

## Introduction

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.

Immigration provokes questions about changing relationships between state, local community, citizenship, and identity. The analysis I present here begins to address these questions using 12 interviews, conducted in February and March of 2010. The adult daughters and sons of parents who immigrated during the civil war in El Salvador, and several immigrant parents, express experiences (1) of parent-child relationships, (2) of concept of self, and (3) of understanding of self as a civic actor, with the social roles and aspirations that go along with 'civic self'. In this paper I break down and synthesize the interviews according to these three

areas of analysis. In the first section I address parent-child relationships. In the second section I explore the self-understandings and self-identifications expressed in interviews. Then, in the third section, I consider the implications of my previous analyses for civic participation: civic life in its diverse forms and related to interviewee's expressed understandings of citizenship, of self and of community.

### ***Identification of the Literature***

I consider the possible link between sense of self and civic participation suggested in Sociopolitical Development Theory (SPD). Meanwhile, I draw from anthropological concepts of self-understanding and self-identification. I use the terms self-understanding and self-identification in accordance with anthropologists who challenge the ambiguous over-use of the term "identity" for analysis. A SPD framework focuses on individuals' sense of agency and social analysis, which is a component of self-concept highly relevant to exploring civic participation in the context of immigration. My analysis of civic attitudes and related self-concepts also applies concepts of sense of belonging and of efficacy, concepts found in community psychology and anthropological ethnography pertaining to immigrants and ethnic minorities. I consider SPD and sense of belonging as central aspects of self-understanding and self-identification. My design and analysis of interviews also draws from literature conceptualizing how "culture" relates with self understandings and self-identifications.

My study contributes to knowledge about civic attitudes and civic sense of self by exploring ways in which parent-child relationships influence self-understandings. *Self-understandings* include sense of belonging, sense of agency, social analysis and the social issues deemed important, personal priorities, and, of particular focus, *self-identification* in terms of group membership and representation of self in relation to others. If joined by more research that

takes up this kind of analysis, accumulated findings may form a strong case for how immigrants' self-understandings, and related civic attitudes, enrich the U.S. democratic social fabric. This would strengthen an important voice in the controversial debates over the social consequences of Latino immigration to the United States.

My interviews address experiences largely influenced by the context *from* which and *to* which people migrated. Many immigrants from El Salvador confronted the politically and psychologically complex experience of coming illegally and seeking legal and refugee status from the U.S. government, a government whose involvement contributed to the violent upheaval of the 1980s in El Salvador. My analysis takes into account a nuanced view of Salvadoran-American intergenerational dynamics as mediated by immigration policies and by “the social location of the parents and children, by gender ideologies and conceptions of motherhood and parenthood, and by the socioeconomic and cultural resources available to parents by virtue of their physical and social locations.”<sup>1</sup>

My original research question employed the term civic “identity.” But review of “identity” literature revealed an important distinction between peoples’ use of the term “identity” in practice and identity as a “category of analysis,” in Frederick Cooper’s terminology.<sup>2</sup> This distinction is fundamental to the development of my analytical framework. My interview analysis takes the assumption that “identification of self and others is intrinsic to social life,” although identity in the static, essential sense is not.<sup>3</sup> Although I adhere to Cooper’s critique of the use of identity as a category of analysis, my interviews will acknowledge that identity is also a “category of practice.”

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<sup>1</sup> Menjívar, Cecilia and Leisy Abrego, “Parents and Children Across Borders,” in *Across Generations: Immigrant Families in America*, ed. Nancy Foner (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 181-182.

<sup>2</sup> Cooper, Frederick, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 71.

By “category of practice,” Cooper means that identity is a concept “used by individuals in some everyday settings to make sense of themselves, their activity, and of how they relate with others,” and that it is also used in “identity politics” to organize, mobilize and justify collective action.<sup>4</sup> I will interview individuals with the view that they are agents doing the “work” of identifying, but I will also recognize Cooper’s observation that discourses and public narratives also contribute to the meaning individuals make of themselves and of others. Thus, my questions about particular civic lives requires examination of how, or whether, individuals use identity as a category of practice, and how they experience identity as a category of practice used on them by contextual forces. I will not, however, use “identity” as a “category of analysis.” Instead I reduce ambiguity in my research question with the term substitutions of *self-identification* and civic *self-understanding* that I described earlier.

### ***Research Design***

My research design aims to discover the civic orientations of adult sons and daughters of Salvadoran immigrants in the United States to contribute to exploration of the potential cross-generational transfer of parental pre- and post-immigration experiences. I address this topic with the question: To what extent, and in what ways, do the experiences, attitudes and parenting practices of immigrants influence their adult children’s civic sense of self in relation to the U.S. and to the parents’ birthplace? I first investigate: What parenting practices, priorities and values, and experiences characterize individuals’ parent-child relationships? My analysis then explores civic self-understandings by addressing two more subsidiary questions: In which communities do they express a sense of belonging? And, what are their attitudes regarding civic responsibilities, community and nation?

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 62, 73.

I believe a focus on the construction of self-understandings and self-identifications can weave together scholarship on civic participation and parenting. My question, research plan and rationale for this investigation respond to the scholarship on collective and individual identity construction,<sup>5</sup> sense of belonging,<sup>6</sup> civic participation<sup>7</sup> and Sociopolitical Development (SPD),<sup>8</sup> and parenting and family backgrounds.<sup>9</sup> In the following sections of this paper I explain in more concrete detail how these scholarly discourses informed my interview questions (see appendix) and analysis. This foundation in existing scholarship serves the purpose of evaluating the relevance of such discourses to second-generation Salvadoran Americans and their immigrant

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<sup>5</sup> Brewer, Marilynn B., and Wendi Gardener, "Who is This 'We'? Levels of Collective Identity and Self Representations," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychologies* 71, no. 1 (1996): 83-93; Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), 5-46, 141-154; Boykin, A. Wade, Robert J. Jagers, Constance M. Ellison, and Aretha Albury, "Communalism: Conceptualization and Measurement of an Afrocultural Social Orientation," *Journal of Black Studies* 27, no.3 (January 1997), 409-418; Nagel, Caroline R. and Lynn A Staeheli. "Citizenship, Identity and Transnational Migration: Arab Immigrants to the United States," *Space and Polity* 8, no. 1 (April 2004): 3-23; Karunungan, Maria Leonora Lockaby. *Civic and Cultural Identity Development of Filipino Students in the United States* (Georgia: Emory University, 2006); Huntington, Samuel P., *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2004), 7; Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 59-90.

<sup>6</sup> Coutin, Susan Bibler. *Legalizing Moves: Salvadoran Immigrants' Struggle for U.S. Residency* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), 25; Coutin, *Nations of Emigrants: Shifting Boundaries of Citizenship in El Salvador and the United States*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 3-16, 73-99, 149-175; Pine, Adrienne, *Working Hard, Drinking Hard: On Violence and Survival in Honduras* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 1-24.

<sup>7</sup> Rosenthal, "Political Volunteering from Late Adolescence to Young Adulthood," 477-493; Trombley, Guy Michael. *The Transmission, Acquisition, and Creation of Civic Culture: Americorps National and Community Service in a Pluralistic Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Minnesota, 2001); Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Diemer, "School and Parenting Influence on Sociopolitical Development," 317-344; Zimmerman, Marc A., and Julian Rappaport. "Citizen Participation, Perceived Control and Psychological Empowerment," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 16, no.5 (1988): 725-749; Quintana, Stephen M, and Theresa A. Segura-Herrera, "Developmental Transformations of Self and Identity in the Context of Oppression," *Self and Identity* 2 (2003), 269-285; Watts, Roderick J., and Constance Flanagan. "Pushing the Envelope on Youth Civic Engagement: A Developmental and Liberation Psychology Perspective," *Journal of Community Psychology* 35, no. 6 (2007): 779-792.

<sup>9</sup> Lichter, Daniel T., Michael J Shanahan, and Erica L. Gardner, "Helping Others? The Effects of Childhood Poverty and Family Instability on Prosocial Behavior," *Youth & Society* 34, 1 (September 2002), 89-119; Cheng, Amy S., *Narratives of Second-generation Asian American Experience: Legacies of Immigration, trauma, and Loss* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2005); Menjivar, "Parents and Children Across Borders," 161-189; Carranza, "Building Resilience and Resistance against Racism and Discrimination," 390-398; Ekehammar, Bo, Jim Sidanius and Marie Louice Dacker, "Political Defection and Psychosocial Factors in the Home," *The Journal of Social Psychology* 123 (August 1984), 253-260.

parents. My interviews and analysis suggest that each area of the above literature would serve to pay more attention to, and question assumptions about, how parental influence interacts with and within in their respective frameworks pertaining to social and political life.

My purpose is exploratory. I analyze participants' expressions in interviews to describe parent-child relationships and self-understandings. These relationships include communication on U.S. and Salvadoran political, social and community issues, parenting goals and the child's perceptions of their parents' values, experiences and parental influence. A list of the interview question (see appendix) represents how I link interviews with aspects of parent-child relationship and with my forthcoming reviews of the literature on family, self-understanding, identity, culture and collectivity, and civic participation. In this scholarship context, I explore how parent-child relationships may mediate other experiences: those of childhood and adolescence, of extra-familial community, of prejudice and structural violence, of children's own migration in some cases, and of negotiation within powerful legal and political frameworks. I conclude from this study that such experiences seem to interact with parent-child relationships to influence young adults' constructions of self, with implications for civic activity.

The research design does not seek causal relationships between parent-child relationship, self-understandings and self-identifications, and civic orientations. Instead it addresses the knowledge gap about the ways in which Salvadoran immigrants and their children relate within socio-political U.S. systems and about the aspects of parent-child relationships that members of this group express as relevant to their self-understandings and perceptions of civic responsibility. Rather than assume knowledge about diverse relationship and identity experiences, I engaged in in-depth qualitative research to identify themes that deserve further inquiry.

I collected data from Salvadoran young adults (18-30 years old) born in the U.S. or within 10 years of immigration. I also collected data from parents who immigrated to Washington D.C. during the Salvadoran Civil War (1980 – 1992) and who have children who fit the description of my first sample group. Sample selection focuses on the Salvadoran civil war context of migration. The case also reflects a particular context of “reception” marked by social stigma, by limited access to resources, by the politics of refugee status and tenuous legalization processes and by the related U.S. foreign policies of involvement in the political violence in El Salvador. A broader sample or multiple cases would need to acknowledge the different historical and socio-political experiences, in the country of origin and in the United States, and it would also require more interviews than I had the capacity to conduct for this project. My sample consists of eight young adult participants and four immigrant parent interviewees. One of the immigrant parents immigrated during his adolescence and three of the young adult women have now become parents themselves, so there are areas of cross-over between the experiences of the two participant groups.<sup>10</sup>

Contacts within a variety of D.C. based organizations (see appendix) helped me to identify and access possible participants to explain my research to them and request that they volunteer to be interviewed. I sought and developed relationships with these contacts because these organizations include or serve Salvadorans living in the U.S. “Snow-balling” and distribution of flyers (see appendix) was the first step to obtaining participants. Snow-balling enabled me to reach Salvadoran-Americans and their immigrant parents who are less involved in the community or are involved in the community in ways other than the activities of the above organizations.

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<sup>10</sup> See appendix for more detailed description of the participant sample in this study and for the explanation and rationale of the adjustments made to my original sample goals.

