

**The Elephant, the Donkey, and Ukraine:  
The Partisanship of the Ukrainian Diaspora in America**

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**Abstract**

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The Ukrainian diaspora in the U.S. is a growing group whose American partisanship has scarcely been examined outside of diaspora-related media. This study makes use of interviews with Ukrainians in the Seattle metropolitan area to uncover how Ukrainians in the U.S. make and explain their partisan choices at the individual level. Core factors influencing Ukrainians' party preference include generation and education, religion and values, and views on the role of government. An additional section investigates how Ukrainians across the political spectrum responded to the Trump administration's controversial actions in regard to Russia and Ukraine as well as immigration. The findings suggest Ukrainian identity and concern for Ukraine are seldom the driving factors shaping partisanship or vote choice. However, Ukrainian identity does mediate and inform partisanship. Across generations, members of the Ukrainian diaspora rely on and reference experiences associated with Ukrainian identity to formulate and justify their political views. Thus, Ukrainians' partisanship is often shaped by factors that affect the party preferences of many people in the U.S., but Ukrainians often employ narratives based on Ukrainian identity to explain why such factors matter to them. This study contributes to three bodies of literature: diaspora studies, as it looks at how the Ukrainian diaspora negotiates homeland and host country identities and interests; post-Soviet studies, as it examines how Ukrainians in the U.S. are responding to Soviet and post-Soviet legacies through their politics; and U.S. partisanship studies, as it sheds light on the political views of an understudied diaspora.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the many Ukrainians who made this study possible. Your generosity and openness are a testament to the strength and potential of our diaspora. Just as I learned from each individual I spoke with, I hope this project becomes a resource for greater understanding, discussion, and action in our community.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Ukrainian diaspora in the U.S. is a growing group that numbers over a million nationwide and over 68,000 in Washington State (Center for Demographic and Socio-economic Research of Ukrainians in the U.S., 2020) yet remains woefully understudied. The majority of research on Ukrainians outside of their ancestral homeland centers on topics such as cultural life and homeland connections, with only a few works touching on political facets of the diaspora. The question of how individual Ukrainians form and enact their partisan views in America is thus an unexplored one, and one that is particularly intriguing in light of political developments in recent years. In 2013 and 2014, Ukraine captured global attention with the dual shocks of the Euromaidan protests and the annexation of Crimea. Despite an ongoing war in eastern regions, Ukraine largely faded away from international attention in subsequent years. Few predicted that Trump's arrival on the political stage would lead Ukraine to once again dominate the headlines. Trump's campaign ties with Russia, temporary withholding of 391 million dollars of military aid to Ukraine, interactions with Putin, phone call with Zelensky, and first impeachment placed a spotlight on post-Soviet dynamics between Russia, Ukraine, and the U.S. The Ukrainian diaspora stands at the intersection of these interactions, yet its response remains largely unprobed outside of brief media reports and opinion letters in Ukrainian American publications.

This isn't the first time the Ukrainian diaspora has needed to negotiate its homeland interests with partisan choices in the American political landscape. Since 1945, Ukrainian Americans have been reputed to lean Republican due to the GOP's anti-communist reputation and factors such as social conservatism. At the same time, a survey of the diaspora's history and the Ukrainian American press reveals that just like any group, Ukrainians were and remain divided. Ukrainians have also demonstrated some degree of willingness to shift partisanship

when political figures appear to jeopardize Ukrainian interests. Given this precedent, one might have expected noticeable numbers of Ukrainians to not support Trump in 2020 due to the Trump administration's controversial engagements with Russia and Ukraine. However, many Ukrainians continued to support Trump's reelection, and quite strongly so. This poses a few interrelated questions. First, how do Ukrainians in America today make and explain their partisan choices in general? What distinguishes Ukrainians who support the Republican Party from those who support the Democratic Party? When it comes to the 2020 election, how did Ukrainians respond in partisan terms to candidates' engagements with Russia and Ukraine?

This study's primary purpose is shedding light on the political perspectives of a growing and poorly understood diaspora. At a broader level, this research serves as a case study of diaspora political identity. How diasporas negotiate homeland and host country identities, experiences, and interests in their political engagement is a particularly relevant topic in the increasingly diverse U.S. This study also informs post-Soviet studies by investigating how Ukrainians in the U.S. respond to Soviet and post-Soviet experiences in their political choices. Studying the concerns of Ukrainians in the U.S. helps illuminate broader themes of how communities continue to process Soviet legacies in a post-Soviet world. In turn, this work contributes to ongoing discussions of partisanship in the U.S., and particularly partisanship in the age of Trump. Ukrainians may reportedly lean conservative, but their internal divisions are strong and reflect forces in both the homeland and the U.S. As the following study demonstrates, Ukrainian identity and concern for Ukraine are seldom the driving factors shaping partisanship or vote choice. Ukrainian identity does, however, mediate and inform partisanship. Across generations, many members of the Ukrainian diaspora rely on and reference experiences associated with Ukrainian identity to formulate and defend their political views.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Diaspora and Migrant Political Formation**

Prior to discussing Ukrainian partisanship in America, it is important to establish whether it is reasonable to assume the political formation of people with a migrant or diaspora background meaningfully differs from those without such a background. Scholarly discussions on political attitude formation are diverse and ongoing, but two key theories are Campbell et al.'s (1960) social psychological model and the rational choice model discussed by Downs (1957). Campbell et al. argue early parental socialization creates fairly stable partisan identification that shapes voting more causally than short-term factors like candidate qualities or particular issues. Downs sees partisanship as a more flexible result of people continually incorporating information into cumulative assessments of parties. Migrants and their descendants are often seen as testing these two theories due to their differential socialization.

In general, immigrants are less likely to be politically engaged than their U.S.-born co-ethnics, partly due to barriers such as language acquisition and partly due to reduced public infrastructure that supports political incorporation (DeSipio, 2011). When it comes to acquiring partisanship, length of residence is key while socioeconomic status and education are secondary, yet also strong predictors (Wong, 2000); naturalization is also important to party identification (Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier, 2016). Since many migrants take time to develop partisan preferences (if they do so at all), their U.S.-born children can also face prolonged partisan socialization since there is an absence of parental partisan transmission (Carlos, 2018). Despite these general trends, Cho (1999) makes the important point that since many immigrant groups form communities, they are not only distinct from the entire U.S. population, but also from other migrant groups. Therefore, it is important to examine each community individually.

Studies reach varying conclusions about the degree to which migrant-based groups hold on to pre-migratory ideological commitments or adapt to new conditions. Wong et al. (2011) argue the social psychological model is insufficient to describe the migrant experience because first- and second-generation socialization differs from the national average. They find ideology has an inconsistent association with party identification between minority groups while social, economic, and political markers are strongly associated with the acquisition of partisanship. Contrarily, Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier (2016) find Campbell et al.'s model applies to Latino partisanship formation, albeit with some differences in socialization. Fidrmuc and Doyle (2004) observe Czech and Polish migrants' vote choices in home country elections are meaningfully different from their domestic counterparts due to adaptation to their host country contexts, but Ahmadov and Sasse (2015) reach the opposite conclusion, finding Ukrainian and Polish migrants' votes in domestic elections reflect regional divides carried over from their homelands. In their study of Americans selecting parties in Australia, Finifter and Finifter (1989) identify ways in which pre-migration political views can carry over to a new country.

How does one account for these divergent findings? Multiple researchers conclude both pre-migration and post-migration forces affect political socialization. Among them are White et al. (2008), who test three competing theories of resocialization. The resistance theory states prior experience in a different political system is an obstacle to host country political engagement. In contrast, the transfer theory holds migrants will adapt relatively easily to their new environment by drawing on past experiences. Taking the middle ground, the exposure theory suggests that while migrants are at a disadvantage in terms of political integration, they adapt with more exposure to host country politics. White et al. find both exposure and transfer are relevant, suggesting premigration positions are not resistant to change, but they also conclude there is no

single pathway to political learning for migrants. Instead, migrants' mode of political adaptation varies based on which political activity is under consideration. For instance, the scholars find partisanship acquisition is largely a result of exposure rather than resistance or transfer. More complex political attitudes and behaviors involve greater challenges in regard to resocialization.

In short, there is no strict formula for which factors influence political socialization most strongly, and it is very plausible that the salience of factors varies based on individuals' national origin and pre-and-post-migration experiences. Political engagement and partisanship are shaped by complex processes as well as factors such as age, income, time spent in a country, and so forth. Aside from the actual act of migration, what often makes migrants and their descendants distinct from other groups in the U.S. is their relative lack of American socialization, distinct ethnic and religious affiliations, and homeland concerns and identities. Even though homeland ties and religious affiliation often weaken in subsequent generations, homeland connections do persist for many (Soehl & Waldinger, 2012), and religious decline is not a linear process, especially among certain groups (Connor, 2014).

For decades, most minority groups in the U.S. have tended to vote Democrat. According to Kuo et al. (2017), this is a growing phenomenon even among historically unaligned and comparatively affluent groups like Asian Americans due to situational factors activating the political salience of certain identities (e.g., being part of an immigrant community) as well as feelings of alienation on the basis of identity. In contrast, Ukrainian Americans, along with a number of other groups from Eastern and Central Europe, have been reported to lean Republican. The factors responsible for this are tied to the history and characteristics of the Ukrainian diaspora in the U.S., which is the subject of the following section.

## 2.2 The Ukrainian Diaspora

This study employs Lapshyna's (2019) conceptualization of diasporas, which holds that only migrant groups with diasporic consciousness – defined by affective and material ties and practices that connect migrants to a homeland – are true diasporas. While diasporic consciousness varies by individual, Ukrainians in the U.S. qualify as a diaspora as a whole due to their historic continuation of diasporic identity and activity. Large-scale immigration from Ukraine is divided into four waves: 1890-1914, 1922-1936, 1945-1953, and 1989 to the present (Wolowyna, 2019). Members of the 1<sup>st</sup> wave largely came for economic reasons and rarely thought of themselves as Ukrainian. Their identity was more religious (predominantly Greek Catholic) and cultural, and many called themselves Rusyns (also known as Ruthenians). Despite these qualities and a lack of a Ukrainian home state, community groups and Greek Catholic clergy organized “Ukrainianization” programs that simultaneously promoted Ukrainian identity and language as well as American integration (Kuropas, 2013a).

