

ABSTRACT

Current scholarship on migration and civic culture largely ignores how immigrants influence their children's civic development. Yet, civic self-concepts expressed by the children of immigrants can ground debates over how immigration affects the transfer and transformation of civic culture. This raises the question: To what extent, and in what ways, do the experiences, attitudes, and parenting practices of immigrants influence their adult children's understandings of self as civic actors in the U.S. and in the parent's birthplace? My research is based on interviews with Salvadoran-Americans who grew up primarily in the U.S. and their parents who came to Washington D.C. during the Salvadoran Civil War. The young adults in my study expressed attitudes and goals that tell about self-understandings relevant to civic responsibility: empathy with newcomers and with the less socially privileged, motivation to push oneself for personal growth, desire to "give back" in gratitude for what they and their parents now have, commitment to a strong and supportive family, and a desire for less silence on political issues. Interviews show that parenting and parents' experiences of immigration from El Salvador did influence these civic self-understandings, primarily by influencing their identification with communities, nations, ethnic groups and political systems.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the individuals who helped me in the various components and phases of this research project.

Without Cristian Barrera's selfless contribution as a translator, this study would have excluded the important voices of several Spanish-speaking Salvadoran parents. That flaw would have greatly lessened the quality and contribution of my work. Cristian Barrera's role in the interviewing process lent an important perspective to my research, and required him to make sacrifices, for which I am forever grateful.

I also owe thanks to the members of D.C. based community organizations who communicated with me about my research and who helped me reach out to Salvadorans living in the D.C. area. Without these people's encouragement, their suggestions and perspectives and the logistical assistance in participant recruitment, my project would not have represented such rich experiences that my interview participants shared with me. I must especially thank the CentroNía staff members in the Family Literacy and Experience Corps departments (who helped me network amongst potential interview participants), CISPES representatives (who helped me reach out to Salvadoran youth and more politically involved D.C. community members), Ana Negoescu at CARECEN (who gave me suggestions for improving my recruitment and allowed me to spend time in citizenship classes to involve their students in my research), and also to CLASE at American University, for informing me of events that I could attend in order to involve participants from among the American University maintenance employees.

I must thank my primary advisor, Linda Lucia Lubrano, for all her constructive criticism, guidance and encouragement through each stage of my first original research. Professor Adrienne Pine also provided important perspective and feedback regarding the content of my arguments and the development of my conceptual framework and analytical approach. Thanks to these advisors I have grown as a researcher.

Above all, I want to express my gratitude to each of the 12 individuals who gave me their invaluable time and contributions as interview participants. I thank also the individuals who may not have participated themselves, but helped me to reach out to wider circles of potential participants. I hope I have conducted and presented this research project in a way that shows how valuable I consider each of your parts in this endeavor.