I designed a preliminary questionnaire (see appendix), with the intention that it would facilitate purposeful selection from among volunteers in order to represent a variety of roles that people take in relation to their local community, to the United States and to El Salvador. In reality I found that in recruiting the immigrant parents I had to do much of the work of the questionnaire in face-to-face communication. The written questionnaire seemed to pose a barrier in encouraging the participation of many potential interviewees, who often only volunteered when addressed directly, one-on-one, and in person, even if they were interested and willing to participate. I received little response when I asked potential participants to call the researcher on their own accord, and so interviews were more successfully arranged when planned during face-to-face interaction. In my need to begin interviews, I used the questionnaire less for selection purposes and more as a tool for obtaining background information to prepare for interviews. The questionnaire also allowed me to check that volunteers match my sample characteristics. I do not claim to represent all young adult Salvadorans and their immigrant parents with this study, but my forthcoming analysis reflects that participants take on a variety of roles, levels of involvement, attitudes and particular interests regarding local and transnational communities.

I presented potential participants with information about my research in a flyer as well as in face-to-face interaction and presentations (see appendix). The time and place of interviews was arranged in person, or, in the case of Spanish-speaking participants, during a phone conversation with my translator. Interviews were conducted at the location preferred by the participant, taking into account my dependence on public transportation. When participants expressed a limited ability to communicate in English in our pre-interview face-to-face conversations, a native Spanish speaker certified in human subject research, as I am, contacted the interviewee by phone before the interview to clarify the request for participation. This

translator then accompanied me to the interview to guard against communication limitations. The appendix details these procedures, as requested by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Individual interviews lasted one to two hours. Participants were interviewed individually to avoid pressure to respond in a certain way due to the presence of their parent or child. Individual interviews best serve to elicit authentic perceptions of relationships, of self, and of civic or community experiences. My interest is participants' "felt experiences" and representations of self, which does not require the observation of parent-child dynamics in an interview context. With participant consent, I tape-recorded interviews to facilitate transcription.

My collection and use of data requires ethical considerations. Participants received both English and Spanish versions of written informed consent. I supported participants with low literacy or poor eye sight to facilitate comprehension and documentation in the consent process. Interview questions could have raised topics (regarding experiences of migration exit, reception and legality) that present possible risk to participants and could have evoked strong emotions or unwillingness to continue discussion. The potential sensitivity of interview questions, and the vulnerability of individuals potentially lacking legal status, makes confidentiality and anonymity particularly important.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines helped me to consider the details for protecting participants against this potential risk. I do include legal status in analysis when status was shared without solicitation during interviews because other scholars suggest, and I hypothesize, that experiences associated with legality are important to my questions. The participant-researcher contract, established in the informed consent procedure, served to lessen anxiety, to respect participants' rights, and to help build a relationship of trust and equality. I

expressed my interest and value for the participant's experiences and contributions to foster trust and equality with the participant.

My conceptual framework assumes that the perceptions and self-understandings expressed in interviews constitute experiences realities and constructed representations of self with implications for social and political behavior. Anthropologist Yolanda Majors' ethnographic research with African Americans analyzes participants' talk during interviews as narrative texts that act as data sources and "provide a space through which identities can be constructed and expressed as well as resisted and reshaped."<sup>11</sup> Majors' framework for studying narratives is useful for my study in that it takes into consideration both individual agency and structural and socio-cultural contexts involved in processes of identifications of self and others. In this framework, narrative texts constitute "verbal performances of identity in which speakers understand themselves vis-à-vis the audience" and they allow the researcher to identify "ideological stances and patterns of perception of the speaker."

Narratives *about* events and experiences offer something that observation alone cannot. Interviews constitute the window through which I study social actors from the theoretical position that "social actors are readers of narrated life texts and authors of emergent narrative text."<sup>12</sup> Majors points out the strength of analyzing narratives that recount experience: they "provide insight into participants' readings of the social and cross-cultural relations that may not have been apparent" by observing the actual events that inform the interviewees' production of oral texts.

By targeting this information, my research situates itself in the ethnographic tradition. Ron and Suzanne Scollon identify four categories of ethnographic data: (1) "Members'

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<sup>11</sup> Majors, Yolanda J., "I Wasn't Sacred of Them, They Were Scared of Me': Constructions of Self/Other in a Midwestern Hair Salon," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 35, 2 (2004): 169.

<sup>12</sup> Majors, 183.

generalizations” about group characteristics and behaviors; (2) “observations,” which requires fieldwork and participant-observation; (3) “individual member’s experience,” which may contrast with their generalizations about the group; and (4) “observer’s interactions with members,” which involves returning the researchers analysis to the group studied and examining how the analysis is received.<sup>13</sup> My study most directly targets the first and third of these categories. My interviews explore how participants in my study simultaneously generalize experiences of their individuality and experiences within group and community contexts. In the context of the interview I am an observer, so the second and fourth of the above data types are also included in my research, but to a more limited extent. My analysis and conclusions focusing on interviewee’s generalizations and individual experiences allows me to flesh out a model of parental influence that provides a foundation for more fieldwork-based data collection falling under researcher observations of, and interactions with, Salvadoran immigrants and their children.

Many structural factors influence role-negotiation in local, ethnic and national communities. This research design explores whether the many factors can be studied through studies of parent-child relationships. Qualitative analysis of interviews suggest some ways in which parent-child relationships are one of the multiple, interacting influences relevant to immigrant children’s relational behaviors and social contributions. Although my analysis suggests more questions for future study than it answers, it also supports the validity of my model for investigating how parents influence their children’s constructed understandings of self as civic actors in ways that can empower immigrants, immigrants’ families and communities, and society at large.

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<sup>13</sup> Scollon, Ron, and Suzanne Wong Scollon, *Intercultural Communication*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1995.

I present my research as three components of my research model: Parent-child relationships, self-understandings and identifications, and attitudes about civic participation. In each of these paper sections I link interview questions and responses with the literature. I suggest the relevancy of aspects of the literature to the experiences expressed by my interviewees.

### **Parent-Child Relationships**

In outlining questions to include in the interviews, I considered the ways in which family and parent-child relationships may be relevant to participants' understandings and expectations of themselves, to the lives they lead, and to the things that are important to them. Scholarship on immigrant identity has addressed intergenerational relations in several ways. In this section, I present my review of the literature that influenced my interview question design and that has proven relevant to my analysis. I examine my interviews for a number of elements in parent-child relationships: structural factors affecting immigrant parents, attachment to place, political discussion and activism, awareness of sacrifice, church, and language. With these categories for considering parental influence, I present the foundation of my interview design in the literature at the same time that I discuss the implications of my interview analysis for these.

The Pew Hispanic Center has examined surveys to explore how first-, second-, and third-generation Latino youths “have been socialized by their parents in ways that relate to their sense of identity.”<sup>14</sup> The Pew study focuses on choices of self-expression within the narrow confines of the U.S. Census framework for social categorization, that is, in terms of their choices of ethnic, racial or nationality labels, in terms of their pride either in their country of origin or “in being American,” and in terms of their understanding of U.S. citizenship. This study also does

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<sup>14</sup> *Between Two Worlds: How Young Latinos Come of Age in America*, A Pew Hispanic Center Report (Washington DC: Pew Research Center, December 2009), 21, 25.

not adequately explore whether parents are a main influence on these choices of self-categorization or what ways they exert this influence.

Other frameworks, in which broader social roles affect parenting, begin to address the forms of parental influence and the parental agency involved in the processes of influence. Cecilia Menjívar and Leisy Abrego explored the role of immigration policies “in establishing the contours of family dynamics among Guatemalan and Salvadoran immigrants.”<sup>15</sup> State power constrains parents’ agency in this framework. A related conceptualization of parental influence forms the framework of loss and trauma that Amy Cheng applies to focus on psychological stresses of immigration and recreation of traumas in family relationships.<sup>16</sup> Literature on the idea of “collective pain” experienced by Salvadorans in relation to the civil war<sup>17</sup> suggests that Cheng’s framework may be applicable to understanding the parent-child relationships of my interview participants. According to Carlos Cordova, nearly every Salvadoran family had at least one relative killed by the war, and the psychological welfare of Salvadoran immigrants is affected by past and ongoing events in the home country that compound with immigration experiences to contribute to mental health problems and stress induced illnesses that affect many Salvadoran immigrants. Given this population background, my interviews explore the extent to which participants perceive that structural constraints, loss and trauma may transcend generations.

Mirna Carranza found that Salvadoran immigrant mothers in Canada strategically support their daughter’s resilience through pride in their identities and ethnic heritage.<sup>18</sup> Her model emphasizing agency in resisting victimization would be strengthened by investigating how the

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<sup>15</sup> Menjívar & Abrego, “Parents and Children Across Borders,” 161-189.

<sup>16</sup> Cheng, *Narratives of Second-generation Asian American Experience*, 5.

<sup>17</sup> Cordova, *The Salvadoran-Americans*, 127-128, 96.

<sup>18</sup> Carranza, Mirna E, “Building Resilience and Resistance Against Racism and Discrimination Among Salvadorian Female Youth in Canada,” *Child and Family Social Work* 12 (April 2007): 390-398.

mothers' identities of resistance were socially constructed. However, it contributes to my investigation by acknowledging that antagonistic structural forces sometimes affect parent-child relationships in empowering, not just disempowering, ways.

I integrate these models of agency as I interpret immigrant parent-child relationship experiences conveyed by my interviewees. Interview questions sought to understand how young adults perceived their parents' agency as constrained, how immigrant parents, and their children, may contribute to processes constituting their own victimization, and how they are agents in resistance and resilience. Such an analysis that explores agency makes use of the concept of "processes of identification" used by anthropologists to refer to an individual's active role in identity construction"<sup>19</sup> Thus, the discussion in this section about parents' agency and constraints on agency is importantly connected to the analysis of self-identification presented in the next section of my paper. Here I analyze what I consider to be a factor in processes of identification: interviewees' perceptions about how structural forces affect Salvadoran immigrant lives.

All the interviewees discussed difficulties immigrants face in the physical process of relocation and once in the United States. Several young adults explained that they knew their mothers had made dangerous and physically taxing journeys while pregnant. I interviewed a mother and her daughter who had immigrated together, illegally, and who both shared with me their memories of deep fear they experienced while hiding in tunnels to wait for coyotes. The mother talked about how worried she was that something would happen to her daughter, because she would have blamed herself. Her daughter remembered her mother's fear as well as her own, saying that their experience of immigrating together was an important bond in their relationship. Many of the young adults also talked about the stress their parents were under once in the United States:

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<sup>19</sup> Pine, *Working Hard, Drinking Hard: On Violence and Survival in Honduras*, 3.

“Here everything costs more, you know, and the jobs aren’t like the ones over there. I mean, he (my father) used to help my grandfather pick cotton and corn and all these other things, but here you have the pressure to know you have to be there on time, and this and that. Now everyone’s kind of a stranger, and if you get fired, that’s it, nobody cares, and so it’s very different and so it’s much more stressful to someone who isn’t used to this lifestyle, and that’s, I think, the shock that my parents went through, and I think that’s why my dad took up drinking, because he had this pressure of supporting a family, and, you know, he didn’t know if he could do it...and then after a while my dad’s problem got so out of hand that she (his mother) felt she was pretty much the only one holding us all together...”

One of the mothers interviewed recounted how afraid she was that her second son would follow in his older brother’s footsteps when he joined his mother in the United States. After being “traumatized” by the trouble her older son had given her by going to jail for selling drugs, she told her son, “The moment that you give me trouble I’m going to send you back. I’m not in the condition to be dealing with any more suffering (translated).” She said her son responded by showing great respect for her sacrifice, by taking initiative and responsibility for his education, and by helping her financially once he had finished school.

The young adults also talked about what they knew of the poverty, and often violence, in their parents’ experiences in El Salvador. They all referenced the civil war, and often described their immigration as an “escape.” Regardless of political affiliation, parents and young adults talked about specific instances and general conditions that made them or their parents feel threatened. These experiences varied, from pregnant mothers being thrown to the ground by military forces, to having one’s life and family explicitly threatened, to seeing other young men get recruited into the army, to being stopped again and again at bus check points and nearly sent to the group of passengers who “never got back on the bus.” But even in light of these reasons for leaving El Salvador, young adults explained that the experience in the U.S. was somewhat disheartening for their parents:

“She was surprised at the amount of violence that was here in Columbia Heights because, again, Columbia Heights was a pretty nasty in the eighties and nineties, so she kind of walked into a pretty tough area, but I think she still considered it an improvement to what was going on in El Salvador, where she would hear gun shots almost every night. And she would hear stories about what was going on, and she’s even seen some pretty graphic stuff that I’ve never seen before up and close.”