The 2<sup>nd</sup> wave immigrated for economic and political reasons given the turbulence in the Ukrainian territory. Ethnonational identity was stronger in this wave, as some had experienced brief independence. As members of this wave debated what would benefit their homeland most, three main ideologies formed: communism, which surpassed socialism's early appeal among Ukrainian migrants; monarchism, which promoted a constitutional monarchy under a hetman; and integral nationalism, which envisioned a “Ukraine for Ukrainians” and became the most prominent ideology by 1939. The latter two groups formed organizations that engaged in humanitarian, cultural, political, and even military projects (Kuropas, 2013a).

Most 3<sup>rd</sup> wave Ukrainians came after World War II as refugees from displaced persons camps. Compared to earlier waves, they were more urbanized, better educated, and more

passionate about defending Ukrainian identity and independence. Indeed, 3<sup>rd</sup> wave migrants often criticized the older waves for Americanizing. The main ideological divide in this wave was between nationalists who supported different independence fighters in the homeland (Kuropas, 2013b). While many Ukrainians had supported FDR, the 3<sup>rd</sup> wave in both Canada and the U.S. appeared to be more right-leaning as opposed to earlier waves (Prymak, 2015; Fink, 1997). Greater Republican affiliation developed after FDR ceded Eastern and Central Europe to Stalin (Fedynsky, 2020) and was strengthened by subsequent Republican presidents like Reagan, who took a firm anti-communist stance. This support wavered when Republicans took a weaker stance on the Soviet Union than Democratic counterparts. The exact degree to which Ukrainians shifted their allegiance due to such factors is unclear while an overall conservative trend is often noted in the existing literature on the diaspora. Anti-communism was a key component of the 3<sup>rd</sup> wave's identity, mirroring Cuban Americans in their exile politics (Girard et al., 2012) and Vietnamese Americans in their use of anti-communism to assert identity and claim civic status (Vo Dang, 2008).

4<sup>th</sup> wave migrants are said to continue the conservative trend but have dramatically changed the composition and nature of the Ukrainian diaspora. This wave began arriving in the late 1980s and thousands arrive each year, primarily through diversity, family, and work visas as well as the Lautenberg Amendment, which allows people belonging to minority faith groups in former Soviet states receive refugee status (Wolowyna, 2018). Economic opportunity and family reunification are the primary motivators for most 4<sup>th</sup> wave migrants. While armed conflict and some religious discrimination persist, many Lautenberg arrivals say opportunity, not persecution, is the main reason for their migration (Hauslohner, 2020). Earlier Ukrainian migrants largely settled in the Northeastern U.S. in states like Pennsylvania and New York, but the 4<sup>th</sup> wave has

spread more widely; due to church connections, for instance, many Ukrainians settle in Oregon, Washington, and California. The influx of new Ukrainians has led some Ukrainian populations, like the one in the Seattle area, to be about half 3<sup>rd</sup> wave and half 4<sup>th</sup> wave (Wolowyna, 2018). Klokiw (2019) argues that due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the U.S.'s changing refugee policies, Ukrainians who arrived after 2014 constitute a 5<sup>th</sup> wave; since this classification is still emerging, this study will consider post-2014 migrants to be part of the 4<sup>th</sup> wave.

Many members of the 3<sup>rd</sup> wave judged the 4<sup>th</sup> wave as insufficiently patriotic and overly Sovietized, especially since 4<sup>th</sup> wave migrants often come for economic purposes and are less satisfied with the outcomes of independence (Lemekh, 2010; Iarmolenko & Kerstetter, 2016; Rovenchak & Volodko, 2018). Despite intergenerational tensions, negative stereotypes reduced somewhat with time. Pawliczko (1994) finds that families preserving homeland attachments, the role of institutions (primarily churches), and key events in Ukraine continue to fuel a strong Ukrainian identity abroad. This leads her to conclude Ukrainians are among the “unmeltable ethnics” who are not immune to assimilation but resist its homogenizing effects across decades (p. 94). Holmes (2007) finds the activeness of the Ukrainian diaspora in the U.S. and Canada is tied to a narrative of victimhood. Indeed, Holmes is one of several scholars identifying the Ukrainian diaspora as a *victim* diaspora that maintains narratives of oppression that in turn create a shared sense of there being a great need to promote Ukrainian interests and identity. Multiple observers acknowledge the unprecedented impact the Euromaidan and subsequent Russian aggression had on mobilizing the Ukrainian diaspora on a global scale (Reshetchenko, 2014; Oleinikova & Bayeh, 2019). As argued by Nikolko (2019), events surrounding the Euromaidan served as a *re-actualizing* force that renewed the diaspora's unity and bolstered the victim narrative so central to Ukrainian identity.

Collectively, these studies suggest that despite generational differences, Ukrainians in the U.S. are frequently invested in foreign policy issues relating to Ukraine. This has the potential to not only mobilize Ukrainians to support homeland goals, but also to impact their vote in the U.S. Ukrainians have reportedly leaned conservative for decades, but they have long understood bipartisan support is essential (Deychakiwksy, 2017; Mirchuk, 2019). Moreover, some Ukrainians have demonstrated a willingness to speak out or vote against their party if they believe Ukrainian interests are being jeopardized. In *The Ukrainian Weekly*, the diaspora's leading English newspaper, Ukrainians voiced feeling "betrayed" by what they saw as Reagan's concessions to the Soviet Union (Vitvitsky, 1988) and "massacred," when Ukrainians were fired from the H. W. Bush campaign due to allegations of anti-Semitism (Kuropas, 1988). Kuropas, a lifelong Republican, did not push Ukrainians to vote against Bush but did expect them to "stand up and fight back when an abomination has been perpetrated against the entire community."

The diaspora's frustrations did not end with H. W. Bush's election. In an insightful case study, Fink (1997) describes how a notable number of Ukrainians, long considered to be reliable members of the GOP, mobilized against H. W. Bush when he chose not to support Ukrainian independence. This mobilization took the form of organized lobbying efforts and culminated in a widespread, albeit quantifiably unspecified protest vote throughout the Eastern European population in America. Despite this event, Ukrainians appear to have largely returned to or maintained a preference for Republicans, although vocal Democrats are not hard to locate. Thus far, no studies have investigated how Ukrainians have responded to subsequent administrations, and particularly the Trump administration. However, journalists and Ukrainians writing to diaspora-related publications reveal significant disagreements within the diaspora.

Trump's statements on NATO, campaign ties to Russia, friendliness toward Putin, and

negative characterization of Ukraine disturbed many Ukrainians (Kirichenko, 2020; Cornwell & Becker, 2016; Green, 2019; Hayda, 2019; Kelly, 2019; Fedynsky, 2016). In a letter to the editor of *The Ukrainian Weekly*, Balko Slywotzky (2020) voiced her confusion as to how Ukrainians can support Trump in light of his decision to “pressure the Zelenskyy government to dig up dirt” and his “blatant contempt for the truth and the rule of law.” In another letter, Deychakiwsky (2019) condemned Trump’s decision to put 391 million dollars of Ukrainian military aid on hold after asking Zelensky to investigate the Biden family as a “travesty of the highest order.”

Some Ukrainians reported feeling torn in light of Trump’s foreign policy choices and impeachment hearings. Reporters also noted an increase in Democratic outreach in Eastern European communities in swing states (Kelly, 2019; Stolberg, 2016). Ukrainians who usually voted Republican and chose not to support the party in recent elections cited Trump’s foreign policy choices as the primary factor shaping their decision. Zwarycz (2016), in a letter to *The Ukrainian Weekly*, sums up these convictions as follows: “For the record I do not like Hillary Clinton and I have voted for the Republican presidential ticket since I could vote. I do care about social and economic issues affecting every American, but given the war in Ukraine, there is only one issue that we as Ukrainian Americans must focus on: Ukraine. The Ukrainian issue ‘trumps’ all other personal issues!” Nonetheless, a number of Republican Ukrainians expressed faith in what they saw as Trump’s or the GOP’s overall performance. Multiple contributors to *The Ukrainian Weekly* credited Trump for sending military assistance to Ukraine while Obama did not (Melnyk, 2019) and keeping Russian sanctions in place (Kuropas, 2020). Many contributors also argued the Democratic Party is heading toward the very socialism they escaped from (Shandor, 2020). While the Ukrainian press featured lively political debates, many Ukrainians

reported avoiding public discussions about these issues in fear of stirring up arguments within the diaspora or reducing bipartisan support for Ukraine (Gammage, 2019; Gardner, 2019).

These media sources are useful starting points, but they are insufficient for examining Ukrainian partisanship in a holistic and in-depth fashion. Many of these sources discuss Ukrainian partisanship largely in relation to foreign policy issues since diaspora-related media is often focused on the homeland. In practice, the political views of Ukrainians living in America are influenced by a multitude of factors, many of which engage Ukrainian identity in ways that are not as obvious as foreign policy concerns. Second, many of these articles and letters are written by politically interested and engaged individuals. This fails to capture the views of Ukrainians who are less politically involved both in regard to U.S. politics and Ukrainian politics. Third, while these sources may discuss the reasons why a Ukrainian might lean more to the right or the left, they rarely capture the underlying factors that explain how their positions were formed or how different values are weighed and prioritized. These gaps in our understanding of Ukrainian partisanship are precisely what this research set out to investigate.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Design**

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data due to their ability to allow for both comparison and conversational flexibility. 30 interviews were conducted between July and October 2020. Interviews lasted between 1.5 and 6.5 hours, although few exceeded three hours. Participants were asked a more robust or pared down set of questions depending on availability. A few interviews were conducted in person, but due to COVID-19, most were conducted via video or phone calls. 17 interviews were done in English and 13 in Russian; although some participants would have preferred Ukrainian and used some Ukrainian words and phrases,

Russian was used since I do not speak Ukrainian. 24 participants consented to be audio recorded and interviews were subsequently translated and transcribed; the six interviews that were not audio recorded were manually recorded as completely as possible during the course of conversation. All participants were provided anonymity and are represented by pseudonyms.

Interviews were divided into six sections that assessed various aspects of identity and political views (see Appendix B for an abridged set of interview questions). The first section covered general demographic information (e.g., migration history and education). The second section addressed participants' Ukrainian identity (e.g., community ties and sense of self). The third section included general political questions about participants' political engagement and issues of interest. The fourth section delved into partisan preferences. The fifth section focused more intently on the 2020 election and the Trump administration as well as perceptions of the Ukrainian diaspora's partisanship. The sixth section included questions about Ukraine as well as situations that connected Russia, Ukraine, and the U.S. The latter two sections were focused on more recent events since they have the potential to create tension within the Ukrainian diaspora and within individuals themselves.

