acquire citizenship or permanent residence. A bill was passed called the Nicaraguan and Central American Relief Act of 1997, which granted Nicaraguans and Cubans asylum and only provided Salvadorans and Guatemalans with a relief of deportation if they had arrived to the United States prior to 1990 (Fitzgerald). Given Cuba and Nicaragua were both communist countries at the time and the Salvadoran and Guatemalan governments were actively fighting against socialist and communist rebel groups this is more proof of the discrimination and hypocrisy in the United States' immigration policies. Referring back to the 1980 Immigration Reform Act, Salvadorans should have been granted asylum, yet instead they were faced with

Source: Bonner, Raymond. "America's Role in El Salvador's Deterioration." The Atlantic, Atlantic Media Company, 20 Jan. 2018, www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/01/trump-and-el-salvador/550955/.

This image is a beautiful depiction of the protests that took root in Washington D.C. during the Salvadoran Civil War in correlation with the Cold War. The image can be divided into three levels of observation, that of the state, the protestors, and the people or bystanders. At the top of the image the Supreme Court stands out as a chalky white monument to the United States' judicial system, and in a more general association, the United States government. The government which has prevented the Salvadoran immigrants from claiming refugee status, but also the government that walked hand in hand with the oppressor at home.

The second level of the image is the massive swarm of protestors standing just below the platform that the Supreme Court building sits on. Here more of the color white is present in the large banners that spread across the crowd with words like, "Anti-Imperialist", "Salvadoran Leftists", and "Stop". These are just a few of the words that echo throughout the protests in the United States trying to support the people falling victim to United States backed authoritarian and militaristic governments such as those in El Salvador and Guatemala. Aside from the words that are visible, the large turnout of people also establishes a position that United States citizens supported, that of anti-U.S. intervention.

At the third level there is the street and at the very bottom of the image what seems like bystanders. The presence of all these bystanders means that the protestors are heard, are seen, are acknowledged, and their message is possibly getting through to the rest of the population. Even if bystanders disagree, they see them. A privilege that the citizens in the United States have that the Salvadorans did not, the freedom of speech. This advocacy provides a strong basis for people to start trying to fight for those at home. Salvadoran immigrants in the United States during this time had the ability to speak up and share their experiences in order to gain support from U.S.

citizens increasing the likelihood that the United States might listen and withdraw from El Salvador. The financial support that the United States was providing was a lifeline for the Salvadoran government, and without it, the rebel groups had a much better chance at winning.

Aside from protests that took place within the United States, there were also organizations that were popping up in support of ending United States intervention. One of the most prominent ones was Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), which still exists today. CISPES put pressure on the United States government by protesting tirelessly in Washington DC and shouting their slogan, “Not a Dime for Death Squad Government”. The existence of these grassroots organizations could provide reasoning for why some Salvadoran immigrants started to speak out against the Salvadoran government. The platform that these organizations provided people created a much different environment from that which existed in El Salvador, where opposition to the government meant almost certain punishment. This starkly contrasts the liberty that people had in El Salvador to protest against the government, which allowed immigrants from the civil war to become open activists in the United States. These organizations worked diligently to garner support in opposition to the Reagan administration's actions, including taking speaking tours that allowed Salvadoran immigrants to share their stories (Perla). Direct opposition of the administration based on U.S. intervention in El Salvador means that people were establishing their opinions against not just the administration but also the political party that they were under. All of these factors are part of a larger set that fueled people’s decisions in assigning their partisanship. Although the United States government was actively working with the Salvadoran government, it was evident that citizens and immigrants residing in the United States were not in full support of this, and that they wanted it to end.

Expropriation and increasing inequalities

El Salvador post-colonialism and throughout their development as an independent state, relied mostly on agrarian means to support its economy. However, the economy was structured around elitists, especially after the commodity boom surrounding coffee beans in the 1880s (Byrne). The state pushed for the production and exportation of coffee during the commodity boom by cutting production taxes, and exempting people from military service. In order to allow for more land to host these large coffee companies, the government abolished community property, also known as *ejidos* and *comunidades*, in 1882. *Ejidos* were municipal commons, and *comunidades* were communal property. This led to the redistribution of land from communal property to private ownership, forcing peasants out of their land and into working for the cash-crop industry. This drastic shift from subsistence-food production to cash-crop farming resulted in more economic inequality between the rural peasants and the elite who owned these large private farms. The continued increase in private land ownership and cash-crops led to the richest fifth of the country holding 66 percent of the national income, and the poorest fifth holding only 2 percent (Byrne). The economy was in the hands of the most elite in El Salvador, and the poor were only losing more, especially as the agriculture industry moved towards private ownership and exporting goods. This disparity in economic inequality is the foundation of the people's unrest and what motivated people to take action against the government by mobilizing and protesting.