Parents themselves expressed disillusionment with the place to which they had “fled” for a better life. When asked what it was like to be someone without legal documentation, one woman responded “you can’t work. You can’t get health care. You have nothing.” Another woman cried as she told me about her mother, who had died before she could get her residence in order to visit her mother. To describe how she had felt for many years in the U.S. she quoted a song: “even if you are in a golden cage, it is still a cage.” These experiences affected their children. One young woman described how the combination of her parents’ health problems and financial situation affected her high school years, forcing her to give up her dance team and go to school half-days so that she could spend the rest of the day working to help her family.

“I mean I had to grow up over night. I was 17 when she had the stroke, back when I was a typical high schooler...that did help me. For one, not to be sacred to work, and ‘you gotta do what you gotta do’ kind of thing. You gotta make ends meet somehow...That taught me something, you know, just to rely on yourself.”

Much of the literature and public discourse that uses parenting and home life to explain characteristics of civic lives employs a deficit theory focus on negative socialization. Lichter et alia call for more research on “whether disadvantaged children become socially responsible and civic-minded young people.”<sup>20</sup> It is important to note that this question implies that we do not need to ask whether other children, those not considered “disadvantaged,” will “become socially responsible and civic minded.” Also, if Lichter et alia had designed their research differently,

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<sup>20</sup> Lichter, Daniel T., Michael J Shanahan, and Erica L. Gardner, “Helping Others? The Effects of Childhood Poverty and Family Instability on Prosocial Behavior,” *Youth & Society* 34, 1 (September 2002), 90, 93, 98.

their question may have led to findings that counter the traditionally assumed correlation between social disadvantage and negative social contributions.

Deficit theory models use classist and sexist indicators that I reject as invalid, or at least as not comprehensive, for understanding families in general, and particularly immigrant families with such a rich source of experiential knowledge to potentially draw upon. But the deficit model reflects assumptions that are unfortunately powerful in scholarly and mainstream debates about the children of immigrants. Assumptions about “unstable” family situations can be explored through models that do not view such situations as inherently negative, but acknowledge a possible perception of “instability” of “home.” For example, the “organismic model”<sup>21</sup> states that “residential transiency” reduces likelihood of attachment to geographic community and levels of civic and political commitment. This is pertinent to my study given that the parents, and sometimes the children as well, have experienced “residential transiency” in the form of migration.

The following excerpts are example of how interviewees connected parenting to their attachments to and perceived roots in geographical locations other than their current residence. Even those born in the United States expressed that they saw El Salvador as a home, and as a source of pride. They called El Salvador their “roots”, “another home,” and where they are “from.” They wanted their own children, sometimes two generations removed from El Salvador, to feel this way also. One young adult’s message to future immigrants and their children was: “Always make sure you remember where you came from, even if you haven’t been there... You can care about it and try to give back.” Another described his own feelings for El Salvador:

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 94, 98; Rosenthal, “Political Volunteering from Late Adolescence to Young Adulthood,” 477-493.

“I feel supremely proud of it, about my heritage, and it’s just because I feel I lived it, I grew up in it, through my parents...I can talk to people about certain places, and I still remember so much from when I went over there, so if I were to go back there, you know, I feel, you know, I feel like I’m walking down the street here...I feel like I know it more than I should because I haven’t been there much.”

One of the U.S. born young adults described how he thought his mother had instilled in him his strong appreciation for El Salvador and its people:

“She never like yelled out ‘I’m proud of being Salvadoran,’ but there was always that sense that’s eh was happy to be Salvadoran, and growing up, you know, she still carried some of the old traits of being from El Salvador, you know, the people, the food, music and so forth...of course she grew to like other music and foods but she never got away from it either. She never changed to fit in.”

Other described their parents being more explicit, and linking geographical roots to family:

“They would always remind me where my roots were...I can’t forget that. They’ve instilled that very well in me “you’re born here but your roots are over there, and your grandparents still live over there, you’ve got cousins over there, that’s where I was raised, and that’s where your father was taught everything he knows.”

Parent-child relationships do seem to have influenced young adults’ perception of “roots” in El Salvador, supporting the relevancy of the “organismic model” to analysis of inter-generational transfer of social perceptions. My analysis of self-understandings and civic participations in the next two sections draws from this exploration of perceived roots in El Salvador to consider how such perceptions relate to the roles that children of Salvadoran immigrant parents construct for themselves in civic society within and beyond U.S. borders.

Second-generation Salvadoran-Americans may express a sense of “transiency” due to their parents’ immigration experience even if they grew up with little geographical mobility, but they may also respond with heightened empathy and awareness of communal interdependence and of community needs due to a combination of their parents’ immigration, their parent-child relationships, and current social realities. Applying the “organismic model” does not lead to the hypothesis that immigration weakens civil society. Instead, it suggests that children who are

raised in families and communities that reinforce helping behaviors are more likely to become “helping adults.” From this perspective, immigrant communities that feature high interdependence and address members’ needs encourage civic commitments. Lichter et alia acknowledge that hardships associated with immigration and socioeconomic conditions may also encourage empathy,<sup>22</sup> and I suggest political-economic awareness as well.

Meanwhile, a contextual model posits that current circumstances matter more in the lives of young adults than past experiences and that civic participation may be “a situated response to the real unmet needs of impoverished communities.”<sup>23</sup> Current school, work and family commitments may also limit civic participation. Rather than diminish the relevancy of parents, the emphasis on present context calls for studies of how parent-child relationships, and the parent-encouraged values with which individuals currently identify, interact with current community and sociopolitical situations. I have responded to family instability models by exploring perceptions of “home” and of family hardships, but I also draw on the “organismic” and contextual models to evaluate whether the feeling that “home” is elsewhere or, instead, *empathy-increasing awareness* is the more important way parent child-relationships affect young adults’ civic identities. This evaluation depends on the additional analysis in the coming sections, but first I present here the evidence of empathy-increasing awareness in my interviews.

Overwhelmingly my interviews with young adults supported the notion that concern for others stemmed from their awareness of their parents’ immigration experiences, and from their awareness of other immigrants in the community, an awareness they seem to have *due to* their connection with their parents. Interviews included questions about social issues of concern to the participant. One participant said he would like to provide more education for adult Latinos, such

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<sup>22</sup> Lichter, “Helping Others?,” 113

<sup>23</sup> Rosenthal, “Political Volunteering from Late Adolescence to Young Adulthood,” 477-493; Lichter, “Helping Others?,” 115, 99.

as computer, English, and even driving classes. Watching his own parents learn English when he was growing up is an important memory for him, and yet he sees other parents who are not learning English and who are not learning to “think differently” and to open their minds to learning “a few key things” that could make their lives easier. He said:

“Adults are used to living that life where they just work and provide for their family and don’t- the one’s that kind of see themselves as victims and things. I think that education is part of that...some parents are like ‘o, I can’t, I can’t, I can’t’ and I understand. I understand where they’re coming from. That’s just the way they’re thinking, you know, it’s just etched in their mentality.”

One young woman described helping children who recently emigrated from El Salvador as part of her job in a community education program. She said the children, who knew no English, reminded her of herself as a child of immigrant parents: “I was just like ‘I have to help them.’ That’s my job and that’s what I’m called here for, you know.” Another young woman responded to the question ‘what does it mean to be a member of a community?’ in a way that showed clear connections between her parents, their origin in El Salvador, and her role as a community member. She said:

“I feel like being a member of your community is caring. Caring a lot about your community, educating yourself about where your parents are from, the native country of your family.”

There are also sentiments of concern for community that relate to the effect of immigration policies on peoples’ lives. One young man gave some words that he would like to say to future immigrants from El Salvador:

“Come and find us if you have any trouble. And we will work with you to try to make a living and try to keep your feet planted in this country...we’d like it not to be a scary process at all, and we’re trying to create some positive reform, and at the same time at least there’s groups out there that are welcoming and we’ll try to help you out however we can.”

I asked another young man why he chose his career as an immigration attorney and how related he thought this choice was to his parents' immigration experiences and his own immigration as a very young child:

“I just figured if I was going to do law it would be immigration. I just wanted to help people, and they're mostly Latinos, and most end up being Salvadorans. Help them better their lives. Status makes peoples' lives better... (Being an immigration attorney) is always informative, helps me keep in touch with what it is like for them.”

Studies of parental influence on political identity tend to consider parent-child communication. Bo Ekehammar et alia, for example, found that parent-child “affective closeness” may influence party deviation.<sup>24</sup> Rather than take this narrow political party approach to examining parental influence, I pay more attention to studies that associate parenting with broader notions of political identity in the form of Sociopolitical Development (SPD), a theory central to my question and framework for linking self concept with civic attitudes and behaviors. Mathew Diemer et alia identify parental factors facilitating SPD to include: “parental discussion of current events and social justice issues” and parental encouragement to live according to beliefs may play a role, alongside student racial relationships in school.<sup>25</sup> Political science scholars also identify “early exposure to political stimuli,” including parent activism and discussions at home, as factors contributing to civic and political engagement.<sup>26</sup> My consideration of these factors in my interviews challenges the assumption that higher parent education levels necessarily facilitate the development of more civic skills and attitudes in children,<sup>27</sup> which implies a deficit model in which parents with less education do not contribute to the development of civic-mindedness. My interview design and analysis allows for the

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<sup>24</sup> Ekehammar, “Political Defection and Psychosocial Factors in the Home,” 253-260.

<sup>25</sup> Diemer, “School and Parental Influences on sociopolitical development,” 35.

<sup>26</sup> Verba, *Voice and equality*, 20.

<sup>27</sup> Lichter, “Helping others?,” 98.

possibility that parents who have not attained high levels of education may still contribute to their children developing a political and civic sense of self.

When asked about how much their parents talked about “politics” or “political issues,” only one participant described their parent as highly involved in “politics.” One young adult explained:

“I mean my parents kind of grew up, the mindset was, you know, it’s ‘go to work, feed the family, make sure we have enough, this and that,’ so their whole life they were...there was just poverty, you know. They were poor. So they definitely just grew up working their whole life. So they didn’t really get into all that (politics).”

Although young adults were aware of the civil war, most said that their parents rarely talked about it with them, and that they had to “pick up little bits and pieces over time.” One explanation offered was:

“Some people here live in a little bubble. They inherited their bubble from El Salvador. A stagnant bubble. People here are afraid of being seen, so they’re not going to be political, and then who knows about their kids. They carried over their fear of politics, and of talking about politics. Immigrant status reinforces that mentality.”

Another participant said that he and his mother had not talked about the civil war until recently “mostly because I never asked the questions.” Recently however, this young man was involved in an intercultural exchange program with youth groups in El Salvador. As part of the program he had to construct his family tree. He said this opened up a lot more discussion between him and his mother about “what our whole history looked like,” although he said:

“We mostly talk about what’s going on around here or what’s on TV, on the news or what have you, mostly, for lack of a better word, ‘normal day stuff.’ The El Salvador thing was more a selected moment.

When asked if his parents talked much about politics in general, one young man related the difference between his mom and dad, noting that his mom had “planted the seeds” for his strong political interest and involvement that he attributed mostly to his university education:

“My dad...he wasn't a very good talker period, and he has to this day remained in his estimation a-political. I don't believe that's possible, but, um...but my mom was more... she tried to get us to know what was happening, but she wasn't forceful about it. She wasn't always cramming it down our throats, but she did talk about 'there's a war going on. There's a lot of persecution. There's a lot of assassinations. There's a lot of injustice being perpetrated.'”