### **3.2 Participants and Representativeness**

Participants were recruited from Seattle's metropolitan area (MA) for four reasons: proximity to me as the researcher, a steady rate of Ukrainian migration, high 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> wave representation, and the fact that this MA holds the largest number of Ukrainians in the Pacific Northwest. People qualified for the study as long as they identified as Ukrainian in an ethnic, national, or cultural sense and considered their Ukrainian identity to be dominant or equal to other identities. A self-identification approach was used to recognize the complexity of Ukrainian geopolitical history and identity; this is the same approach taken by the Shevchenko

Scientific Society, the primary group collecting demographic information on Ukrainians in the U.S. Due to practical difficulties of locating willing Ukrainians and establishing trust, acquaintance networks and Ukrainian organizations were used to recruit participants. To diversify the interviewee pool, information-oriented selection was employed to locate Ukrainians with different qualities that may be politically salient, such as wave or generation (Lemekh, 2010), immigration type (Sadowski-Smith, 2018), and religion (Hauslohner, 2020). A total of 16 female and 14 male participants of various ages and backgrounds participated. Since many demographic factors have an influence on partisanship, further information is included in Appendix A. There is greater 4<sup>th</sup> wave representation in this study for several reasons. The nationwide diaspora is approximately 28% 4<sup>th</sup> wave and 72% non-4<sup>th</sup> wave, yet the 4<sup>th</sup> wave is often more conspicuous in terms of language, cultural traits, and religious institutions. The Seattle MA community is also approximately half 4<sup>th</sup>-wave and half 3<sup>rd</sup> wave. Non-4<sup>th</sup> wave Ukrainians tend to be more assimilated in American society; most individuals in this group are of mixed ancestry, meaning they are not of single Ukrainian ancestry, and about 80% speak English at home. In contrast, the majority of 4<sup>th</sup> wave Ukrainians are of single ancestry and over 80% speak Ukrainian or Russian at home (Wolowyna, 2021; Wolowyna, personal communication, January 13, 2021).

It is important to note this sample is not representative of the nationwide diaspora. The Seattle MA Ukrainian community differs from the nationwide population in several ways. While Ukrainians arrive to this area through a variety of migration pathways, a large part of the growth stems from religion-based refugee visas. The religious (and evangelical) element is prominent across the nationwide diaspora but may be particularly strong in this area due to Washington's history of refugee resettlement since the late 1980s. Family ties and a robust system of Protestant

churches in the area have contributed to Ukrainians being one of the top refugee groups resettled in the state for the past several years. On average, members of the Ukrainian diaspora surpass the overall U.S. population in educational and economic outcomes. However, 4<sup>th</sup> wave Ukrainians often have lower education and income levels than members of earlier waves and have a higher poverty rate than white non-Hispanics (Wolowyna, 2019). These differences must be kept in mind given that most individuals in this study are members of the 4<sup>th</sup> wave. Since Ukrainians of varied backgrounds were purposefully recruited in a way that does not reflect demographic proportions nationwide, this sample likely over-represents left-leaning Ukrainians considering that the existing literature and most participants note the diaspora is largely conservative. Although I emphasized that no political knowledge or interest were required for participation, people still often referred me to Ukrainians with a known interest in politics. For this reason, this study may overrepresent politically interested individuals even though the sample does include a number of individuals with low political activity and/or a lack of party affiliation.

Despite these qualifications, a small and localized sample size does not undermine this study's ability to answer its research questions, which center around how members of the Ukrainian diaspora make and rationalize their partisan choices. In fact, deliberately selecting people from varied backgrounds rather than seeking a representative sample actually made partisan cleavages more apparent. Partisan cleavages and rationales were further illuminated by the semi-structured interview approach, which allowed participants to express and explain their views in a deeper way than more fixed or statistical research methods. The effectiveness of using in-depth interviews to study the diaspora's political views is demonstrated not only in the potent themes in the data, but also in the parallels between said themes and arguments found in diaspora-related studies and media.

### **3.3 Analysis**

Thematic analysis was chosen due to its suitability for qualitative interview data and small sample sizes as well as its ability to describe patterns in rich detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Both interpretive and deductive coding were employed. Deductive reasoning was used to develop codes and themes from analysis of the existing literature on the Ukrainian diaspora's partisanship. For instance, many works on the diaspora suggest religious conviction is an important factor shaping partisanship. However, deductive themes were only used if the interview data supported their relevance. Inductive reasoning was used to develop codes and themes based purely on the content of the data. For example, education proved to be a factor that was not discussed in background literature but proved to be important for participants.

## **4. RESULTS**

### **4.1 Summary of Political Behavior and Key Findings**

Of the 30 participants, 12 preferred the Republican Party, 10 preferred the Democratic Party, and eight said they preferred neither party. Most of the latter eight participants did nonetheless have some party preference for the 2020 election cycle, at least in terms of who would be president, and their arguments often reflected the side they leaned toward. Low interest in politics, being more newly arrived, and lacking citizenship were associated with a lack of party affiliation or preference. Among those interested in politics, a lack of affiliation or preference was often tied to dissatisfaction with the two-party system, skepticism and criticism toward both parties, and not wanting to tie one's identity to a party. Many who preferred the GOP identified as conservatives instead of Republicans for the last-mentioned reason as well.

Among conservatives, freedom issues, religious values, and decreased government involvement in everyday life were top priorities. Among liberals, key concerns included social

justice issues, progressive values, the environment, and more robust government support for social programs. The views of those who did not identify with any party often reflected a more complex mix of issues along the political spectrum. Views on controversial issues, such as racial injustice and COVID-19 policies, usually followed party lines closely. Partisanship was also reflected in individuals' preferred media outlets, although many interviewees said they sought out opposing perspectives. Conservatives frequently expressed distrust toward the mainstream media, arguing it has a liberal bias and is run by wealthy liberal elites.

Notwithstanding a record of historical mobilization around foreign policy issues, Ukrainians in the U.S. are anecdotally known for having low political participation rates. Many interviewees echoed this claim when talking about their community. Research shows migrant political incorporation takes time due to barriers associated with linguistic, economic, and cultural adjustment; subsequent generations tend to experience fewer barriers, although they may face delayed partisanship acquisition due to lacking parental political socialization (Carlos, 2018). When it comes to Ukrainians, interviewees cited a focus on family and finances as primary concerns that made politics less of a priority. The 2016 and 2020 election cycles, however, produced an increase in diasporic engagement across multiple ages and generations. On both sides of the political spectrum, there was a sense that the recent election cycles had high stakes for both national and everyday life. One participant described it as follows:

“Before... if a Democratic president gets elected, it doesn't affect your daily life. If a Republican president gets elected, it doesn't affect your daily life. I feel like because of it not affecting you directly, it didn't feel like it mattered. But now, it's starting to affect everyone's daily life because of how heated and divided it is, so now people are starting to see it is something we should be involved in.” (Marina)

Many interviewees said they would consider voting for a party other than their preferred one in theory or voted for other parties in the past, but they also said doing so in the current

political climate was highly unlikely. They cited the high stakes in 2020 and feeling like the main opposing party was becoming increasingly problematic. This led people to vote for Biden and Trump even if they were not their ideal candidates. As Bogdan put it, “Right now, there’s such a war between them two. It’s like a chess game. You have to set up your guys everywhere else, so I would not vote for anyone Democratic, no way.”

Overall, the findings suggest Ukrainians are influenced by factors affecting everyone in the U.S. regardless of background. Ukrainian identity and its associated experiences may seldom be the driving factor shaping partisanship or vote choice, but it does inform partisanship in key ways. In other words, Ukrainian identity serves as a prism that mediates other factors that shape partisanship more directly. Across generations, many members of the Ukrainian diaspora rely on and reference experiences associated with Ukrainian identity to formulate and justify their political views. Thus, while Ukrainian partisanship may be mostly formed by factors common to many people in the U.S., Ukrainians often employ narratives based on their identity to explain why such factors matter to them. Key factors influencing Ukrainian partisanship include a combination of wave, generation, and education; religion and core values; and views on the role of government. Concern about policy issues relating to Ukraine plays a smaller role in vote choice but is discussed in detail given its salience in diaspora research and media.

#### **4.2 Wave, Generation, and Education**

A combination of migration wave and generation are important cleavages in the diaspora. All non-4<sup>th</sup> wave Ukrainians in this study were Democratic. Danylo, whose grandparents arrived in the 1<sup>st</sup> wave, noted the working-class roots that attracted many Ukrainians of that era to FDR. Some 3<sup>rd</sup> wave participants said their parents were independent or Democratic, but others said their parents were more conservative than they are. “The generation that immigrated to the states,

my grandparents, they were way more religious, and so with that, it's associated ideologies," said Taras. Early on in life, Taisia said she supported Republicans for their fiscal conservatism and anti-communism like many Ukrainians but became more liberal due to her education and being exposed to different views. Zlata echoed the importance of university education in shaping her commitment to liberal values like multiculturalism and social justice.

Among 4<sup>th</sup> wave Ukrainians, some in the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations said they are less conservative than their parents. Like members of the 3<sup>rd</sup> wave, they cite their American education and experiences in communities more diverse than the homes and church networks they were socialized in as politically formative. Older individuals also acknowledged the impact university educations and non-conservative circles have on shifting youth perspectives. Nina, who grew up in a conservative Christian environment, came to identify as a Democrat after attending university in Seattle and resonating with the region's progressive policies. Yaroslav argued that while some Ukrainians who got a college education like he did might forge their own path, many will continue the conservative values their strong family and church-based environments reinforce. Similarly, Denis suggested a lack of liberal arts degrees in his community might account for greater conservatism. For Sofia, education and personal research shaped her politics the most; she also said Ukrainians with more diverse friends seemed to be more Democratic. Svetlana, who felt many Ukrainians her age fall closer to the middle of the political spectrum like she does, summarized her ideological evolution as follows:

"I think working and going to school made me more open minded to not discriminating toward people. Not that my family discriminated, but I think because I was in this bubble of Ukrainians for the majority of my life before I became an adult, I really, really enjoyed going to college and then going to work because I got to meet so many different people. Was I always on the conservative side of things? Yes, but again, like I said, an open minded conservative. I love talking to people who believe different things."

The Democratic lean of this study's 3<sup>rd</sup> wave Ukrainians may be somewhat skewed due to these participants lacking religious affiliation (although none identified as atheist) as well as region, since Seattle is relatively progressive. Nonetheless, the findings for multiple waves relating to generation and education reflect broader trends in the U.S. public. College education and a decline in religious affiliation are associated with increased Democratic affiliation (Pew Research Center, 2020), as is being part of a younger generation (Griffin et al., 2020).