The beginnings of Militarization

The rise in inequality caused people in these rural areas to feel resentment towards the government and the elite class. As a result many of these rural peasants, *campesinos*, started

to mobilize and organize protests and strikes as a means to force attention and action to their demands (Wood). That state's response to the *campesino* civil resistance was with violence via military groups that would target these villages and assassinate or kidnap people who were trying to oppose the status quo. These military groups would eventually also include the death squads that became a source of extreme violence of the state against its citizens, their reason being that subversive people were the only targets and that this would prevent the rise of communism within El Salvador. The extent to which laborers were abused by the economic elite went as far as birth control projects under the guise of preventing women and children dying, but in reality only to benefit landlords by keeping the workforce under their control (Wood 25). The elite class had control over territory and wealth long before the civil war started.

La matanza in 1932 was what brought elites their unopposed power for so long, the massacre of 17,000 indigenous people. They were persecuted because of their affiliation with the Communist Party and their demand for land reform, returning to the communal property that had existed previously. The state was run by military officials due to unfair elections and the elites controlled the economic sector of the country. The mass corruption that existed resulted in a lack of public goods and services provided to the people, which eroded the trust that people have for the state. The social contract between the people and the state was broken and with the acceleration of violent repression by the state, people began to form opposition groups.

United States intervention in El Salvador

The dominant political party in El Salvador was the Revolutionary Party of Democratic Unity (PRUD) which helped El Salvador's economy grow but eventually lost their credibility due to election fraud and repressing the people who had opposing views (Gettleman et al). PRUD rebrands itself as the Party of National Conciliation (PNC) but remains an authoritarian

militaristic party, that is far-right and continues to repress the people. By the end of 1980 the United States provided the government \$150 million in military aid in order to subvert the now militarized opposing group, the Farabundo Martí Front for the National Liberation (FMLN). Another factor that led to the rise of opposing forces in El Salvador was the Sandinista movement in Nicaragua, which gave the people the right to believe that the government can be overthrown. The following years were concentrated in warfare between the FMLN and the military state, with grossly violent acts on both sides. The United States continuously supported the state during the civil war especially after 1985, when the FMLN announced itself as a Marxist-Leninist political party. Now that the FMLN was a communist affiliated rebel group the United States had more reason to support the state in its repression and violence against the threat of communism.

Peace Negotiations after the Civil War

The violence that plagued the country led to a huge displacement of people, and massive migration to neighboring countries. Over one million civilians fled the country in the effort to survive the violence and deterioration of the nation. By the end of 1989, talks of peace were underway despite compromise being difficult to obtain given the polarization of the FMLN and the state. With the support of the United Nations and the United States, negotiations occurred and eventually lead the signing of a peace treaty in 1992 called the Chapultepec Peace Accords. With this the FMLN was officially recognized as a political party. Despite FMLN's strength and organization throughout the war, it was unable to defeat the military because of the endless amount of economic and militaristic support coming from the United States. The intervention of

other international actors was important in the development of the war because it was the main cause of the duration of the war, aside from the unwillingness to compromise on both sides.

All of the built-up resentment of the lower class, mostly composed of farm workers was due to the increasing economic inequality amongst the people due to the government's lack of responsibility in providing public goods and allowing political participation for people to voice their concerns. This led to a growing exploited working class and a powerful and unopposed elite. The stark contrast between the classes led to the eventual monopoly on power by the elite class alongside the military, feeding off of each other to remain at the top.

Considering political climate of world, but mainly Latin America, with the Sandinista movement in Nicaragua, the Cuban Revolution, and the Soviet Union's powerful influence across the globe, the working class was emboldened and the prospect of overthrowing the bourgeoisie was not seen as impossible. The intense violence that took place also sets a foundation for the extreme polarization of not just the two parties at war, but also the civilians.

The government that existed during the Salvadoran Civil War was a military dictatorship that worked in favor of the elites of El Salvador. President Arturo Molina, who held office between 1972 and 1977, attempted to implement agrarian reforms in order to benefit the people, however this was ultimately later disposed of by the military, specifically by Major Roberto d'Aubuisson (Wood 26). Major d'Aubuisson, who launched a successful coup d'état in 1979, was known for the extremely violent death squads that terrorized civilians throughout the civil war, their main purpose was the prevent subversion. The government that d'Aubuisson functioned under was the National Republican Alliance (ARENA), the prominent right-wing, conservative political party of El Salvador.