Other young adults described disagreement, and sometimes tension, with their parents, politically speaking. While growing up, one young adult remembered getting angry with his mom when she would “say stuff, that...would be classified by some people as anti-American sentiment.” He went on to say, with a laugh, that now he is the one to be most critical of US foreign policy in Central America. One young woman talked about arguments with her father about the legal right to have an abortion.

“He always brings up religion. I'm like 'Dad, can we not include God in this?...I would never personally have an abortion, but I'll be like 'what about the concept of the government telling you what to do?' but he'll be like 'no, no, no, it's God!' and I'll be like 'forget it'.”

Some participants even expressed sympathies with or said they actively support the Salvadoran political party associated with the side that parents felt most threatened or persecuted by during the war. One young woman mentioned that she had “sparked conversation within the older generation” in her family when she had asked her grandmother why she was so anti-FMLN. After mentioning her hopes for the FMLN party in El Salvador, this young woman continued:

“My dad hates that about me. He thinks I'm a guerilla, because I have a little quote of Che Guevara on my wall and when he saw that he was like 'what are you communist now?' And I'm like 'no, dad. Chill. Don't report me now,' you know. I just feel like to close the gap (regarding class and wealth in El Salvador) is very important.”

Some participants said they and their parents have recently begun to talk more about political issues affecting them in the United States. In the words of one participant:

“Now we depend on this system so now we’re paying more attention. They watch the Spanish news, *Primero Impacto*...so they’re watching that, paying attention to it. I will get calls sometimes, ‘can you help me understand this? What does this mean?’...so they definitely pay more attention to that (domestic political issues) than they ever did before.”

Although most of the young adults did not recall that political issues or activism were central in their parent-child relationship while they were growing up, there was one exception among my interviews. One young woman described her mother as a social worker at a community health clinic who is “very involved in the community,” particularly regarding domestic violence issues. She said she and her mother share many of the same political views, social commitments and concerns, both locally and about issues throughout Latin America.

“I do feel my mom has played the biggest role in my life because she is a very active person. She’s very involved in the community...I’ve always been exposed to that kind of world in which I- you know, I’m not the girl who was always being raised up by just being spoiled...I grew up going to protests with her, and going to different meetings...whenever there has been stuff going on over there (in El Salvador) she has always been involved in organizing protests, or different meetings with congressman and stuff like that, about US policy in El Salvador pretty much...one of those things I most remember when I was little was when CAFTA was signed. And I remember sitting in that little room while they all voted, for like three hours, and I was like, ‘what am I even doing here?’...And now it’s just become the kind of thing I feel we can do together. It’s not like she has to drag me. I have to drag her to do things sometimes!”

Although this case may be exceptional, it reflects a theme that others echoed in other parts of the interview: the notion that ‘action is louder than words’ came up often in the way young adults talked about the influence their parents had on the values, beliefs and personal goals they now claim as young adults. I still consider political discussion to be one form of parental influence, a factor identified in Sociopolitical Development theory as relevant to the ways young people see themselves as a political actor. But we need to acknowledge that parental influence may act in “silent,” or less explicitly political, ways.

My interviews suggest that parents may play an important role regarding political attitudes in ways other than discussion. Learning about history, politics and social issues in

school may work hand-in hand with parent influences. One young adult explained how things learned in school hit especially ‘close to home’ because of her parents. “They (my parents) give me proof. Those things really help me form my opinions when it comes to politics and issues.” Another participant said he would be lying to himself if he did not acknowledge that his views, particularly regarding immigration policy, were influenced by *knowing about* his mother’s experiences in El Salvador and as an immigrant mother:

“When I hear stories of people living in DC and all the hardships they have to face I am always more appreciative of the fact that they could find a way to come here and make an attempt to escape pretty awful stuff down there...I just have a stronger appreciation of them for coming here...And of course there are people directly around me that get affected by that whole immigration policy of getting the immigrants out of the country. And, of course, because my mother was one of those immigrants (that is one of the issues I am most interested in).”

This interviewee response supports my rationale for including interview questions about the reasons for the parents’ immigration. Members of the second generation may develop views, values and civic commitments that are a response to what they perceive and know of their parents’ immigration motivations and experiences. According to my interviewees, providing for and protecting one’s family, a strong appreciation for educational and economic opportunity, and bettering the futures of the next generation are values and goals that underlie many of the reasons interviewee’s gave for their own or for their parents’ immigration, and for the sacrifice that children perceive and associate with reasons for immigrating.

Motivations for immigrating also seem closely related to sense of belonging/non-belonging experienced via the meanings parents’ give to the United States, to citizenship in the United States and to citizenship in the country of origin. For example, parents’ perceptions about communities and belonging are likely influenced by the involuntary nature of much of the migration out of El Salvador during and following the war. Another aspect of the nature of

migration that seems relevant to belonging is the common belief among Central American immigrants of that era was that stay in the U.S. would be temporary, although in many cases stay has extended to the present day.

Education was an important theme of parent-child relationships. All the young adults identified education as something their parents valued for them and stressed as important. Parents emphasized that working hard in school is the child's "job," the opportunity of which a parent should work to provide. Although some interviewees wished their parents had taken some time from work for education for themselves, the interviewees never questioned that their parents valued education for their children. In the words of one immigrant mother, "the first thing you should provide for is giving your kids an education."

This priority was often linked to the limited education opportunities available to parents when they were growing up. One interviewee contrasted rural El Salvador and in the United States regarding the child's primary responsibility, and the related economic relationships between parents and children. In the U.S., he said, the children's job is to go to school and their parent's job is to plan for and provide for the different "phases" of a child's educational attainment until they have enough education to provide for themselves. In El Salvador, on the other hand, children begin working at a young age and help provide for their parents throughout their life, especially as their parents grow older. Despite this difference between the U.S. and El Salvador, my interviews suggest that Salvadoran parents create new expectations of their children regarding education and provider roles once they have the opportunity for more and higher levels of education. Although young adults still say they feel bound, at least partially, to the tradition in which grown children help support their parents, my study suggests that parents'

prioritization of education, and of earning at least a high school diploma, influenced the goals, work ethic, and views of self expressed by the young adults.

My interviews suggest that children's perception of their immigrant parents' sacrifice, in combination with their knowledge of the reasons their parents immigrated, may have allowed these parental values to affect children's own values as young adults more than in families where parental sacrifice is a less prominent theme in the child's family experience. In the coming sections I discuss how interviewees describe their Salvadoran heritage and the pride in, and identification with, El Salvador and Salvadoran immigrants. These perceptions of Salvadorans and these notions of pride and identification help clarify the ways parental sacrifice and motivations for immigrating have affected children's values and drive to honor their parents' struggle as immigrants.

Awareness of sacrifice goes hand in hand with the earlier discussion of interviewee's heightened awareness of the hardships of immigration and of life in El Salvador. One young man born in the U.S. tried to describe what is so special about Salvadorans. He talked about "the will they had to do what they had to do" and "how strong they are psychologically." Some young adults explained that they saw their parents as hard-workers and that their parents had instilled in them a strong work ethic. Several young adults expressed that what they knew of their parent's past experiences, sacrifices, and reasons for immigrating motivated them to push themselves, particularly regarding academic achievement, either for themselves or for their own children:

"They told me about the sacrifices they had made. They came here to give me a better life. To go to school, because in El Salvador most likely I wouldn't have been able to get that. They knew what was going on over there (in El Salvador) and it was sad. There was nothing. You were born into poverty or not but you couldn't go up or down really. You were just there. And here, here you have room to grow, you know, and be what you want to be. So you know, every time they talk about it that's what they would say."

One woman explained that at different points in her education it was her parents' sacrifice and the value for not passing up opportunity to grow that lead her to keep continuing her education, despite wavering moments. Another young woman who immigrated as a child explained that in order to give her two children "the best," what she herself did not have, she was going to try to help her children get a good education and to go on to college.

"He's growing up in a big world that I never thought that I could be at. I wish him the best and I'm trying myself to give him the best...especially education. I couldn't go on with my education, and sometimes I do regret it myself...when you have kids, it's like, you don't have the time no more, although you can make the time, but...so I hope they do have- I'm going to try to help them out."

In addition to providing a supportive and motivating force in some children's educational endeavors, some parents apparently supported other activities because they saw them as safe alternatives to a common fear among Salvadoran mothers: involvement in gangs.

"I know that one of the things that she was most fearful of was that at some point I would join a gang...so she would always find ways to keep me busy at every stage of my life... as I got older, other people recommended to me to go out to other places like CentroNía and Gandhi Brigade (community youth programs) and when I told my mom she was pretty supportive of that."

Parental support of school and community programs that offered learning opportunities is relevant to my question about understanding of self and civic attitudes and orientations. Among the participants in my study, parents seem to have played a role in the development of education-related work ethic and skills for keeping informed as a life-long learner. In addition, young adults frequently talked about their exposure to social issues, foreign policies and history in the classroom, especially at the post-secondary level. These other factors relevant to political and social views reflect indirect parental influence, because of the expressed parental value placed on education.

Church is another way Salvadoran parents may influence their children's understandings of themselves as civic and political actors. "Religiosity"<sup>28</sup> is a factor that scholars have associated with exposure to civic skills through church activities. This is especially important to consider in my study because of the role the Catholic Church has played in the lives of many Salvadoran immigrants, and in the history of social struggle in El Salvador. Studies conducted by the Pew Hispanic center begin to address this element of family influence in their findings that religious affiliation among Latinos seems to play a role in political party identification that is possibly more significant than among the general population.<sup>29</sup> Parental discussion and church factors in parent-child relationships may foster civic identities, in addition to political party affiliation, regardless of parents' formal education levels.

To the individual immersed in American ideology with its ideal, albeit a contested one, of separation of church and state, religious philosophies may seem out of place in a study addressing national citizenship in the United States. However, I consider it relevant in that religious beliefs and beliefs about citizenship each imply individual responsibilities towards others. It is especially relevant here given that church is an important aspect of how many Salvadoran parents raise their children. Many recent Central American immigrants have close ties with the "Church of the Poor"<sup>30</sup> and the current of Liberation Theology that entails an interpretation of Jesus Christ as a revolutionary and a role model to inspire action among the oppressed. This history rooted in families' religious background suggests commitments to the community and to the socially disadvantaged that are highly relevant in characterizing civic and political attitudes.

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<sup>28</sup> Verba, *Voice and Equality*, 20; Lichter, "Helping Others?," 98.

<sup>29</sup> Suro, Roberto and Luis Lugo, *Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2007), 2.

<sup>30</sup> Cordova, 118.

Interviews did not reflect one general consensus regarding the role of church and religion in their childhood and their lives today, although most young adults regularly went to Catholic Church as children and there does seem to be a connection between church-going and awareness of community interdependence. One young woman vividly remembers teaching English classes to adults at her church as a teenager. She does not attend church regularly now, but she cited this as an important experience in realizing her desire and commitment to use her bilingual abilities to “give back.” On the other hand, the young woman who described her mother as highly involved in the community and in U.S. foreign policy activism did not link religion with her civic views. She said her mother, who is not very religious, has most influenced her political views and interests. She describes her experiences with religion as harsh and contradictory to her beliefs, as do several others:

“My family in El Salvador was very religious, you know, everyone goes to church every day. Everyone believes, you know. And even when I was little I was like ‘why am I here?’ I wasn’t a strong believer I guess. Sometimes my grandmother would hit me for it, like ‘how dare you say something like that’.”