### **4.3 Religion and Values**

One of the strongest cleavages shaping Ukrainian partisanship is religious affiliation.<sup>1</sup> Ukrainians are a majority Christian group and 4<sup>th</sup> wave arrivals are especially likely to be evangelical Protestants, particularly of Baptist and Pentecostal denominations. There are smaller, yet enduring groups of Orthodox and Greek Catholic Ukrainians as well as plenty of Ukrainians for whom religious affiliation is not very relevant or important. Immigrant-based groups are often incorporated into U.S. society via existing co-national networks (Portes & Zhou, 1993); spiritual organizations serve as a major network, and especially so in the Ukrainian diaspora (Pawliczko, 1994). For this reason, religious settings play a crucial role in socializing Ukrainians to support certain values. "The way that Ukrainians live their lives is very much based on their religion," said Nina. Churches also provide a key space for the maintenance of Ukrainian identity. As Symon explained, "Church is not just religion. It's also a community where people gather of your culture, your language, who are close to you in spirit."

Most respondents of all religious affiliations said their church leaders did not frequently or directly discuss U.S. politics outside of praying for the nation. While political disengagement

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<sup>1</sup> Many participants in this study preferred the term "faith" over "religion" due to varying connotations associated with these terms. This study's more frequent use of the term "religion" is not intended to convey any negative connotations and is simply meant to reflect this term's usage in the academic literature.

was reportedly more pronounced among evangelicals, both disengagement and a lack of church discussion of politics seem to be shifting considerably in evangelical circles. Denis explained this change in his church as follows: “If you asked me ten years ago if this [politics] is a secular thing, I would say the majority would say yes. But now? Not as much. People are saying, ‘Well, it's affecting us, it's affecting our kids, so we have to stand up.’” Parties and candidates are not always openly named in church, but evangelical interviewees (and Catholic and Orthodox observers) described how evangelical Ukrainians value their pastors’ political recommendations.

Interviewees were very aware religious affiliation not only shapes partisanship, but also creates rifts between diaspora members and has led Ukrainians to organize into different diaspora organizations by faith. Congregations of all confessions were reported to be involved in praying for and sending aid to Ukraine. Outside of church, Catholic and Orthodox Ukrainians often participate in the same diaspora organizations while evangelicals largely engage in the diaspora through their churches (with notable exceptions). Politically speaking, evangelical Protestants strongly lean Republican; those in this sample struggled to identify any left-leaning evangelical acquaintances. Among the Catholic and Orthodox, there is a reported conservative tilt, but also more variation. In this study, those with no religious affiliation and those who were non-evangelical Protestants preferred Democrats. While not statistically representative, these findings reflect patterns in America – evangelicals are the faith group most likely to prefer the GOP and secular individuals tend to be Democratic. Yet a distinctly Ukrainian element is at play as well, as different aspects of Ukrainian identity are stressed based on one’s faith and values.

While many evangelicals associate being Ukrainian with being a person of faith given the church networks that define their community, they prioritize their religious identity. Their congregations also tend to be a mix of Slavic groups rather than only Ukrainians. In contrast,

faith, culture, and ethnicity are more intertwined for Catholic and Orthodox Ukrainians; this is unsurprising given that these churches have a longer history in Ukraine and have culturally and linguistically specific traditions. Two participants illustrate this contrast:

“Before I’m an American, before I’m a Ukrainian, before I’m a woman, before I’m a mother, before I’m anything – I’m a Christian. And so, I feel like that’s always going to be the first precedent off of where I see everything and how everything should be.” (Marina - evangelical)

“[The Washington diaspora is] pretty divided... between the more religious and mostly Protestant community that come from the country but identify with their religious identity more than their ethnic, then the other group who are mostly not Protestant, like Orthodox and Catholic, who I would say have a stronger sense of belonging to the Ukrainian ethnic group rather than religion, who carry more of the cultural rituals.” (Galina - Catholic)

In fact, some Catholic and Orthodox individuals expressed frustration that evangelicals putting their faith first often resulted in them being less patriotic for Ukraine and less involved in diaspora activities. Rostislav (evangelical) acknowledged this trend, citing the impact repression in the Soviet Union had on subduing both the ethnic and religious identity of Ukrainian Protestants, but also defended the Protestant approach:

“Often when people put their faith above their love for Ukraine, this is seen as not patriotic because love to Ukraine is understood differently. For me, love for Ukraine is to do what is beneficial for Ukraine and the people of Ukraine, to promote culture that is beneficial... there are things in our culture that I see are damaging for our country and I choose not to participate in that part of culture... And that’s what many Protestants do. They don’t blindly support everything.”

Evangelicals readily identified faith as the number one factor shaping their political views. One reason evangelicals greatly value their faith is because their families endured great persecution to preserve it. Many Catholic and Orthodox participants also value religious freedom and experienced religious repression, but this repression was not cited by them as frequently. Evangelicals spoke of relatives who were imprisoned and killed for their faith and described being barred from academic and vocational opportunities because they did not adhere to atheistic

principles or participate in communist party organizations. Stories of persecution passed down through generations continue to make religious issues highly salient for Ukrainian evangelicals and reinforce a particular spiritual understanding of Ukrainian identity.

Danylo, an Episcopalian who was once a Ukrainian Baptist, provided a perceptive list of issues that draw evangelicals to support Trump and the GOP more broadly: an anti-abortion position; an anti-LGBTQ position; support of Israel; fitting the mold of King Cyrus, who helped fulfill God's will despite not being a believer; value of individual responsibility, which connects with the evangelical message of Christ being a personal savior; and an aversion to socialism and its association with atheism. Each of these six factors was mentioned by evangelical participants, with abortion, LGBTQ, and religious freedom issues stressed most heavily. Several evangelicals cited abortion as their number one issue of concern due to the value of unborn children's souls. Many evangelicals explained they were willing to accept various rights for those who identify as LGBTQ but are increasingly wary of the government and various institutions promoting the normative acceptance of LGBTQ identity, especially among youth in schools. Several participants held similar sentiments as Oleg about LGBTQ issues:

“It's not just propaganda anymore, but the planting of ideology. It's a harmful ideology and I don't support it... I believe that every person has the right to their own expression. If someone wants it that way, that is his personal business. But it is not the business of the government to deal with these issues and plant these views... I don't have the right to tell you how to live, and you don't have the right to tell me how to live. I do have the right to see to it that you are not influencing my children, because they are my children. If I don't have the right to influence my children but you do, that is unfair. That is what we are dealing with today. It has nothing in common with freedom. It's dictatorship, in my view.”

Some evangelicals think several of their policy concerns could be solved with greater state support of Christian values, but others say greater general freedom is optimal. Ekaterina, for instance, argued society declined after Bible teaching was taken out of public schools and

liberals excessively embraced individual freedom. Yaroslav said he knows evangelicals who hoped Trump would essentially make Christianity the state religion. In contrast, several Ukrainians supported “across-the-board freedom” (Marina), citing the Soviet experience in which policies and ideologies limiting non-religious aspects of freedom ultimately contributed to religious restrictions. For many evangelicals, supporting the GOP was unavoidable given the contrast between their principles and those held by Democrats. When Yaroslav, a political independent and non-evangelical Protestant, spoke against Trump, he was accused of having “liberal disease” by evangelicals he grew up with. Not all evangelicals take such a categorical stance, but Bogdan spoke for many when he said the following:

“It’s either Democrat or Republican... Donald Trump, he stands with the Bible, he stands with God, he stands with being pro-life. I mean, you could say how he lives is a little different, but I don’t think he’s that bad. He’s embracing prayer, and if you’re a Christian person, I think those values are essential to you... So, I think any Christian person, a real Christian, born-again person, if he votes for the left, it’s absolutely – you can’t really justify it in any way.”

For the Orthodox and Catholics, faith was sometimes a major factor impacting political stances, but was more often one factor among several. There was also a less strong association between religious and social values and the Republican Party. Compared to evangelicals, more Orthodox, Catholic, and non-evangelical Christians were willing to distinguish between their personal morals and their desired government policy outcomes. For instance, Galina (Catholic) and Inessa (Orthodox) said that while they opposed abortion personally, they felt it was more of an individual matter than a state one. Many of these participants still held on to socially conservative views but did not always make these views policy priorities. For example, Evdokia (Christian) said she wished fewer Ukrainians would choose their candidates based on highly politicized issues like abortion and LGBTQ rights.

Several non-religiously affiliated or non-evangelical participants also expressed values tied to their Ukrainian upbringing that, while not religious, served as partisanship-shaping convictions. They cited their experiences being part of a minority ethnic and cultural group and being connected to immigration as factors that made them concerned about human rights, the support of vulnerable groups, diversity, and less restrictive immigration policies. For similar reasons, this group often found candidates' race and gender important in promoting diversity, in contrast to evangelicals who valued candidates' religion but said they did not usually factor in race or gender. Sentiments connecting Ukrainian roots with progressive values were particularly invoked by 3<sup>rd</sup> wave Ukrainians who grew up in a diaspora that valued preserving Ukrainian identity abroad as it was being suppressed in the homeland:

“I feel incredibly strongly that all people are equal. Again, I think my Ukrainian background informs me. As the daughter of immigrants who always referred to Americans as ‘they,’ I’ve always been sensitive to what it means to be even slightly an outsider, so I feel very, very strongly about equal rights for all... LGBTQ, race issues, color issues, sexual orientation, gender, abilities, disability, whatever... My love for human rights has its roots in Ukrainian culture” (Larysa)

“I think growing up, feeling a little bit like an outsider, not racially but culturally, gives me more of an appreciation for cultural diversity and makes me lean politically that way.” (Zlata)

“I feel like if any groups or communities are being discriminated... they should have the freedom to do whatever they want. Of course, making sure it’s legal... I experienced a lot of... discrimination as someone coming from a different country.” (Konstantin)

As previous quotes suggest, views on Trump also varied based on religious affiliation. Many evangelicals felt Trump’s negative qualities were exaggerated by the media but admitted his rhetoric and personal life were troubling. Nonetheless, most said they ultimately prioritized policy over personality. In their view, Trump was fulfilling goals that would impact the U.S. positively for years to come, such as appointing conservative judges. Denis, who was

considering voting third party, said the issue of judges was precisely what persuaded him to vote for Trump. Several evangelicals expressed the belief that Trump was divinely appointed, like King Cyrus, to further their religious community's cause, but few asserted he was a genuine believer himself. Grigori commented on Trump's connection with evangelicals as follows:

“They say that Trump is using Christians, evangelicals, that he is using them purely for his political goals... I don't believe he is using them, but even if he was, that would not bother me, because while he is using us, we in some way, not in a direct sense, use Trump as well. It's a win-win situation... I approach this more pragmatically and don't expect him to be a believer.”