The casualties that were caused by both sides drove civilians outside of El Salvador, and these people who left are the subjects of this research. Many of the FMLN supporters had to leave the country out of fear or direct threat of persecution by the state. In particular, many fled to the United States, an actor that can be considered a main reason why the war became as violent and prolonged as it did. Under the hope of communist overthrow at home, what difficulties arose for those that had to create a new home in the mother of capitalism and anti-communist and socialist reform?

Methods

Interviews

Criteria for participation

The ethnographic research in this paper focused on interviews with two sets of parent and child relationships for a total of four individual interviews. For the parents these requirements were about a) have lived in El Salvador during the civil war, as well as immigrated during the civil war, b) have left between 1985 and 1990, during the height of the war, and c) being currently affiliated with a U.S. political party. An additional requirement regarding the current affiliation was purposefully included to ensure that the conclusions drawn from the interviews are accurate and juxtapose the divergences in their experiences. This controlled variable was to have participants “parents” who belonged to different US mayor political parties, namely a Democrat and a Republican. Criteria for the child interviewees was only restricted to being 18 years or older and being the child of the being parent interviewed. The first requirement fulfills the minimum age directed by the IRB, while the second intended to be the minimum controlled

variable that would not otherwise compromise the analysis of the relationship between the parent's partisanship and child's partisanship.

Questions Asked

The series of questions that were carefully structured in a way that would prevent leading the interviewee to any conclusion other than their own. The questions asked to the parent were different from those asked to the child, and interviews were all conducted separately and over the phone to facilitate each interviewee's personal account without outside interference.

The parents' interviews were based on twelve semi-structured questions. This research selected this question format so the parent could thoroughly develop their narrative and go in whatever direction they thought best explained their perspective. Some of the themes covered by the questions were: the experience of the civil war, their feelings Salvadoran government during the civil war, their political partisanship in El Salvador and the United States, and their religious affiliation. Two additional questions referred to what they thought their children believed and these were compared their children's responses and how in turn their children's answers compared back to the parents' responses.

For the children, the questions were much more centered around asking what they knew about their parents' experiences and feelings in regard to the war, the Salvadoran government, and religion.

Findings

Participants' Characteristics

The interviewees last names will remain confidential but will refer to the first parent-child participants as "Sandra" and "Mary", and the second parent-child participants as "Javier"

and “Sarah”. Both Sandra and Javier are immigrants from El Salvador and left during the civil war. It is important to disclose that the four participants are related to each other. Mentioning this is important when considering their responses but also to understand some of the controlled measures exercised.

Sandra and Javier are siblings and as a consequence, both children, Mary and Sarah are cousins. Both of them left El Salvador in different years but in the US, they reside in the same city in North Carolina. Sandra left in 1988 when she was 21 years old, while and Javier left a year after (in 1989) when he was 17 years old. Mary is 25 years old and Sarah is 21 years old.

Both Sandra and Javier are registered voters in the United States and actively vote during election seasons. Their party partisanship is also somewhere they diverge in stance. Sandra mentioned being registered as a Democrat while Javier identifies as Republican.

Factors that seemed to influence Parents’ Partisanship

Immigration process to the United States

The very first question asked to the parents was how they felt about the Salvadoran government during the civil war. Both responded similarly, pointing out the corruption of the government as a whole and the state of warfare that existed in El Salvador due to the weak political institutions. As mentioned previously, both interviewees left El Salvador during the civil war but at different ages and years, Sandra leaving in 1988 at 21 years old, and Javier in 1989 at 17 years old. Despite leaving only one year after the other, their journey to the United States differed greatly.

For example, Sandra described her journey as one of, “running, walking, on planes... on buses, in the trunks of cars”. Her journey lasted two weeks. She landed her first in California and

after a long plane ride, in Washington D.C. Javier describe his journey as one of reunification with his mother who had filed the necessary paperwork to bring him into the United States via a visa.

The differences in their journeys creates a stark difference in how they view immigration. Sandra mentions her support for undocumented immigrants within the United States and rejects the way the current administration has villainized people like them. Her argument is that they are trying to seek better futures in the United States due to the violence that exists in their home countries. This correlated with her answer when asked about her reason for leaving El Salvador. About that question she repeatedly stated that she knew there was no future for her in El Salvador and she had to leave to provide herself with a better future. She also emphasized how she wanted to offer her children a better reality than hers in El Salvador. Her answers differed greatly from Javier who mentioned the legal means of immigrating, which highlights how important that is to him, and despite the state of war he lived in. It seems that laws still had validity and legitimacy.