Not all of the young adults were so ambivalent towards religion. Even when they did not go regularly, or find fault with either corruption in the church or the teachings of the Catholic Church regarding one’s relationship to God, they often described themselves as spiritual and said they would like to make church a part of their future children’s lives. Both generations discussed the role of church as a valuable part of a strong, healthy family, which they associated partly with “staying out of trouble” and good role modeling by parents. One young woman described how she cannot deny the influence of church teachings on how she has lived her life, and how her parents’ values influenced her decisions, even though she does not practice anymore:

“Growing up I was more involved in the church, doing the right thing, so that kept me a lot from getting into troubles that I guess most teenagers get into... ‘if I skip school, then I’m disrespecting my parents’, that’s the ten commandments. You gotta respect your parents

...so that definitely played a role in how I behaved and the decisions I made when it came to temptation and things like that. Doing drugs. I never did it. Respecting my body, things like that.”

Several parents also associated church with their community life. All three immigrant mothers talked about church and the primary importance of God in their lives. One of these mothers volunteers her time to work at her church’s childcare program, which takes up most of the time that she is not working for a cleaning company. This woman finds her volunteer work, and the classes she takes about how to read the bible and about the word of God, so fulfilling that she is planning to get married to her partner, as required by her church, in order to keep participating in these church activities. Another immigrant mother finds that going to church provides her with more interaction with people outside the Spanish-speaking community. She cares for the children of some of the people she meets at her church. She said she enjoys watching African-American children because she can practice some English and learn about what their mothers do, such as the things they make for their children to eat.

It can be hard in some cases to tease out from my interviews how much religion played a role, but it can be considered a factor in the parent-child relationship for many Salvadoran immigrant families. The same participant cited church as the place where she first became involved in “giving back,” helping those who reminded her of her immigrant parents and their hardships, while she also discussed her frustration over political debates with her father who persisted in using religious arguments to counter her own. This reflects a multifaceted role that religion may play in shaping the civic attitudes of children of religious parents.

In addition to considering religious ideas and practices in my study of parental influence, I addressed ideas and practices regarding language. The interview includes questions about the language encouraged by parents, about family dynamics surrounding language use and about

perceptions about the significance of using Spanish or English. With these questions I sought to understand how language, in the context of family relations, plays a role in the processes by which individuals come to identify with, and find a sense of belonging in, certain communities. My interviews supports and shed light on the suggestion made by one Pew Hispanic Center study that parental encouragement to speak Spanish contributes to Latino youth's self-description using their parents' country of origin.<sup>31</sup>

All young adults grew up speaking Spanish in the home, and they now appreciate that their parents enforced this as a rule. They said that being able to speak Spanish is important to them, although they found it frustrating at times when the older generation in their family did not learn English as well. Interviewees described efforts to keep speaking Spanish so that either they or their children would not lose Spanish fluency. To lose Spanish, in the words of one young adult, would "be a cultural loss." To maintain and improve Spanish speaking ability, on the other hand, was sometimes explained as being a part of how they "accepted" or "celebrated" or "held onto" their "identity." Interviewees commonly associated Spanish with a feeling of home and comfort, with a desire to hold on to a notion of culture and heritage, and with a sense of competence and greater possibilities for work, as the following excerpt demonstrates:

"I speak English most of the day, when I'm in school, with friends, but it's also refreshing to speak Spanish when I get home, because it's like Spanish makes me feel like I'm home. Whenever I go home I start talking to my mom, like that's when I know I'm home, because it's always been the language I speak with my family...you want to keep your culture and your parents culture, but also speaking two languages brings so many opportunities and it gives you an advantage over people who can only speak English or only speak Spanish."

Those who are now parents try to speak mostly Spanish to their own children, and those without children say they would want their children to speak both Spanish and English. One parent said that trying to teach children another language is one way parents can begin to instill

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<sup>31</sup> *Between Two Worlds*, 27.

in their children a way of looking at the world that encourages open-mindedness and learning about other ways of life. Another young parent has enrolled her child in a French-English bilingual school, and speaks with her child in Spanish at home. Her account of a recent discussion with her daughter reveals how the meaning of language is related to self-understanding in relation to nation and community, which is my focus in the next section.

“Yesterday I talked to (my daughter) and, I was speaking Spanish to her, and she says ‘(sigh) but I don’t want to speak Spanish’ and I said ‘Gloria you have to because you’re Latina. Your parents are from El Salvador and we speak Spanish and that’s part of our culture,’ and I said, ‘these days a person who speaks more than one language is an asset, like you know, they want you everywhere,’ and she was just like, ‘ok, but it’s just so hard,’ she says...”

My interviews suggested that bilingualism can be an important ingredient to civic behaviors. In a practical sense, not just a symbolic one, language ability can help link its speakers with a community. One young woman, who frequently interacts with Spanish speakers as part of her work with a program providing family services, explained what it means to her to be able to speak Spanish:

“I think it’s useful (to speak two languages). And I’m glad, like I feel like I can help somebody who reminds me of my mom. Like the other day at Giant, this woman didn’t know how to pay for things or whatever. She was paying and she had some forms she needed to use and she couldn’t read them. It was English. So I went over and was helping her. Things like that you can really appreciate. You feel good that you can help.”

Interviews mostly revealed positive feeling about their language experiences, but they did include anecdotes of the difficulties of not knowing English upon arrival to the U.S. and of growing up with parents who cannot speak English. The young adults who had immigrated as children experienced ridicule and bullying in school made more stressful by the fact that they did not understand what was being said. Interviews also revealed that language can be a very real barrier to parents’ ability to be involved and to feel fully emotionally present in their life in the United States. One immigrant mother, who is taking classes to try for a third time to become a

citizen, spoke about English when I asked her how having citizenship would affect how she lives in this country:

“When I got my permit, I felt much less fear, walking on the streets. I did not realize it before, but now I see that when you become a resident, or when you become a citizen, there is an understanding that comes with it that you are, first, supposed to have knowledge of English, so you’re supposed to be more involved already just by the language. I wish I knew that before because that concept of involvement starts to happen when you learn English (translated).”

This woman said she regrets the years she spent “with a mentality still rooted in her former life in El Salvador.” She said this mentality prevented her from finding ways to be a part of society here. One of the young adults described another way that parents without a strong grasp of English are limited:

“I have cousins that still, you know, are the translator. And I feel kind of like, it’s almost like their parents are ashamed of it, you know, because I can’t imagine having my daughter trying to tell me- And then also having to trust your kids. For example, in school, when my mom would go to school I would love it because she couldn’t understand English. My mom would be like ‘what are they saying?’ and I’d be like, you know, kind of ‘I was great today,’ so, and I feel bad because I did it.”

I have presented my analysis of language here because my interviews supported my assumption that language use would be an important issue in a relationship involving immigrant parents and their children in the United States. For immigrant parents and their children, language is also closely connected with these concepts of self-understandings about membership in groups and ability to participate civically. It is important to keep in mind this link between language and involvement in the United States as I describe more fully how interviewees expressed sense of belonging and non-belonging, and identification with those who have been socially excluded or limited in a variety of ways.

In this section I have focused on the parent-child relationships piece to my puzzle. Maria Karunungan interprets the representations individuals assume as based on their relationships with

others,<sup>32</sup> suggesting that parents may influence civic participation indirectly, by affecting how their children understand themselves and the groups with which they identify themselves. So far I have begun to present how my interview responses shed light on the immigrant-parental factor in the young adults' perspectives of self and civic society, notions that I more fully flesh out in the coming sections. In the remaining sections of this paper I present aspects of the interviews that more explicitly explore self-understanding and self-identification and civic attitudes and participation. These sections of analysis clarify the connection between the parental influences discussed here and the civic attitudes located at the heart of my question.

### **Self-Understandings and Self-Identifications Relevant to Civic Self**

To study 'civic self' is to study the communities in which a person expresses a sense of belonging and a person's attitudes about citizen responsibilities, government and nation. Questions about community, beliefs, and values relate to conceptualizations of "identity." Immigration debates lack knowledge of how parent-child relationships affect second-generation Americans' sense of self in relation to their parents' present and former governments and communities. Identification and self-understanding processes that contribute to a dynamic overarching American political culture are changing. How do parent-child relations contribute to these dynamics? To answer this, I relate constructions of self to civic life and to family to respond to the need for scholarship on the ways in which immigrant parents influence their children's civic orientations.

Originally I used the term "identity" for the component of my research that I explore in this section of the paper. If I gave this section the title "identity," it would say much less, and perhaps the wrong things, depending on the reader. In fact, Frederick Cooper makes a strong

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<sup>32</sup> Karunungan, *Civic and Cultural Identity Development of Filipino Students in the United States*, 10.

argument that the overuse and ambiguity of the term *identity* requires that social scientists use other, more specific analytical categories “in the name of the conceptual clarity required for social analysis and political understanding alike.”<sup>33</sup> Samuel P. Huntington presents some of the concepts often associated with “identity”: “Identities are defined by the self but they are the product of the interaction between self and others.”<sup>34</sup> Maria Karunungan echoes this, adding that *self-concepts*, or the *understanding of one’s own identity*, change or preserve structural inequalities.<sup>35</sup> Studies of society require exploration into this concept of self that changes and is changed by interactions within society. However, this concept can be better explored when given more nuanced terms than *identity*, especially due to the potential to interpret *identity* as it commonly used in everyday practice: as persistent over time, “the same, while other things are changing.”<sup>36</sup> For example, one study that focused on Chinese immigrants<sup>37</sup> uses “political identities” to refer to labels rather than the underlying self-conceptualization processes. Measuring identity with group labels is problematic because people who identify with the same ethnic group label may understand and express the meaning of this classification differently.<sup>38</sup>

Cooper argues that although “identification – of oneself and others – is intrinsic to social life, “identity” in the strong sense is not.”<sup>39</sup> Social scientists can instead unpack the word identity by creating more specific terms. In Cooper’s words, “moving beyond identitarian language opens up possibilities for specifying other types of connectedness...other styles of self-understanding, other ways of reckoning social location.” In my analysis I will recognize the value of vocabulary

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<sup>33</sup> Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, 90.

<sup>34</sup> Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America’s National Identity*, 23

<sup>35</sup> Karunungan, *Civic and Cultural Identity Development of Filipino Students in the United States*, 9-10.

<sup>36</sup> Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, 68.

<sup>37</sup> Lien, Pie-te. “Homeland Origins and Political Identities Among Chinese in Southern California,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 8 (November 2008): 1384-1387.

<sup>38</sup> Karunungan, *Civic and Cultural Identity Development of Filipino Students in the United States*, 12.

<sup>39</sup> Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, 71, 87.

that helps to better conceptualize “social and cultural heterogeneity and particularity.” Adrienne Pine’s fieldwork in Honduras constituted the study of “processes by which Hondurans come to understand themselves as people: as women, men, poor (or not), drunk, sober, workers, and most of all, Honduran.”<sup>40</sup> In clarifying my terminology I draw on the analytical frameworks of anthropologists such as Pine who challenge ambiguous uses of identity as an analytical category.

I specify the relationship between my research and other scholarship on identity with the analytical categories of *self-understanding* and *self-identification*, each referring to processes *engaged in* by individuals and with implications for their life choices, aspirations, plans and actions, as well as with implications for how an individual views others and relates with others. The term self-understanding refers to “situated subjectivity,” or “one’s sense of who one is, of one’s social location, and of how (given the first two) one is prepared to act.”<sup>41</sup> Cooper suggests the term to replace “identity” when “identity” is used “to suggest ways individuals and collective action can be governed by particularist understandings of self and social location rather than by putatively universal, structurally determined interests.” The term *self-understanding* need not imply a purely cognitive awareness, or an understanding of the self as a “homogenous, bounded, unitary entity.”

It is important to recognize that processes by which people develop a more conscious self-understanding include the “ingredients” of “self-picture”: the activities in which a person engages and that person’s priorities in life, beliefs, and values and the person’s evaluations of his or her way of life.<sup>42</sup> I understand this use of the term “self-picture” to refer to the more explicit expressions of self-understanding that my interviews may elicit. At the same time it is highly

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<sup>40</sup> Pine, *Working Hard, Drinking Hard: On Violence and Survival in Honduras*, 2.