The two non-evangelical Protestants in this study were both very critical of Trump. Yaroslav described Trump as “an ungodly, lying tyrant who has nothing to do with Christianity” and who manipulated evangelicals to gain their vote. Danylo said he would urge evangelicals to define morality not only as concern for sexual values or the unborn, but more broadly based on a holistic notion of justice described in the Bible. Views among the Catholic and Orthodox were mixed, but greater criticism of Trump was palpable. Secular Ukrainians condemned Trump on multiple ethical counts. In all groups, moral stances on Trump often connected with views on Trump's foreign policy actions; this juncture is discussed in greater detail in section 4.5.

#### **4.4. Views on the Role of Government**

Another common factor shaping Ukrainians' partisanship is their view of the proper role and influence of government. Many Ukrainians retain a strong suspicion of socialist and left-wing politics. This concern cut across religious affiliation but was also frequently informed by it. A substantial number of Ukrainians are concerned with government overreach and argue the Democratic Party is leading the U.S. toward the very socialism they and their families fled from. The view that the Democratic Party has swung too far left seems widespread not only within the

Ukrainian diaspora, but also among other Eastern Europeans in the U.S. (Bondarenko, 2017; Khazan, 2016).

Ramakrishnan and Espenshade (2001) find immigrating from or being born to migrants from a communist or repressive regime does not have a significant effect on voting rates one way or the other; such origins seem to be a mobilizing factor for some groups, like Cuban Americans who are motivated by anti-communism, and a dampening factor among those who distrust political systems, like many Vietnamese Americans (Collett, 2000). A distinct combination of these dynamics exists among 4<sup>th</sup> wave Ukrainians who lived in the USSR. For some time, 4<sup>th</sup> wave Ukrainians said the Soviet experience decreased their community's political engagement in the U.S. Participants spoke of there being a Soviet imprint on Ukrainians that makes them "accustomed from those times to not be active" (Grigori) and have a "keep your head down" attitude (Larysa). Two participants used the same saying to describe the mentality of Ukrainians: "*Moya hata s krayu, ya nechego ne znayu.*" This phrase, which translates to "My house is on the edge; I know nothing," conveys a sense of sociopolitical isolation. As Roman said, people with this mentality "are thinking through the prism of the Soviet Union... what mattered was not how you voted, but who counted..." The initial dampening effect was particularly pronounced among evangelicals, for whom negative political experiences in the homeland often combined with Christian pacifism, the belief that the church must operate independently of worldly matters, and a view of politics as dirty business. Like other Soviet citizens, they could not meaningfully participate in government, but they also faced additional layers of exclusion based on their faith:

"Believers in the Soviet Union were not even second-grade citizens, but third-grade ones. Accordingly, to get an education, to get a [political] position, and to be active in society – there was just no opportunity to do so. From this, particular upbringings and views on politics and the approach to politics naturally carried over here. For this reason, people never really participated in politics, but they did participate in spiritual issues, such as helping Ukraine..." (Oleg)

In recent years, however, comparisons between the American left and the Soviet Union are not only mobilizing more Ukrainians to vote but are also pushing them to identify more strongly with the GOP. For many of these Ukrainians, socialist policies are seen as ultimately leading to socialism, which then slides into even more repressive communism. People of various faith backgrounds, but especially evangelicals, also discussed socialism as an ideology that misunderstands the fundamental nature of mankind as fallen and self-interested:

“I don’t like the [Democratic Party’s] inclination toward socialism, to socialistic, communistic, liberal ideas. That’s what I don’t like most of all. We lived through that in the Soviet Union. We know what it is and what it leads to.” (Symon)

“Let them present me with one example of a country where socialism existed and developed successfully. There is not one. They mention Sweden – but this isn’t socialism. There are elements of socialism there, but it’s not close to socialism at all, because socialism does not have any private ownership... following the theories of Karl Marx. It seems to me that these theories are completely lifeless. They completely ignore the essence of man. They offer an illusion in place of reality, and this illusion must later be paid for with blood.” (Oleg)

Referring back to White et al. (2008), the dampening effect of Soviet regime experiences on the political integration of the 4<sup>th</sup> wave is an example of the resistance theory at work. In addition to facing other obstacles to immigrant incorporation, Ukrainians of this wave had less experience with democratic processes and more negative views of politics even if they appreciated the American system. However, experience with the political system over time and increased analogical reasoning between Soviet and American experiences seem to be increasing the 4<sup>th</sup> wave’s political participation; this demonstrates the exposure and transfer dynamics, respectively. Grigori summarized this ongoing transformation in his community as follows:

“Now, having lived in America, we changed our views. Not all of us, but a certain portion of us have come to the conclusion that it’s not only needed, but necessary to participate because this affects our future.”

A second camp of Ukrainians believe in the merit of some socialistic policies and do not believe Democrats are heading toward socialism. This group is largely composed of those who support Democrats and those who are more politically independent; they are also less likely to identify as evangelical. These Ukrainians draw a meaningful distinction between socialist policies and/or socialism and communism by citing differences between the Soviet experience in Ukraine and socialist policies in other nations. In fact, many in this group said a robust and institutionalized system of social support was a major political priority for them. As long as freedoms are protected, these Ukrainians argued socialistic policies or democratic socialism will not lead to a repressive system like the Soviet Union:

“If you think about capitalism and socialism, socialism does not value the individual. Democrats actually have the value of the individual as their main point... Yes, I think Democrats want to have some socialistic things to help people, but that doesn't mean they're socialists. I think we're confused with communism and if we think about having some kind of government help from people will lead to a communistic country, that's not true. We need to take care of people who are less fortunate than we are.” (Evdokia)

“I keep telling him [Ukrainian friend], the only socialism you know is communist socialism, which I agree with you about, but it doesn't even follow that if you begin flirting with socialism that you inevitably end up in communism. There are other models that America, if the will of the people through their democratically elected representatives chose to go there, could be viable. I think education is mightily important in this whole political discussion, but it's so poisoned that it's hard to have rational, data-based conversation.” (Danylo)

“I think communism is an incredibly horrible disaster, because the concept itself might sound nice, but in reality, as we know, I don't think we know of any country in the world that has implemented communism in that ideal way. Mainly we know of the Soviet Union, we know of China... where communism has been just a sham. It's authoritarian, totalitarian, incredibly unjust... My view of socialism is quite the opposite. For me, socialism is sort of a gentle version of capitalism... I would say that as much as I have a very positive view of socialism, I am very careful not to necessarily say that clearly or talk about that clearly, especially in Ukrainian circles, cause lots of Ukrainians have bought into the Trump propaganda and wrongly equate socialism with communism.” (Larysa)

A generational effect is also at play, as those who did not experience the Soviet regime directly are less likely to draw analogies to it. Many who are of the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation in the 4<sup>th</sup> wave do cite Soviet and post-Soviet developments, but they do not make comparisons to the U.S. as often as Ukrainians who lived in the USSR. Several felt the socialist threat is exaggerated while others shared concerns with older generations. For instance, Yaroslav had very negative views of communism but was open to forms of democratic socialism that exist in Europe; he argued the labeling of Democrats as socialists is “fueled by old stereotypes from communist times where it’s easy to brand someone as a communist and then have everyone hate them and refuse to engage in some sort of dialogue.” Sofia, who prefers Democrats and said the U.S. constitution is a barrier to full-fledged socialism, still had the following reservations:

“I’m not sure I’m openly comfortable saying I’m a Democrat, because I don’t agree with every single value that they have, especially when it comes to socialism. Because... with my parents, the communism that they went through, that’s kind of difficult. I just wouldn’t want to see that happen here.”

Ukrainians who don’t see the specter of socialism may not draw analogies between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, but they sometimes do reference post-Soviet authoritarians when raising concerns about Republicans. Multiple interviewees said the GOP has devolved into a personality cult around Trump and said they were disturbed by his admiration for dictators and inclination toward authoritarianism. “He’s a Putin wannabe. He wants to have power like Putin,” said Galina. Along similar lines, Zlata said Trump’s decision to respond to the summer protests of 2020 with the threat of military force reminded her of Yanukovich’s response to Maidan protestors. Evdokia theorized some Ukrainians might be attracted to Trump’s “toughness” and “dictatorship” if they were nostalgic for Soviet law and order. Further sentiments about Trump and the GOP are the focus of the following section.

## 4.5 The Ukraine Connection

### 4.5.A. The Trump Question

Following Kuo et al.'s (2017) argument that situational factors can activate the political salience of certain identities, concerns regarding Ukraine may lead some Ukrainians to shift their party choice, even if temporarily. Past studies and articles note this has occurred in the diaspora before (Fink, 1997; Fedynsky, 2020), and Nikolko (2019) explains how serious threats like the crisis that started with Crimea's annexation can function as a re-actualizing force that unites Ukrainians abroad around a victimization narrative. Were Trump's controversial actions relating to Russia and Ukraine a re-actualizing or vote-shifting force in the diaspora? Headlines such as "Welcome to Ukrainian-Americans, the Latest Constituency Alienated by Trump" (Kozloff, 2017) and "Ukrainian-Americans, Long Fond of the GOP, Greet Donald Trump with Despair" (Stolberg, 2016), suggest that may be the case. Yet as discussed earlier, other diaspora-related media indicate a divided diaspora and limited changes in party choice. This study's findings comport with the latter body of work. Instead of uniting the diaspora around a common narrative in defense of Ukraine, the fallout surrounding Trump's actions actually reinforced partisanship and existing divides in the diaspora. In other words, underlying cleavages and party loyalties mediated responses to Trump's foreign policy choices more so than homeland concerns.

This study's findings also support arguments raised in Mirilovic and Pollock's (2018) work on Latinos, which explores how partisanship affects how migrants and their descendants engage in political issues related to their homeland. They find greater Republican affiliation does not lead to significantly lower general interest in the homeland or in the wellbeing of friends and family, but it does lead to reduced *political* transnationalism. Those with greater Democratic affiliation, higher education levels, and greater interest in U.S. politics are more likely to follow

country-of-origin politics. The authors attribute these differences to contrasting partisan views on American identity, cultural integration, and immigration, with Democrats being more likely to support multiculturalism and the maintenance of international ties.