Reasons for not participating in political activism in El Salvador

When it comes to their political activeness back in El Salvador both of them stated they did not participate in any kind of political activity, but their reasons for not doing so differed. Sandra explained how political activeness could very easily put you at risk of being kidnapped or killed because of the harsh penalty that came with speaking out against the government at the time. Javier pointed out that any political activity was almost useless when the political system in El Salvador was so corrupt and inefficient, it was pointless to vote.

Identification with a particular party back in El Salvador

As mentioned previously, during the civil war El Salvador was under the rule of the right-wing government, and what became the ARENA government. Outside of that were the guerrilla groups, most dominantly the FMLN left-wing communist party, who were outlawed during the civil war, but afterwards became a legitimate political party. When participants were asked whether they affiliated with any of the political parties back in El Salvador at the time of the war, but they both seemed hesitant to fully commit to a party but later admitted they sympathized with one more than the other. Sandra identified more with the guerrilla groups because of their claims to being “the voice of the poor” and fighting for the redistribution of land to improve conditions for the poor communities in the country. Despite her leaning towards the guerrilla groups, she still distanced herself from them due to their lack of follow through with their promises, and what her daughter Mary later reveals as her mother’s distaste for the bloodshed caused by both the right and leftist parties.

Javier also did not take stakes in either parties but held a strong opposition to the socialist and communist groups that existed in El Salvador. He briefly mentioned his views aligning more so with the ARENA party, and his daughter Sarah later emphasized that her father’s repugnance for socialism and communism was because of how much it failed her father and his family, skewing “whatever he would think in the future about politics”. Javier explicitly stated that he hates socialism and communism, because of what it did to El Salvador and how its presence has impacted the country to this day, perpetuating the fragility of its failing political system.

Parties’ Core Values align with Personal Opinions

Sandra and Javier similarly hold membership to opposing parties in the United States. Sandra responded with gusto that she was a member of the Democratic Party stating, “democrat of course”. Her support for the party is heavily tied to her experience as an immigrant in the United States, with a focus on the struggle of being an undocumented person and the harsh journey that she had to survive to eventually reach Washington D.C. Her belief is that the Democratic Party tends to support the immigrant community more than any other party, and their general mission as a party seems to provide a better future for everyone. Her justification for affiliation runs deep with nostalgia for her reasons for leaving El Salvador, in search of a better future. Mary highlights her mother’s experience as an undocumented immigrant as a huge cause for her political partisanship. Mary refers to conversations she has had with her mother about the current caravan of immigrants on their way to the U.S.-Mexico border as people seeking refuge. Sandra and Mary express great disdain for the current political administration and, Sandra calling him a crazy man. Their hostility towards President Trump and his administration influenced by their support of the Latinx immigrant community.

Javier approached his political partisanship more tentatively. Although he did not embrace his party quite as strongly, he labeled himself as Republican leaning. He quickly mentions that aside from his religion, the Republican Party tends to follow his views on political issues, therefore he would consider himself Republican. Sarah refers to her father’s political partisanship as Republican or conservative, pointing out the cause for this lies in his opposition to the socialism and communism that existed in El Salvador during his childhood. She alludes to the violence of the war and his association between that and the leftist groups. However, she continues to develop the causes for his partisanship through his devotion to his religion.

Personal Religious Views

Sandra and Javier both categorized themselves as non-denominational or Protestant Christians, and they explained they had the same religious affiliation before leaving El Salvador. Despite belonging to the same religious group, Sandra and Javier incorporated their religious beliefs differently. Sandra adamantly opposes the integration of politics and religion, and fully supports a secular system where religion does not interfere with political discourse or action. For her, religion is meant to, “go to church, to pray, to help those in need” not to be involved in politics, “because they will always be something very dirty”. She reminisces on the actions taken by Saint Oscar Romero and praises how he became the voice of the people, but how unfortunately his meddling in politics led to his assassination.

Sarah her father’s deep-seated dedication to Christianity as a reason for his conservative and Republican leaning stance. For her, religion comes first and claiming Republican as their partisanship is not based on the party itself, but instead on the Bible and how that happens to fall in line with the party to a certain extent.

How is political partisanship passed onto children?

Oral Narratives

The civil war was a brutal war that both Sandra and Javier lived through and almost the entirety of it. Even though they have different stances, something they have in common is sharing their experiences with their children. They supported this because it was necessary for their children to learn what to avoid.