<sup>41</sup> Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, 73-74.

<sup>42</sup> Barna, Laray M. “Stumbling Blocks in Intercultural Communication” 335.

important in my analysis to note that self-understandings may be unspoken, even as they inform action and “even when they are formed in and through prevailing discourses.”

*Identification* is closely related to self-understanding. Cooper distinguishes the term from self-understanding in that *self-identification* suggests some explicit discursive articulation and better captures emotional dynamics. Pine uses the terms identity and identification to refer to self-conscious “acts of naming and recognition” of self and others,<sup>43</sup> linking with the above mentioned idea of “self-picture” in that naming self and others inherently involves judgments about the significance of the distinction.

Sociopolitical Development Theory (SPD) concepts for analysis that can be associated with “identity,” but that I address as part of *self-understandings* and *self-identifications*. Mathew Diemer et alia break SPD down to two parts: (1) motivation, to reduce social and economic inequality and to help one’s community, and (2) a self-definition consisting of self-concept and “locus of control.”<sup>44</sup> “Locus of control” is a part of self-understanding that applies to perceived relationships with U.S. and Salvadoran governments and in communities. It locates my research within the debate about the civic participation by immigrants and their children. The Diemer et alia study associates parenting, among other factors, with SPD, and so also relates to my question about the role of parenting in the identifications and self-understandings that constitute a civic self. I draw from SPD to ask: how might second-generation Americans’ self-understandings bolster social justice values in U.S. society? To begin to answer this question, I first describe these self-understandings as they were described to me in interviews.

“Locus of control,” self-efficacy and empowerment are concepts which contribute to processes of civic self-understandings. Amy Cheng uses a “loss paradigm” to examine

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<sup>43</sup> Pine, *Working Hard, Drinking Hard: On Violence and Survival in Honduras*, 3.

<sup>44</sup> Diemer, “School and Parental Influences on Sociopolitical Development,” 319.

immigrants' loss of sense of competence, control and belonging associated with the loss of "social roles that provided them with culturally scripted notions of how they fit into the world."<sup>45</sup>

My analysis of parent-child relationships addressed this by exploring senses of competence and belonging as central to civic self. As I do this, I also draw from the relevant literature on power and agency that are so important to notions of competency and belonging.

Eric Wolf explains individual power as the power to make choices and act, but individuals, and their personal power can be also affected by power imposed by another individual, by institutional or organizational power, or by structural power.<sup>46</sup> Forms of power and constraint, such as racism, can be imposed at all four of these levels of power, simultaneously and in reaction to past experiences of power exerted over individuals at any or all of the levels. Wolf's mapping out of power, and the individual's place and interactions within it, is important when studying the choices and aspirations, and closely related identification processes, of individuals, because it reminds us that there are many forces involved, and that individuals' identification and life paths are affected by their accumulation of experiences with all these forms of power. In my analysis I try to understand the power in parent-relationships in the context of wider forms of power.

These measures imply effects on *sense of belonging*, or *non-belonging*, within minority and "mainstream" communities and influence my study with questions about the extent to which participants emphasize distinguishing features of groups with which they most or least identify. Ethnography of how immigration policies construct notions of belonging led Coutin to argue that "the practices that define individuals' legal status are central to determining and contesting what

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<sup>45</sup> Cheng, Amy S., *Narratives of Second-generation Asian American Experience: Legacies of Immigration, trauma, and Loss* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2005), 2.

<sup>46</sup> Wolf, Eric R, *Pathways of Power: Building an Anthropology of the Modern World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

it means to be American.”<sup>47</sup> Cecilia Menjívar<sup>puts</sup> immigrants’ sense of national belonging in the context of uncertain legal status, which she argues “shapes who they are, how they relate to others, their participation in local communities, and their continued relationship with their homelands.”<sup>48</sup> In a sense, my study examines social interaction via expressions of the closely related concepts of self-identification and sense of belonging.

Interviewees tended to acknowledge that the United States “may still not be the best when it comes to immigrants.” They expressed the feeling that the U.S. did not receive with open arms immigrants like those from El Salvador, and that it is perhaps worse now than in the past, now that “immigration is going around, picking people up.” One young woman talked about sometimes wondering what her co-workers really thought about her for being a Latina. “I think sometimes we’re misunderstood, or we’re looked at like we’re here taking away things,” she said, adding, “Maybe if we had resources in our country . . . but people don’t think about why we’re here.” This quote reflects a view that neither the U.S. nor El Salvador is a completely supportive, hospitable home for Salvadorans.

The stories of two immigrant mothers about their interviews for citizenship and permanent residence also reflect the hostility that Salvadoran immigrants can feel that they face. Both women described the interviews as “traumatizing” because they felt attacked by their interviewers regarding their reasons for wanting the status for which they had applied and regarding their lack of English ability. One young man was so pessimistic about the treatment of Salvadoran immigrants in the United States that he focused on improving El Salvador so people do not have to migrate. “Given the climate of anti-immigration here, I hope it gets better in El Salvador,” he said. Many interviewees talked about legal status in a way that reflected that they

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<sup>47</sup> Coutin, *Legalizing Moves: Salvadoran Immigrants’ Struggle for U.S. Residency*, 25.

<sup>48</sup> Menjívar, Cecilia. “Liminal Legality: Salvadoran and Guatemalan Immigrants’ Lives in the United States,” *American Journal of Sociology* 111, no. 4 (January 2006): 1000.

could identify with a group that was not allowed to feel entitled to membership in U.S. society.

One young woman explained conversations she has had with co-workers who complained about immigrants taking jobs:

“If it would be on my hands I would give all immigrants permanent residence...Our countries are really poor, and we are hard working person, people, and if you guys have the opportunity to grow in this country and you guys don’t, we want to do it. We have the ability to do it, although the government is not issuing us the legal papers in order us to do everything. So I feel, I feel really bad when I hear somebody’s being deported to our country...when they’re good people.”

In the previous section I went into more detail about the perceptions interviewees have about the hardships experienced by Salvadoran immigrants. Some of these hardships were shared by the young adults when they were growing up, as in the case of the young woman who, as a child, had to keep moving among the houses of strangers when they first arrived as illegal immigrants. The people they would share living space with “were treating her badly,” causing her mother to seek new living situations. Such difficulties in finding a “place to call home” and friendly people to live with would seem to take their toll on one’s sense of belonging in a new country.

Another interviewee talked about the “culture change” and the “overwhelming” impact of the “different language, different economic environment, different social environment,” explaining that there are “certain things you always have to aware of that you are an immigrant in a foreign country.” Although this is not entirely the case of those who immigrated very young and for those born in the United States, it is important to consider the affects of growing up with a parent who may feel like, and act like, a “foreigner” and an “outsider.” One young adult explained that his home life had always made him feel “different” because he grew up in a neighborhood with few other Latinos: “When I would go to school, you know, even the peanut

butter and jelly sandwich (that his mother had made) was just slightly different than these other kids' sandwiches.”

Some interviewees talked about not feeling they belonged at times in their schooling. Those who had to learn English in school shared memories of being bullied by English-speakers, by Latinos sometimes just as much as by white students. One young woman went to a magnet program high school that drew students from many backgrounds, and she found herself in Honors classes as a minority among mostly white and Asian students. She described feeling intimidated, and like she “stood out” “for the first time.” For the first few years she said that she let it affect how well she did in the class, “giving into the stereotype.” Sometimes those who were born in the United States were told to “go back home.”

These negative influences on sense of belonging in the United States help explain why the children of Salvadoran immigrants may be especially sympathetic to immigrants' causes. But at the same time that people discussed how hard it is to be an immigrant, especially one without legal status, the young adults in the study tended to consider the United States a place where they themselves belonged. One young woman who immigrated as a child put it, “the Washingtonian community and the United States community, if you may, and El Salvador, they're hand-in-hand because they have raised me.” All but one of the young adults said they planned to keep living in the United States, even though they all expressed a strong connection with El Salvador.

In considering agency and sense of belonging in my analysis, I draw on anthropological literature on voice.<sup>49</sup> Voice has been defined simply as agency, or individual power to make choices, but it also refers to conscious discourse rooted in collective history, struggles, lived experiences and context. Benedict Anderson addresses identity as the “politics of inclusion and

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<sup>49</sup> Giroux, Henry A., and Peter McLaren (editors), *Between Border: Pedagogy and the Politics of Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 159-161.

exclusion” that works in the “collective imagination” of a sense of community, such as “the nation.”<sup>50</sup> In this “politics of inclusion and exclusion,” agency does not contradict, but rather interacts with, the “power of imposed identification,” which contributes to “self-understandings of people defined by circumstances they did not control.”<sup>51</sup> Thus, my analysis of the meanings given to Salvadorans’ collective history and sense of community should not be read as a description of identity for all members of a Salvadoran community in the U.S., however strongly my interviews reflect values of solidarity and collectivity.

I have identified the notion of community as central to a person’s ‘civic self’. I explored how people express self-understandings in the context of a collective experience, and how they identify themselves with groups, in order to understand the ‘civic self’ of my participants. Scholars of service learning reference “civic identity” without reaching consensus on its meaning. Karunungan explains the development of civic identity as the way “children come to think of themselves as citizens of their country.”<sup>52</sup> However, “civic identity” is not always tied to nation.

It is consistently understood as related to a community and frequently measured with cognizance. For example, an SPD interpretation of civic identity focuses on the centrality of community in one’s motivations, alongside the perception of efficacy “to make things happen”<sup>53</sup> and to participate in the “life of the community.”<sup>54</sup> I am interested in self-*identification* as it relates to community and to sense of belonging, a concept that appears in studies of how migration changes the relationship between identity and state citizenship, and also in studies of

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<sup>50</sup> Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), 10.

<sup>51</sup> Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, 84.

<sup>52</sup> Karunungan, *Civic and Cultural Identity Development of Filipino Students in the United States*, 10.

<sup>53</sup> Lichter, “Helping Others?,” 100.

<sup>54</sup> Zimmerman & Rappaport, “Citizen Participation, Perceived Control and Psychological Empowerment,” 725-749.

how assimilation and integration process that imply a change in self in order to “belong,” but which may imply non-belonging in more socially excluded groups.

Charles Taylor observes that “the politics of nationalism,” relevant to concepts of nation and questions of democratic participation, “has been powered for well over a century, in part, by the sense that people have had of being despised or respected by others around them.”<sup>55</sup> Caroline Nagel and Lynn Staeheli study how Arab immigrants express sense of “societal membership” and “belonging.”<sup>56</sup> Meanwhile, Christina Paulston reviews the literature on processes through which children become “bicultural” to find frequent reports of “an odd feeling of belonging nowhere.”<sup>57</sup> Community psychologists measure distinction between self and the “in-group,”<sup>58</sup> communal orientations<sup>59</sup>, and “ethnic perspective taking ability” related to ethnic self-categorization.<sup>60</sup>

All but one interviewee said they considered themselves as either “Salvadoran” or “Latino/a” before any other group label, although some were also comfortable with the term “Hispanic.” None of the interviewees said they called themselves American, even if they were born here: “I mean, I’m technically, I’m American, you know, I could just say that, but I feel Salvadorian.” One young woman who immigrated as a child tells her son “you’re not American. You’re half Salvadoran, and half America.” Similarly, one young adult said he had always had a “bi-national identity,” and that at times he had been ashamed to be Latino or Salvadoran, and

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<sup>55</sup> Pine, 5.

<sup>56</sup> Nagel, & Staeheli. “Citizenship, Identity and Transnational Migration,” 3-23.

<sup>57</sup> Paulston, Christina Bratt, “Biculturalism: Some Reflections and Speculations,” *TESOL Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (1978); 373.

<sup>58</sup> Brewer, “Who is This ‘We’?.” 91.