These trends were present in this study's participants, albeit with exceptions and some diaspora-specific qualities. Most participants, and particularly first-generation Ukrainians, maintain emotional, familial, and material ties with Ukraine. Through diaspora organizations, churches, or institutions in Ukraine itself, many participants contribute to humanitarian projects, war efforts, and civic goals in the homeland. However, there is wide variation in terms of how aware the participants are about Ukrainian politics and foreign policy relating to Ukraine. For example, while most participants had some awareness that Trump's interactions with Russia and Ukraine caused controversy, several did not know Trump's first impeachment was directly tied to Ukraine or that Trump put military aid to Ukraine on hold. Higher levels of interest in issues related to Ukrainian politics were found among those who did not lean Republican, engaged in diaspora activities (in addition to or outside of their churches), expressed higher interest in politics in general, had more immediate family ties in Ukraine, and said they strongly value their Ukrainian identity. Earlier, it was noted religion often splits diaspora organizations and that evangelicals often prioritize their faith before other aspects of identity. This was reflected in non-evangelicals generally reporting more detailed knowledge of political issues tied to Ukraine and greater engagement in diaspora groups outside of church, although there are also many highly invested evangelicals. Members of the 3<sup>rd</sup> wave in this study were also very informed about Ukrainian foreign policy issues, which can be partially attributed to their membership in diaspora organizations and upbringings that emphasized maintaining Ukrainian identity and interests abroad. Again, there is certainly variation within these trends. Since many Ukrainians care about

the homeland, what often emerges in Trump-related situations is not an absence of concern, but differing interpretations based on different narratives provided by media outlets and parties.

Among those who supported or preferred Trump, many individuals denied there was anything problematic about Trump's actions while others (typically those who were highly interested in Ukraine-related politics) had both criticisms and defenses. Frequently cited concerns included Trump's friendly rhetoric toward Putin and negative rhetoric about Ukraine, inclusion of Manafort in his campaign team, and failure to treat Ukraine as a strategic partner. Yet these concerns were mitigated by a variety of factors. Several participants attributed Trump's friendliness with Putin to a desire to recalibrate U.S.-Russian relations and cultivate a strategic partner against growing Chinese power. Few had serious concerns about Trump colluding with Russia, although one participant raised the possibility that Russia might have *kompromat* on Trump. Multiple interviewees commented that while some of Trump's rhetoric was undesirable, his administration's policies, such as providing Ukraine with weapons and upholding Russian sanctions, showed them he was promoting their overall goals in regard to Ukraine and Russia:

“For me, what is important is that he supports Ukraine at the moment... From what he says, it sounds like he is against it, but his actions show the reverse. With Obama, he said he supported Ukraine fully, but in actions, it was the reverse. In politics, they say one thing and do another.” (Pavel)

“It's not that I believe, but that I know that it was Trump who did more good for Ukraine than his predecessor. Aside from declarations, his predecessor did nothing. He did everything in his power for the Budapest Memorandum to not work. His predecessor did not give a single coin for weaponry and did not give any weapons... There were sanctions under Obama, but they were purely cosmetic, as they did not really affect Russia. What Trump has done... he didn't start by playing games with Russia. Right away, he drove out 60 diplomats from America and closed embassies, including the one in Seattle. Such actions haven't been taken since the Cold War.” (Oleg)

Trump's phone call with Zelensky, in which he asked the Ukrainian president to investigate Biden's son (who had business ties in Ukraine) as well as whether Ukraine (as

opposed to Russia) was involved in hacking the DNC server, was not a major concern for most right-leaning participants. Even if they felt the phone call was not ideal, participants said such conversations take place all the time in the world of politics and that looking into the possible corruption of the Bidens was appropriate. Many interviewees were agnostic regarding whether Trump pressured Zelensky to pursue the investigations by withholding military aid, with some citing Zelensky's statement that there was no pressure as well as the possibility that the aid was withheld due to funds being used corruptly in Ukraine:

“I don't think any rules were broken. Maybe some of them were bent, but not broken.... I am Ukrainian. If anything, I would feel it, you know? I did not feel any of that was happening.” (Bogdan)

“He [Trump] was essentially implying look into the whole Biden's son corporation thing.... That to me was not scandalous. I understand in the end that it could have benefited his political campaign, if he had unraveled some corruption, but I don't think there's anything wrong with unraveling corruption... I think that's regular politics. I don't see what's so scandalous about that.” (Marina)

“I don't consider this phone call to be worthy of full justification, but I don't consider it a sufficient reason for impeaching Trump. I think it's a political game that is sometimes dirty that both Democrats and Republicans can be involved in... I don't know the exact reason he withheld it [the aid]. If it's to make Zelensky investigate, maybe this doesn't seem fully right to me, as a common person. How this is evaluated in the political world, I'm not sure... we can't judge objectively because we don't know the reason.” (Grigori)

Participants also said they felt Democrats and the media were intent on undermining Trump, and thus exaggerated or fabricated his interactions with Russia and Ukraine. Several Ukrainians questioned why Trump was scrutinized so heavily while three other situations remained uninvestigated: Hillary Clinton allegedly granting uranium rights to Russians as Secretary of State in exchange to foundation donations; Hunter Biden receiving a very high salary on the board of Ukrainian energy firm Burisma; and Biden leveraging a billion dollars in loan guarantees until Poroshenko fired Prosecutor General Shokin, who these interviewees

claimed was investigating Biden's son at the time.<sup>2</sup> Some took issue with Biden making such a demand whether or not they thought he did so for personal reasons. These participants argued Trump's actions did not warrant impeachment and the Senate's acquittal proved his innocence:

“If there's reason to think someone should be impeached, I'm cool with looking into it... I guess that's where I realized that just because somebody talks or seems like a bad person, it doesn't necessarily mean what he's being accused of is true... Honestly, for me it's hard to believe that other presidents who weren't considered to be impeached for such things didn't do such things... if the roles were reversed and there was a Democratic leader, I'd be interested to see what the response from Democrats would be...” (Svetlana)

“America should more seriously investigate between Ukraine, Biden, and his son... If Trump said today to Zelensky – ‘Remove that guy and that guy,’ what do you think Democrats here would say? Right? But Biden was not embarrassed to say, ‘I'm giving you five or six hours between my flight from Kyiv to New York for you to remove –’ forgive me for saying it as he did – ‘that son of a b\*\*\*\* Shokin.’ ... But because Trump talked abstractly with Zelensky, impeachment was raised against him.” (Oleg)

Furthermore, participants who preferred Trump often said that even if his actions were negatively impacting Ukraine, they would still vote for him because they prioritized more fundamental values as well as domestic issues:

“I have to think not just about Ukraine, but about America, because this is where my kids and my grandkids are and their future. So, if Trump does not care about Ukraine at this point, it's sad to say, but he cares about America, and that's what is most important to me now. Yes, it's horrible to say I sacrifice Ukraine, but America is my country and the future of my kids. So, to vote for Biden because he can do something good for Ukraine, when I don't even know if it will happen or not, would be a completely ridiculous step from my side.” (Julia)

“I also don't like how Trump approaches Ukraine... But from a long-term perspective, the politics not just of Trump, but more conservative politics in general, are more advantageous for the world, including Ukraine. Conservative in what sense? Economics, which must be considered. Values like family values and religious values. Concern for the interests of one's country... Biden is more anti-Russia and pro-Ukraine, and yes, he would probably do a bit more for Ukraine,

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<sup>2</sup> It must be noted that no evidence has surfaced against Clinton or Biden's son in regard to the first two matters (Emery, 2016; Miller, 2019). In regard to the latter situation, Shokin's office opened an investigation of Burisma years prior to Hunter Biden's arrival and Shokin was subject to bipartisan and international calls for his removal.

but then it turns out that I would not be objective... If you have values, then you have to approach everything consistently...” (Symon)

Those who did not support Trump or the GOP saw Trump’s foreign policy actions as further confirmation of his lack of principles. Not all of these participants believed Trump engaged in outright collusion with Russia or was aware of the inappropriateness of his phone call with Zelensky, but they felt he needed to face the consequences of his actions. Some suspected Trump was threatened by Russian *kompromat* or motivated by business ties to Russia. While most said Trump’s phone call and subsequent withholding of aid were clear quid pro quo and the Senate’s acquittal was a partisan move, many also argued impeachment should have been tied to several counts, like the Mueller investigation’s findings and unfitness for office:

“The impeachment should not have been based on this [the phone call], but on the Mueller investigation. The phone call was just a sudden method to call for an impeachment. This might have even helped Trump out. He was more harmed than the Mueller investigation than the phone call with Zelensky.” (Maxim)

“It [the phone call] was clear blackmail. He was pressuring Zelensky in exchange for particular conditions... to listen to this demand from the president, it was shocking. I didn’t think it would fly. I thought this would end very badly for Trump, but apparently he gets more support than I thought.” (Evdokia)

“Given that the ambassador to Ukraine was immediately withdrawn from that service, given that the attention to Ukraine was immediately shifted in that regard, I think Trump is acting entirely in the interests of Vladimir Putin. Again, we lost a tremendous opportunity to be an ally to Ukraine...” (Taras)

While conservative Ukrainians expressed frustration toward liberals for not recognizing U.S. support for Ukraine under Trump, Ukrainians who oppose Trump criticized what they saw as disinformation, conspiratorial thinking, misjudgment, and rationalization in the former camp:

“The Ukrainian community here in Seattle, they all say first comes religion, then comes being Ukrainian. So, a lot of them are like, ‘Sure, Trump is bad for Ukraine, but who cares about Ukraine? It’s a terrible country.... Trump is doing amazing things for Christianity. And we should elect him, and who cares about if Ukrainians get slaughtered in the Russian-Ukrainian war.’” (Yaroslav)

“Many of them don’t talk about it or refuse to admit that Trump and Russia are somehow correlated because so many of them do actually support Trump, so they either forget about it or don’t care about Ukrainian issues enough for that to be important to them... Trump’s supporters are like a cult.” (Sofia)

“What I think is very interesting and unusual and weird is how our Ukrainian Republicans have justified all of that stuff. Some of the Ukrainian Republicans I know at my church are so incredibly strong about their beliefs that to raise it with them would create a very ugly scene, and so I haven’t asked them, but I wonder about it. Frankly speaking, I think they just tell themselves more lies and live in an alternative universe, basically.” (Larysa)

Meanwhile, those who were more politically unaffiliated and did not express a strong candidate preference in 2020 held a mix of views as well as uncertainty. For instance, Roman was bothered by Trump’s decision to withhold aid to Ukraine as well as Hunter Biden’s business connections but said he did not have enough information to interpret the situations conclusively. For Veronika, Trump’s actions toward Russia and Ukraine were confusing and contradicting.