When I asked Sandra about what she has told her children about her experience during the war, she sorrowfully states, “you’re going to make me cry”. She revealed how she has traced

out her journey to the United States to them, and the violence that she was subjected to while growing up. With great pain she admitted how the extent of the violence caused her to become desensitized to death, and how she knew she did not want that for her children. Mary describes her mother's stories of seeing dead bodies everywhere and of "[boarding] up the house that they were staying at with the mattresses pushed up against the door, in case of bullets coming through".

Javier too voices the importance of his children understanding his experiences as a child, as a lesson to them. Sarah disclosed the prevalence of violence in her father's life how, "he had to own a gun at a young age" to protect himself, and how "he experienced walking to school with people lying dead in the streets". Here both children understand that their parents survived a war, and that the inhumanity of it has shaped their political partisanship..

Adopted Opinions

The second-generation children also provided views that were parallel to their parents'. However there were some distinctions between theirs and their parents. To establish the scene I first asked Mary and Sarah what their thoughts were on politics on a general level. Mary immediately denounces politics and the current state of the political system in the United States, describing her feelings towards politics as, "bad, disgusted, [and] depressed". Sarah pointed out how they are, "problematic and they end up catapulting people against each other" but believes that they are intended to be beneficial. Mary and her mother agree on the dirtiness of politics, whereas Sarah takes a more neutral position in comparison to her father, seeing both the positive and negative qualities of politics.

Mary accredits her approach to politics to her parents, calling herself open-minded and believing that everyone has the right to their own opinion, even if she does not agree with it. She labels herself first as a liberal and second as a democrat, because of their left-leaning political viewpoints. Specifically she lists their position on abortion as something that aligned with her views, and states that the Republican Party does not respect the women's choice, something extremely important to her. Sarah on the other hand, addresses her affiliation with a political party with the same caution her father did. She does not fully embrace Republican as her party, but also lists abortion as an important issue to her in the correlation with her religious beliefs. This is what mostly constructs the basis of her political views, her religious beliefs and how those are intertwined with politics. Aside from the influence of religion, she delves into the importance of conversations with her father while she was growing up as a way of solidifying her beliefs.

Religious Beliefs

Unlike the rest of the interviewees, Mary does not affiliate religiously with any group. Although she was Protestant, she currently prefers to refrain from religion. In contrast, Sarah is very invested in her religion and allows its permeance throughout all aspects of her life, including politics. She associates herself more with conservatism than Republicanism, but understands that because her religious beliefs are categorized as conservative, by default her partisanship falls into the hands of the Republican Party. Despite her lack of knowledge in politics she has interests in further informing herself and adds that the environments that she has been immersed in at home and now in college have provided spaces for her to talk openly about politics and how her religion should guide her in them. In contrast, Mary is more reserved about

her political views and discussing them with others. She blames her inability to discuss her political views on the hostility she has encountered from the opposing party which forces her into silence to maintain civility. However, she does agree that with her mother she can discuss politics without any pushback, mostly due to their similar viewpoints. Only Mary votes during elections, and Sarah holds back because she wants to become an informed voter before she goes up to the ballot.

Analysis and Conclusion

It is evident that there are parallels between the political partisanship of the parents and the children. From the the parent interview analysis it seems that the immigration process and their approach to religion has a significant impact on their part alignment. In both cases, the parent and child affiliate themselves with the political party, even their approach to affiliation is similar, most clear between Javier and Sarah's caution. The experiences that the parents have shared with their children has also made an impact, with their children's ability to draw out specific details of their parents' stories, but also how they have tied those experiences to current political situations. Sandra and Mary plainly embody this inheritance of political partisanship in their shared sympathy for undocumented immigrants and refugees and allowing these emotions to manifest in their political partisanship. Although Sarah does not hold the same detest for socialism and communism as her father, it still exists as association with something negative based on her only characterization of it as something harmful.

Religion is a notable variable in the development of partisanship, most evident with Sarah. Her justification for all of her political views are based on her religion, and her religion was something inherited from her family that she has fully embraced. Even though family is an

important variable in partisanship the added factor of religion strengthens the channel that funnels information between parent and child. Religion was not upheld between Sandra and her daughter, but in spite of the lack of religious affiliation in Mary's life, it is understandable why. Sandra stresses the need for secularity in politics and this distancing of politics and religion translates to Mary severing ties with religion altogether, especially due to her cynical outlook on politics.

Given the extent of the controlled variables of the interviewees, due to their relationship as siblings, I can draw that their differences can be applicable on a larger scale. Their divergence in experience of immigration and approach to religion speak as the outstanding variables that seem to impact their partisanship can be applied to a larger audience because of the consistencies that exist in the rest of their life. However, more research is necessary within the field of research about growing Salvadoran-American population.

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