<sup>59</sup> Boykin, et alia, “Communalism: Conceptualization and Measurement of an Afro-cultural Social Orientation,” 409-418.

<sup>60</sup> Quintana, & Segura-Herrera, “Developmental Transformations of Self and Identity in the Context of Oppression,” 276, 274-283.

then ashamed for having been ashamed. But now he said he can “laugh about it” and identifies himself as either Salvadoran or Latino, but not “Salvadoran-American.”

One young woman made a distinction depending on who she was relating herself with: “If I’m amongst my fellow Latinos, I’m Salvadoran, but then with the rest of the world I’m Latina.” Another young woman chooses Latina over Salvadoran:

“I feel I am so...interested and so caring of other countries and other people in Latin America that before I’m Salvadoran I’m Latina. Because I can identify myself with like a Mexican immigrant or like with all kinds of people from all over Latin America...you know I’ve seen so many videos of the war in El Salvador and I’ve cried so much because of them, but a couple days ago I was watching this film about the Mexican Revolution...and I started crying so hard...I felt such a bond.”

I also asked about the communities with which interviewees felt they most identified. Several interviewees identified the Columbia Heights community, where they had grown up and where they had been involved in some of the community programs oriented toward Latino and “working class” families and youth in the area. One interviewee answered that it had more to do with difficult experiences, either in Latin America or as immigrants in the United States, than it did with their country of origin or their ethnic label. He said he feels the strongest bond with someone “if they had to face the similar kind of difficulties that my mother had to face.”

“Like say there’s a Mexican immigrant who was able to get to the United States pretty easily, like they had the pathway to citizenship tailor-made for them, with no difficulty. I don’t think I would have as strong a connection to him as with all the ones that I know had a much more difficult time...but it’s almost always a given when I see other Salvadorans around I end up connecting pretty well with them because almost every Salvadoran around here was affected by that war.”

On the other hand, one immigrant mother made the interesting evaluation regarding solidarity that, in her experience, Latinos who speak English well and have their citizenship sometimes reach out to struggling immigrants less than white people who can speak Spanish. She said she felt support not only from the Hispanic community but also from “white people,”

some of whom she said are responsible for the scholarship that pays for her son to go to a private school. Another young woman is involved in a “solidarity” organization that works to influence policy affecting El Salvador and that is mostly run by white Americans. In response to my question about what she thinks of this membership, she said “These people have no reason to do this but it is great that they are doing this and I just love every single one of them for doing it.”

These sentiments reflect the sentiment expressed across my interviews that, while they do not identify as “American,” these self-ascribed “Salvadorans” and “Latinos” do not see their identity as preventing them from working with people of other backgrounds, be they immigrants or U.S.-born, living in the United States. Within the Latino community, some of the interviewees mentioned talking with people from other countries about what it is like in their various parts of Latin America. Interviewees also tended to talk about ethnic diversity as a positive part of a neighborhood or school community. One young man said that although there are pockets of Latinos, he is happy that the area where he lives is becoming more “mixed,” and that he thinks Latinos in DC are now more integrated with other groups than in the past.

The conceptualization of collective experience relates to the use of the terms “culture,” and “cultural identity,” in social science studies that address immigrant and ethnic groups. Anthropologist Kathryn Walsh views culture “as a vital source for developing a politics of identity and of community.”<sup>61</sup> For my study, with its interest in *civic* aspects of identification and self-conceptualization, this relationship between the concept of culture and identification warrants consideration. Diane Hoffman identifies a common generalization in immigrant acculturation literature that “individuals who maintain intimate links with their culture of origin through language and other forms of cultural participation are thought to experience less

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<sup>61</sup> Walsh, Catherine E., *Pedagogy and the Struggle for Voice: Issues of Language, Power, and Schooling for Puerto Ricans* (New York: Bergin & Garvey, 1991): xix.

acculturation and more ethnic identification.”<sup>62</sup> However, Hoffman follows this with evidence that the experiences of many minority groups challenge the conceptualized dichotomy between mainstream participation and minority cultural maintenance.

The anthropological use of discourse, and *discourse of difference*<sup>63</sup>, offers clarity to the ambiguous concept of culture. Discourse refers to ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, and speaking. People participate in discourses in ways considered to be responsive to their experiences. Discourse in the place of the term *culture* does not deny the importance of collective histories in the lives of members of particular groups, but adds the element of individual agency, in interaction with personal experience and collective history, when the collective is personalized or internalized by the individual. In this framework, “collective ideational systems” form the context for the “psychodynamics of the individual.”<sup>64</sup>

R. M. Keesing clarifies the definition of culture as a “system of competence.” This helps explain the theoretical framework underlying my research design and analysis of interviews.

“Culture, conceived as a system of competence shared in its broad design and deeper principles and varying between individuals in its specificities, is then not at all what an individual knows and thinks and feels about his world. It is his theory of what his fellows know, believe, and mean, his theory of the code being followed, the game being played, in the society into which he was born.”<sup>65</sup>

Keesing adds that an individual may be unconscious of his or her “theory” of the “rules of the game.” Many individuals may have a largely unconscious perception of culture, but individuals may also “consciously use, manipulate, violate, and try to change what they conceive to be the rules of the game.” It is both these unconscious and conscious uses of perceptions about cultural codes that link the concept of culture with my analysis of self-

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<sup>62</sup> Hoffman, Diane M, “Language and Culture Acquisition among Iranians in the United States,” *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 20, no.2 (1989), 120.

<sup>63</sup> Walsh, *Pedagogy and the Struggle for Voice*, Xix.

<sup>64</sup> Paulston, “Biculturalism: Some Reflections and Speculations,” 372.

<sup>65</sup> Paulston, “Biculturalism: Some Reflections and Speculations,” 371.

identifications, self-understandings and orientations in civic life. It is important to add the caveat that a given “game being played” may be one of multiple games in which the individual feels varying degrees of membership. The concept of social roles helps connect discussion of membership in discourses, of individual self-understandings and of civic interactions. Majors clarifies that “participants’ roles are constituted not only by idiosyncratic intentions of individuals, but also through the historical traditions of discourses.”

My interview analysis considers Mark Roberge’s model of identity politics for students from immigrant families.<sup>66</sup> Although I reject Roberge’s simplistic binary notion of one, all-encompassing culture for the “host” society and for the “home” society, my theoretical framework corresponds with the strength of Roberge’s model for immigrants’ identification with cultures. Like Roberge, I recognize that individuals are not members or outsiders of a culture until they have participated in identification or rejection processes.

The role of self-identification processes in assimilation, alienation and biculturalism show the need to consider the idea of “culture” to understand *sense of belonging*, which I have identified as central to the notion of ‘civic self’, and to understand self-understanding in general. Interviewees talked about Salvadoran “culture” as something that they could own, that you can “know”, that they could be “rooted in,” that they could share with others across time and space, that is “in one’s blood,” and that connected them with El Salvador, but also as something that could be lost. The young adults tended to associate it with a “family foundation,” with history and memories of El Salvador experienced first-hand or through family members, with a “kind of thinking,” and with a sense of warmth that came from the familiarity and uniqueness of “traditions” that allow Salvadorans to relate with one another over a felt, and celebrated, bond.

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<sup>66</sup> Roberge, Mark, *Generation 1.5 Immigrant Students: What Special Experiences, Characteristics and Educational Needs Do They Bring to our English Classes?*, (Baltimore: 37<sup>th</sup> Annual TESOL Convention, 2003), 8.

Due to an upbringing that he described as “traditional Salvadoran,” one young man said, “I wasn’t born there (in El Salvador), but I really feel like I was raised there.”

Interestingly, when interviewees discussed negative, or “frustrating,” aspects of what might be called “culture,” they tended to talk about a “mentality” associated with El Salvador, rather than a “culture.” This came up mostly around gender issues and the expectations and appropriate behavior of females.

“My grandmother is one of those kinds of people who lives here and doesn’t want to go back to El Salvador but still has *the mentality* of people in El Salvador, and it’s just like ‘girls should not take birth control,’ . . . and so I feel like people should gain a new mentality with these kinds of issues because *our culture* in itself is like one of our biggest problems.”

Neither young adults nor immigrant parents embraced everything that came from El Salvador, but overwhelmingly they talked more about their pride in and love for Salvadoran “culture” than about their problems with it. One young woman explained that “it feels good” to talk with someone who knows “our culture.” When asked what she would want to instill in her own future children, one of the young adults linked identity with the learning of “culture,” history, and geographical place:

“I would definitely want him or her to grow up knowing the culture, knowing the history . . . little by little learning about Latin America . . . learning about where my family comes from . . . I think it is important to keep that identity. Even if he or she decides not to make it his own, it’s always good to know it.”

Knowing and speaking Spanish came up often when interviewees talked about “being Salvadoran” and staying “rooted in Salvadoran culture.” In the last section I introduced how parent-child relationships influenced how the young adults understood the use of Spanish and English. My interviews revealed that language, in the context of family relations, plays a role in the processes by which individuals come to identify with, and find a sense of belonging in, the

notion of a Salvadoran community. But losing Spanish is a fear because it is considered so central to a culture that interviewees talked about “holding on to.”

Concepts of “boundary-crossing” and biculturalism deserve attention when considering how interviewees discuss culture and their experiences with different social groups. Paulston asks whether one can be “bicultural” in the same way someone who is competent in two languages is “bilingual.” She does not refer simply to cultures associated with countries, as Roberge’s model implies, but instead focuses on the choices students make between the aspects of their home culture (i.e. their family members’ culture) and the “mainstream culture” they experience outside the home. Such choices form an individual’s “bicultural make-up,” clarifying that “being bicultural is an individual matter which does not lend itself to stereotyping.”<sup>67</sup> Most interviewees said they did not see a major conflict between the different cultures that have influenced who they are. One young mother who immigrated as a child explained what it meant to her to be Salvadoran in a way that reflects a merging of influences and sources of pride:

“I will always be true Salvadoreña, you know, because it is in our blood. It’s where I came from and I am so proud of it. I think every person should be proud because you came from this village and that’s where your foundation was formed to become this big, goal-oriented, or like, successful person. I feel so honored that, you know what? My Grandmother, with the ten pesos that she had, she could give me the foundation to be successful.”

One young mother talked about raising her children by incorporating the strengths of how she was raised, “the values and morals from Salvadoran culture,” with strengths found in other views and parenting styles, so as to improve upon the childhood she was given.

“If you want to play basketball, you can play basketball. Even if she’s a girl, she can play basketball. Whereas I feel like if I went to my parents and said ‘I want to play basketball,’ they would’ve been like ‘no, you don’t do that. You’re a girl.’”

This woman did not by any means reject the Salvadoran community. She talked about how proud she is to be Salvadoran, and that she will do all she can to make sure her children feel

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<sup>67</sup> Paulston, “Biculturalism: Some Reflections and Speculations,” 379.

accepted and recognized as a member of the Salvadoran community, but she also talked about making “a perfect culture” by doing differently what she does not see as a positive. Another young adult who grew up with friends who were mostly white or of ethnicities other than Latino, described his difficulties as an adolescent in reconciling conflicted feelings of shame and embarrassment about the Salvadoran culture of his home life. Several interviewees talked about being “between two worlds” in the sense that they felt obligated to follow Salvadoran traditional norms for taking care of your parents while also trying to plan ahead so that they could provide for their children’s education and for their own retirement so that their own children would not have to take care of them. One father who immigrated as a teenager stressed the idea that people can be influenced by “how you were raised” and “where you are from” and still be a member of a different society:

“I do not have a problem with identifying with the society or community where you come from, but at some point you have to let go, or cut the umbilical cord, and become a member of the society which you’re in.”

For the most part, interviewees did not express that feeling “at home” in El Salvador reflected negatively on their feelings in the United States. One young woman put it:

“Over there everyone speaks Spanish. Over there we’re family. And here...I switch over, and sometimes people here know, but I just fit in naturally.”