As has been demonstrated, views on Trump’s foreign policy abound. In an attempt to evaluate political concerns about Ukraine outside the parameters of the heated 2020 election, participants were also asked more generally whether they would vote for a candidate they liked if he or she would negatively impact Ukraine. Zlata recalled her father would say, “I vote for whoever is best for Ukraine,” and Galina said she would likely change her position if a candidate was not helpful to Ukraine. Yet for the vast majority of participants of all political orientations, domestic interests and core values came first. Ukrainian foreign policy was not a dealbreaker unless the scenario was extreme, such as allowing Russia to seize more territory. In a situation where they felt they could not vote for such a candidate, most Ukrainians said they would vote third party or abstain from voting instead of casting a ballot for the party they dislike. Foreign policy relating to Ukraine and Russia did matter for most participants, but they stressed it was one factor they considered among many:

“Who am I loyal to the most? I like to think that I’m the most loyal to God. So, sometimes it’s a very hard decision, but it will be made based on their position on biblical values. Of course, I think that tolerating killing of innocent people of Ukraine or aggression against Ukraine or other country is not biblical, but based on a complex of supported or not supported issues, I will be making a decision.” (Rostislav)

“I would say that as much as I care deeply about Ukraine... I’m a very committed internationalist and I’m actually more interested in the welfare of people around the world generally... If it were somebody who would do the world a lot of good and do Ukraine some real harm, but if they were to do the world a lot of good, I would still be voting for that.” (Larysa)

“I don’t know why, but I know that he [Trump] has said that Ukrainians are horrible people... He’s definitely more pro-Russia than pro-Ukraine, but I’m not really bothered about that... I’m not even sure if it’s in my top ten issues that I’m concerned about in politics. There’s a lot more issues that affect me more directly, and the communities surrounding me.” (Denis)

“If we’re talking about the presidential election and I know that the person will really bring harm to Ukraine, maybe I would doubt voting for them. I don’t know... My heart hurts for Ukraine, of course, but I live here. Ukrainians must choose who they vote for themselves.” (Inessa)

In sum, these findings suggest that while Trump’s actions did cause concern among Ukrainians, the impact this concern had on vote choice and partisanship was not as strong as some diaspora-related articles suggest. Partisan reasoning and value prioritization strongly mediate interest in and interpretations of politics relating to the homeland. Thus, Trump’s actions led to less re-actualization of diaspora unity and more reinforcement of partisan preferences.

#### **4.5.B. The Immigration Question**

It is also worth asking whether the restrictive approach to immigration promoted by Trump and the GOP alienated Ukrainians given their background. Immigrant status is a known predictor of Democratic affiliation even when controlling for other variables, and this effect impacts multiple generations (Hawley, 2019). Correspondingly, some Ukrainians have raised concerns about Trump’s immigration policies by referencing their own history of displacement

(Pylyshenko Kolcio et al., 2018). The fact that many Ukrainians rely on the Lautenberg Amendment, which hinges on annual congressional renewals, also produces some anxiety (Jordan, 2020). Even so, the diaspora's response to immigration mirrors its response to Trump's foreign policy choices – different narratives emerge based on core values and party preference.

Indeed, research shows partisanship is key in shaping immigration opinions (Masuoka & Junn, 2013; Abrajano & Hanjal, 2015). Left-leaning participants were largely in favor of more expansive and compassionate immigration policies. This was closely connected to the value they placed on their background as immigrants or the descendants of immigrants; for some, this identity was even more important than their Ukrainian one. Those who preferred Democrats also expressed frustration with those who do not understand the obstacles to legal immigration. A few Democrats were more cautious about certain progressive immigration positions. For instance, Galina said she supports legal entry and thinks it is unreasonable to expect Americans to embrace unrestricted immigration, but she also criticized Trump's policies, such as child separation and significantly reducing refugee admissions, as being “not very Christian at all.”

More conservative participants generally supported Trump's policies, rooting their arguments in the rule of law and their family's legal immigration. They also frequently paired critiques of the GOP's approach to immigration with defenses of it. For example, Yuriy said he appreciates the greater support Democratic social welfare programs give to immigrants but also raised concerns about the misuse of those programs. Similarly, Bogdan said he believes his family benefitted from Democratic policies when they immigrated, but argued the U.S. has no need for more immigrants currently. Pavel criticized the construction of a border wall as inefficient and unnecessary, but also questioned why Trump was criticized for policies that were also carried out by Democratic presidents, such as high deportation levels under Obama.

Individuals with more conservative religious views also tended to hold more strict views on immigration and have greater concerns about religious change caused by non-Christian immigrants. At the same time, as two politically unaffiliated evangelicals demonstrated, religious values are also used to construct pro-immigrant arguments based on human welfare and rights. Roman, who said he is “not a supporter of building walls,” argued sanctuary cities follow a Biblical model and noted the first U.S. settlers fled religious persecution. Nadezhda, who came to America to support family, said, “I can’t wish for less [immigration], because someone may have great misfortune and he may really want to be here, for God to protect him.”

Race also plays a role in shaping immigration opinions. Non-white minority and migrant-based groups are more likely than white groups to experience discrimination that leads to greater Democratic affiliation (Cain et al., 1991; Kuo et al., 2017). Ukrainians, while a minority ethnic group, do not face much contemporary discrimination and are racialized as white. Like others from the former USSR, they may express some level of sympathy for immigrants due to a shared background but are often ambivalent about anti-immigrant policies since they do not feel personally affected (Sadowski-Smith, 2018). This distancing was noted by several participants:

“It’s weird cause they’re immigrants, and I tried to talk to them about immigration rights, but somehow they don’t associate themselves as immigrants...Their beliefs about immigration don’t align with who they are.... They’re very against open borders and allowing anyone in. They don’t like that Mexicans are taking all the jobs. I’m like, this is stupid, because it’s not true...” (Nina)

“I think a lot of Ukrainians that are immigrants or children of immigrants like me, they have this idea that they’re immigrants, and they made it, and they’re doing well, and they don’t understand why it’s not like that for every immigrant. They’re like, we worked really hard, and we made it happen, and we’re living the American dream and the American dream works. I don’t think they realize that a lot of that is because they’re white, and so it’s much easier for white immigrants to achieve in one generation here than it is for non-whites who aren’t given the same opportunity. I don’t think Ukrainians have been handed anything, necessarily, but they also haven’t been institutionally set back.” (Taisia)

Moreover, Wallace and Zepeda-Millán (2020) demonstrate people who feel demographically and culturally threatened support more restrictive immigration policies; they also note Republicans are not likely to see anti-immigration policies as racist. Although conservative participants did not raise racialized arguments against immigration specifically, some did express negative stereotypes about other racial groups when discussing other topics; coupled with broader discussions of racism in Slavic cultures, this indicates racial evaluations do play a role in shaping the stances of some Ukrainians on immigration. More often, participants raised concerns about how immigration might lead to negative changes in the nation's values, religious landscape, and culture. Several participants distinguished Ukrainians from other migrant groups by describing them as a hardworking and law-abiding model minority. Some were particularly wary of Muslim immigrants posing a greater security threat and refusing to accept American values. Ekaterina and Julia argued some immigrants arrive with negative attitudes toward America and an intention to misuse welfare programs, while Rostislav cautioned against immigrants who bring negative norms from their home country:

“We should be welcome to those immigrants as well as long as they know what country they're immigrating to and accept rules of this country. I don't like seeing people escaping from massive mess in their country and trying to bring here whatever they're escaping in their country. This is true for Ukrainians as well who are used to corruption and sometimes still have that mentality that it's okay to do it here in the United States.”

These findings imply immigration does not shape the party choice of Ukrainians so much as partisanship prefaces their views on the subject. The diaspora's divided response to immigration thus reflects its reaction to Trump's engagements with Russia and Ukraine. Since both Ukrainians who are in favor of less restrictive and more restrictive immigration policies cite aspects of their own immigrant background to support their positions, immigrant identity does not produce uniform effects on party affiliation in the diaspora.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

As the first in-depth study of the Ukrainian diaspora's partisanship in America, this work uncovers political rationales and nuances that have long been absent from academic and non-academic discussions. Ukrainian identity and its associated experiences may not be a major partisanship-shaping factor for most interviewees, but it does inform other key factors in important and varied ways. When it comes to wave, generation, and education, greater time spent in America and exposure to higher education are associated with a less strong connection to socially conservative aspects of Ukrainian culture, and thus conservative politics as well.

As for religion and key values, Ukrainians cite different aspects of their identity to explain their positions. Evangelical Ukrainians often invoke accounts of persecution to explain why their faith is so central to their lives and politics. Orthodox and Catholic Ukrainians see faith and ethnicity as more closely entwined than evangelicals, but they also place less importance on their personal principles being reflected in public policy. Secular and non-evangelical Ukrainians often attribute their concern for human rights issues and diversity to the history of Ukrainian suppression and a sense of solidarity with other immigrant groups.

Regarding views on the role of government, there is a division between Ukrainians who draw analogies between the socialist Soviet system and the Democratic Party and those who draw comparisons between post-Soviet authoritarian leaders and the Republican Party. The types of analogies individuals make are often tied to other factors, such as generation and values, yet what is notable is how comparisons between the homeland and the U.S. hold out across multiple generations. Finally, Ukrainians' varied reactions to political questions impacting Ukraine and immigration highlight the diverse ways in which the negotiation of homeland concerns and other policy interests can be expressed and defended.

The interaction between partisanship and Ukrainian identity can thus be described as an interdependent, discursive, and ongoing process. Ukrainian experiences contribute to party preferences in distinct yet diverse ways, and in turn, partisanship influences what elements of Ukrainian identity are emphasized. Even though the distinctly Ukrainian element often decreases across generations, it played an important role in laying the foundation for which political issues are prioritized and discussed in the diaspora. For this particular diaspora, the way its members came to relate to American politics was strongly informed by Ukrainians' experiences with imperialism, Soviet policies, and post-Soviet developments. These dynamics remain at play today even as Ukrainians become increasingly integrated into U.S. society. Similar partisanship-forming processes can be expected in other diasporas, but each with their own unique combination of homeland and host country experiences.

The findings discussed here also provide context for further avenues of research. Although this work identifies potent themes regarding Ukrainian partisanship in America, it is limited by its sample size and geographic location. Further studies could examine whether there are meaningful differences among Ukrainians based on their location in the U.S. and look into differences by wave and generation more closely. Along similar lines, it would be worth investigating whether political views differ based on what region of Ukraine people originate from or what immigration pathway they took; such differences were not identified in this study but could be visible in a larger sample. Since this study focuses on partisanship-forming forces at the individual level, future work could consider how these forces operate in various diaspora organizations, and particularly in political ones given that they typically stress the importance of pursuing bipartisan support. This study can also provide groundwork for comparative research on Ukrainians in other countries as well as diasporas from other East European, Slavic, or post-

Soviet regions. Identifying shared and divergent partisanship-shaping factors among these groups can illuminate how political and cultural forces deriving from the region of origin influence political engagement post-migration. Given that much political research on diasporas focuses on how diasporas influence homeland politics, greater attention to how homeland experiences and identities shape host country politics is needed.

Finally, this study can serve as a platform for more political discussion and engagement among Ukrainians in the U.S. Even though many interviewees noted a shift toward greater political interest in the diaspora in recent years, they also called on their fellow Ukrainians to make an active effort to become more involved, and as Denis aptly noted, education is the key to effective involvement. It is my hope that Ukrainians use these findings to become more knowledgeable of their diaspora and fulfill the aspirations of its diverse and vibrant members:

“We should have discussion in our community where people can get together with different opinions and have conversations about this. I hope that we’ll grow to the point in the near future to where we see this as important and beneficial and we will do it... It’s good to have discussion, to have different opinions. That’s how we can find the truth, or what’s close to the truth. By having discussion, we can become stronger and more united.” (Rostislav)

“Be the reason why Ukrainian Americans are doing amazing things... They came here, probably not expecting to have any rights, and they probably didn’t because they were immigrants, but now that we’re Ukrainian Americans, we have a say and I think we need to start speaking.” (Nina)

## Appendix A: Participant Chart and Notes

Pseudonym	Age range	Gender	Wave	Generation	Year immigrated	Citizen
Sofia	Teens	F	4th	2	N/A	Y
Bogdan	20s	M	4th	1.5 (8 yrs.)	2005	Y
Svetlana	20s	F	4th	1.5 (9 mos.)	1998	Y
Marina	20s	F	4th	2	N/A	Y
Denis	20s	M	4th	2	N/A	Y
Konstantin	20s	M	4th	1.5 (10 yrs.)	2007	Y
Yaroslav	20s	M	4th	2	N/A	Y
Diana	20s	F	4th	1	2019	N
Nina	20s	F	4th	2	N/A	Y
Rostislav	30s	M	4th	1	2006	Y
Roman	30s	M	4th	1	2016	N
Yuriy	40s	M	4th	1	1997	Y
Zoya	40s	F	4th	1	2016	N
Taras	40s	M	3rd	2	N/A	Y
Evdokia	40s	F	4th	1	2001	Y
Galina	40s	F	4th	1	2004	Y
Julia	50s	F	4th	1	1996	Y
Pavel	50s	M	4th	1	2002	Y
Grigori	50s	M	4th	1	1991	Y
Veronika	50s	F	4th	1	1992	Y
Zlata	50s	F	3rd	2	N/A	Y
Taisia	50s	F	3rd	2	N/A	Y
Inessa	50s	F	4th	1	1995	Y
Symon	60s	M	4th	1	1994	Y
Oleg	60s	M	4th	1	2004	Y
Larysa	60s	F	3rd	2	N/A	Y
Ekaterina	70s	F	4th	1	1998	Y
Nadezhda	70s	F	4th	1	2010	N
Maxim	70s	M	4th	1	2005	Y
Danylo	70s	M	1st	3	N/A	Y

### Notes:

#### Waves per Wolowyna (2019):

- 1<sup>st</sup>: 1890 – 1914
- 2<sup>nd</sup>: 1922 – 1936
- 3<sup>rd</sup>: 1945 – 1953
- 4<sup>th</sup>: 1989 – present

#### Generations:

- 1<sup>st</sup>: Immigrated
- 1.5: Immigrated before 18 yrs. old
- 2<sup>nd</sup>: Born in U.S. to migrants
- 3<sup>rd</sup>: Born to children of migrants

#### Religious self-description of participants:

- 13: Evangelical Protestants; several non-denominational and Baptist, but most Pentecostal
- 4: Ukrainian Greek Catholics
- 4: No religious affiliation, but not atheist
- 3: Ukrainian Orthodox
- 2: Christians; infrequent church attendance
- 1: Non-denominational Protestant
- 1: Episcopalian
- 1: Some Ukrainian Orthodox affiliation; no church attendance
- 1: Some Ukrainian Greek Catholic affiliation; rare church attendance

## Appendix B: Abridged Interview Guide

### GENERAL

1. How old are you? Where were you born?
2. What city do you live in now?
3. When did you immigrate, or when did your family immigrate (and who)?
4. Why did you/your family immigrate? When you arrived, who did you know here, if anyone?
5. What oblast/part of Ukraine are you/your family from?
6. What was your immigration status when you immigrated/what visa did you come on?
7. Do you think you might ever move back to Ukraine? Why or why not?
8. What is your status here now? If you are a citizen, what year did you become one?
9. If you could have dual Ukrainian citizenship, would you?
10. What's your educational background?
11. What is or was your profession, if any? Did you have a different profession in Ukraine?
12. Are you religious? If not, do you consider yourself atheist or agnostic? If you are religious, what religion/denomination are you?
13. Why are you this religion or why do you lack a religious affiliation?
14. How important is religion in your daily life?
15. Who goes to your church? (Mix of nationalities, Slavic people, mostly Ukrainians, etc.).

### UKRAINIAN IDENTITY

16. What does being Ukrainian mean to you? How important is your Ukrainian identity to you?
17. In what ways are you Ukrainian (ethnicity, place you were born, official nationality, etc.)? Do you have any other ethnic backgrounds/nationalities?
18. How do you maintain Ukrainian identity? Are you part of any Ukrainian organization or community group?
19. How would you describe Ukrainian culture? What do you like/dislike most about it? How would you describe American culture? What do you like/dislike most about it?
20. What languages do you speak at home? List them in order of usage.
21. Do you stay connected with family/friends back in Ukraine? If so, how?

### GENERAL POLITICS

22. What kinds of political engagement do you find most important? What are some ways you are politically involved in U.S. politics, if any? If you do not consider yourself politically involved, please explain why.
23. If you are a citizen, do you vote? What elections do you vote in (local, state, federal)? If you do not vote, please explain why.
24. What political issues matter most important to you? These issues can be broad or specific.
25. What do you think are the main political problems in the U.S.?
26. What are the top factors that influence your political views? What would you say is your top factor and why?
27. Do you consider a candidate's race/ethnicity important when choosing who to vote for? Why or why not?
28. Do you consider a political candidate's gender when choosing who to vote for? What do you think of women running for political office?

29. Do you consider a political candidate's religion when choosing who to vote for? Why or why not?
30. What do you think about privatized vs. universal healthcare?
31. What do you think about LGBT issues?
32. What do you think about abortion?
33. How strong of an issue do you consider racial/ethnic discrimination in the U.S. to be? For example, extremely serious, not sure/mixed feelings, or not an issue at all.
34. How often do you read news about U.S. politics? Where do you get your political information and news?

#### PARTY QUESTIONS

35. Do you prefer: 1. Republican 2. Democrat 3. Independent/unaligned 4. Other.
36. What do you like/dislike about the two major parties?
37. Have you always preferred your preferred party, or did you change your party preference in the past?
38. Have you ever voted for someone who was not part of your preferred party? If so, why? If you have not voted for someone from a different party, would you ever consider doing so? If not, why? If yes, what would motivate you to vote for the other party?

#### ELECTION/ADMINISTRATION QUESTIONS

39. What are the top qualities/positions you look for in a presidential candidate?
40. What are your thoughts on Obama's presidency, if any?
41. Who did you want to win in the 2016 election? Why? If you were a citizen, did you vote?
42. Who do you hope wins in the 2020 election? Why? Did you support anyone more than the current 2 candidates?
43. What are your thoughts on Trump?
44. If you are married, which U.S. party and 2020 candidate does your spouse prefer?
45. Which party and 2020 candidate do you think most of your Ukrainian relatives in the U.S. prefer?
46. Which party and 2020 candidate do you think most Ukrainian in the U.S. prefer, based on your acquaintances or what you've heard from Ukrainians?
47. Do you see political divides among Ukrainians in America? If so, what are these divides and why do you think they exist?
48. What do you think of Trump's immigration policies? Do you think his immigration policies benefit/harm/do not impact Ukrainians?

#### UKRAINE/RUSSIA/TRUMP QUESTIONS

49. What are your general thoughts on socialism/communism? On the USSR?
50. If you voted in the 1991 referendum for Ukrainian independence, how did you vote and why (including no vote)? Would you change your vote if you could? Why? If you did NOT vote in the 1991 referendum, how would you vote if you could go back in time and do so?
51. How important are developments in Ukraine to you now? How/how often do you keep up with developments in Ukrainian?
52. In your view, what are Ukraine's main concerns/goals right now?
53. What are your thoughts on the Ukraine/Russia relationship and the ongoing crisis? What relationship do you want to see between Russia and Ukraine?

54. What do you think of Presidents Poroshenko and Zelensky?
55. What do you think about Trump's relationship with Ukraine? Do you think Trump supports/does not support Ukrainian interests?
56. What are your thoughts on the Trump's administration's relationship with Russia and Putin?
57. What are your thoughts on Mueller's special counsel investigation and the Mueller report?
58. What do you know/think about what Trump's said about Russia interfering in U.S. elections?
59. Do you know/think about Trump's now-famous phone call with Zelensky?
60. What do you know about Trump withholding military aid to Ukraine? Why do you think he blocked the aid?
61. What are your thoughts on Trump's impeachment? What do you think about the Senate's acquittal? Has Trump's impeachment influenced your view of Trump or the political parties in any way?
62. What do your Ukrainian friends/family think about the Mueller investigation and Trump's impeachment?
63. What do you want the U.S. relationship with Russia to be like?
64. What do you want the U.S. relationship with Ukraine to be like?
65. Do any of your experiences in Ukraine or as a Ukrainian influence your political choices in the U.S.? To what extent? Put another way, how does being Ukrainian influence your political views in the U.S.?
66. Compared to people whose families have been in the U.S. for many generations, do you think your political views differ from theirs in any way due to your heritage?
67. How important are Ukrainian interests to which party/candidate you decide to vote for in American elections? How likely would you be to vote against a candidate you really like if he or she had interests or took actions that would impact Ukraine negatively?
68. Here is a quote from a letter by a Ukrainian American (Zwarycz, 2016) to *The Ukrainian Weekly*, in which he explains why he, a longtime Republican supporter, is not voting for Trump in 2016. What do you think of his statement? "For the record I do not like Hillary Clinton and I have voted for the Republican presidential ticket since I could vote. I do care about social and economic issues affecting every American, but given the war in Ukraine, there is only one issue that we as Ukrainian Americans must focus on: Ukraine. The Ukrainian issue 'trumps' all other personal issues!"
69. What role do you think Ukrainian Americans can/should play in U.S. politics?

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