I designed my interview questions with the goal that they would provide a context for interviewees to create a verbal picture of how they understand and identify themselves as individuals in community. In this section I have presented some of the themes that emerged from my interviews and that are relevant to the influence of growing up with a Salvadoran immigrant parent. These themes allowed me to relate my interviews to existing scholarship. I now go on to address in more depth the implications of themes of self-understanding and self-identification for civic attitudes and orientations. In doing so, I show how self-understanding and self-

identification link parental influence to civic attitudes and orientations, and thus respond to my overarching question about parents who emigrated from El Salvador during the Civil War: How did these parents' immigration experiences influence the civic attitudes and orientations of their children?

### **'Civic Self': Attitudes and Orientations**

My research studies participants' ideas about civic participation and their civic obligations. Because I consider self-understandings and self-identifications mainly as they relate to civic orientations, the division made in the structure of this paper between civic participation and civic self is somewhat artificial. I view 'civic self' and civic views as mutually influencing and reinforcing one another, so that the conceptual line between the two is blurry. In this section I focus on how representations of self in interviews seem to translate into the commitments and actions that interviewees expressed regarding the way they live their lives and the way they interact with others.

"Civic indicators" that have been used to measure a "civic culture" include voting, volunteering and philanthropy,<sup>68</sup> political interest, political discussion, information tolerance and political efficacy, attitudes of "civic duty," and "orientations to public institutions and the common good."<sup>69</sup> The common assumption of objectively observable indicators of civic participation excludes certain groups who are political in less traditionally recognized or easily observable ways. Scholars who explore membership within civic cultures tend not to acknowledge that what constitutes "the common good" is determined by established members of a society and may exclude others by its definition. Sidney Verba et alia distinguish between

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<sup>68</sup> Trombley, *Transmission, Acquisition, and Creation of Civic Culture*, 2-5.

<sup>69</sup> Verba, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*, 553-556; Zimmerman, "Citizen Participation, Perceived Control and Psychological Empowerment," 746.

different forms of participation with the question “for what and from whom does the government hear?” to understand social and political power and distortion.

The set of civic values with which interviewees express identification is one aspect of how those individuals relate to and derive identity from the multiple cultural inputs they encounter. *Civic culture* can be understood as one value domain of a culture, making ‘*civic self*’ a process of personal identification with the values and beliefs in one domain of a culture, which does not imply identification with all other domains of that culture. The distinction between participating in a culture and identifying with the culture is important to my analysis of ‘civic self’. Hoffman finds in the case of Iranian immigrants that instrumental learning or “acquisition” of American culture does not equate ownership of or deep personal commitment to the values of that culture, even if such cultural acquisition enables an individual to successfully participate in American life.<sup>70</sup> This point helps clarify why studies simply looking at specific forms of civic participation do not look deep enough to examine civic self-understandings. I view the identification processes of ‘civic self’ as “creative and integrative responses” to “the confrontation between two” or more cultures.<sup>71</sup>

In the previous section I introduced the notions of “home” and “roots” that seemed closely related to parent-child relationships among the young adults in my study. These notions also came up in relation to questions about the meaning of citizenship. Ideas of citizenship relates to questions about civic participation, although nation need not be central to citizens’ social interactions. Scholarship on citizenship confronts concepts of civic culture, civil society, motivations and factors explaining participation, the various civic communities to which individuals can commit and the various civic participation outcomes. Beliefs about the meaning

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<sup>70</sup> Hoffman, “Language and Culture Acquisition among Iranians in the United States,” 123-125.

<sup>71</sup> Hoffman, “Language and Culture Acquisition among Iranians in the United States,” 121.

of citizenship can never be assumed, but rather deserve inquiry. In a history of U.S. citizenship among Central American immigrants, Cordova identifies a prevailing belief, that “to become U.S. citizens was to betray their national identity and citizenship,” that until the 1990s largely stood in the way of this community activists who sought to increase Central American citizenship in the U.S..<sup>72</sup>

At the same time, ideas about the meaning of national citizenship prominent among a specific community should not be considered to represent the full range of ways in which individuals can act civically, nor the range of ways that a community can have a strong “civic culture.” Mark Zimmerman and Julian Rappaport use the term “citizen participation” to refer to “involvement in any organized activity in which the individual participates without pay in order to achieve a common goal.”<sup>73</sup> Thus interests and communal goals, rather than a shared territorial identification or legal documentation of citizenship, are central to understanding “citizen participation.” This view of what constitutes civic activity means that civic commitments may sometimes enable individuals to be civic actors in the United States in a way that contributes to their identification with a nation outside the United States. Zimmerman and Rappaport’s definition of citizen participation requires a modification important to my study: even when activity is lucrative to the individual, such as paid employment, it can still reflect a choice of activity that corresponds to and reinforces an individual’s civic attitudes and orientations.

I asked interview participants what it meant to them to be a citizen, in the United States and in El Salvador. The responses reflected multiple layers of meaning associated with the concept of citizenship. According to my analysis of the interviews, citizenship is, on the one hand, a source of power and for those who have it, and a form of social exclusion for those who

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<sup>72</sup> Cordova, *The Salvadoran Americans*, 114.

<sup>73</sup> Zimmerman, “Citizen Participation, Perceived Control and Psychological Empowerment,” 726.

do not have it. A young adult said “It makes me think that I am one of the lucky ones, in a good and a bad way, because there are so many people that come into this country” and are “nowhere near as lucky.” By putting you in a position of power, one woman explained, having U.S. citizenship is a motivation for political involvement.

Interviewees talked about people they knew who struggled, and could not go to college, because they “they’re not supposed to be here.” One young adult said of his parents “if there weren’t so many things scaring them into doing it they wouldn’t have gotten it,” reflecting the fear associated with not being a citizen and the sense of security and government protection associated with having citizenship. For those who were not born with U.S. citizenship, it was talked about as an achievement, providing “a sense of pride in oneself that they could do it, that they made it.”

The U.S. was described as a relatively safe place, and having U.S. citizenship was associated with a sense of security about the future, because “you never know what’s going to happen.” Rights, liberties, and protections, especially for women, came up in the way several interviewees talked about U.S. citizenship. One young woman, born in the U.S., described it as a source of “persona” that can determine how you are treated:

“I carry around that American passport and I know anywhere I go I am in a sense taken care of ...even if someone wants to hassle me even in my own street, you can’t get away with it. I’m an American citizen. You’re gonna give me the same rights that anybody else has...They could look at me and say ‘she just crossed the border,’ but then I take that passport out and what are they gonna say to me? The persona of me changes, ‘o, I can’t maybe take advantage of her’...the stereotype, the initial perception changes.”

I also asked what it was to “be like” a citizen, regardless of the legal documentation. No one had a quick answer to this question, but most people gave me a variety of behaviors and attitudes as they pieced together parts of what they considered “citizen behavior.” Behaviors included: “taking care of your environment,” taking care of “whatever you have”, “helping

others when you can,” “being involved in your community,” “educating yourself about issues” and “speaking about politics” even if you cannot vote, improving “the conditions of yourself,” and taking advantage of education opportunities. One immigrant mother associated getting your residence and citizenship with a “mentality of progress.” Voting, paying taxes and following the law were mentioned, reflecting the legal interpretations of citizenship. Interviewees also talked about what not to do in order to act like a citizen: “don’t take advantage of the system,” referring to government assistance programs, “don’t sit back and be the victim,” and don’t do “wrong things.” U.S. citizenship was associated with speaking English well, and, interestingly, with “sounding white,” because people treat you differently when you do.

Some people associated citizenship with the sense that a country is “home,” although only one interviewee expressed that only one place could mean “home” in this way. But for immigrants, citizenship in the U.S. does not always signify that they have fully come to see this country as theirs. One young woman who immigrated as a child seemed to imply that citizenship was different for immigrants than for those born in the United States. She emphasized respect for this country, and “maintaining a good pose,” because, as she said multiple times, “this is not your country.” One young man made an important observation that “it’s tricky” to talk about the behaviors of a citizen because there are many people who are considered citizens in the U.S. who do not act in the ways that interviewees described as “citizen-like.” He also said that, although the behaviors he described corresponded with much of what he had already talked about in the context of how he tries to live his life, he had never before thought about himself as striving to act “like a citizen.”

The question about what it looks like to act like a citizen, regardless of documentation, may be largely detached from reality. I asked it in this way to try to elicit ideas about citizenship

that are not strictly legal in nature, so as to learn about civic attitudes, but my interviews suggested that the legal aspect of citizenship is difficult to separate out. Although one immigrant father, who is now a U.S. citizen, said the “most accurate association to citizenship” is the community-minded obligations to others, he said that “the process of (getting) citizenship in this country has nothing to do with that.” A young adult who is also an immigration attorney said that it is the “exception to the rule” for people from El Salvador living in the U.S. without citizenship to get involved politically in their community.

This view was echoed by those who had gone through the process of getting their permanent residence or citizenship supported this. These participants talked about changes in how they perceived their ability and desire to get involved after having these forms of documentation. This is important to consider because so many children of Salvadoran immigrants grew up in households with members who did not have permanent residence or citizenship.

Learning about what citizenship, and dual citizenship, means to people in the context of immigration tells us about sense of belonging, about the places people identify as a “home” and, to some extent, about civic attitudes. But it does not give the whole picture of how people understand themselves as civic actors. Even when young adults did not have citizenship in El Salvador they expressed the same sentiment that in El Salvador they did not, for the most part, “feel like an outsider.” The interviewees who have citizenship in El Salvador tended to say that it signifies ‘this is my home,’ or that ‘I have another home’ (in addition to the U.S.), more than that it designated certain forms of civic participation. For example, one immigrant mother explained that, although she keeps her citizenship in El Salvador as a symbol that El Salvador is “her country,” the U.S. government is most important to her now.

On the other hand, two of the young adults explained that they do go back to El Salvador to vote in presidential elections. One young adult said his citizenship in El Salvador gave him added legitimacy in his work in the U.S. Salvadoran community, and that he might one day use his citizenship to do some work in El Salvador. A few interviewees talked about Salvadoran citizenship as a form of security: they could go to El Salvador if one day the U.S. was no longer a safe place for them. This is interesting in the context of Salvadoran immigration during civil war, when leaving El Salvador, with or without documentation, was not necessarily seen as a choice so much as for survival.

Asking people about their attitudes towards the governments and political systems in the U.S. and El Salvador also reveals the extent people feel belonging in the U.S., as well as the values they have regarding political participation. Several young adults stressed that they could not forget that the U.S. government had hurt El Salvador in the past. One young woman said Obama's election had marked the first time she could "hold an American flag with pride."

"I should be proud. This country has given me and my family so much, and then of course you learn about history- in elementary school they sugar coat everything- and then you're like 'this country's great. But once you get to college, of course...I don't want to be proud of this. Look at how many people had to die to get it this way...but I see a president that looks like a lot of people that I know and it does help."

She, and several others, described this dilemma regarding the role of the U.S. in history as a challenge of "being stuck in two worlds" and "trying to bring them together." But at the same time, interviewees tended to rate the political situation in the United States as better than in El Salvador, and said they were grateful for the rights and protections they had here. Problems of a "culture of impunity" and corruption in El Salvador came up more than once, corresponding with the greater safety and protection immigrants described feeling in the U.S. One immigrant

said that the U.S. comes much closer to realizing what is in the nation's constitution than El Salvador does regarding its constitution. A young woman who works in the D.C. courts said:

“Many people argue that our system (in the U.S.) is corrupt but at the end of the day there are still rules. You have to follow them. You can't pay someone like 'hey get him off.' El Salvador is a little different. If you have money you have power, even if you have nothing to do with government...”

The political culture of fear and silence also came up when I asked interviewees to talk about the political differences between the U.S. and El Salvador. One immigrant parent explained it as a strategy for survival: If you did not talk about your political views you could switch sides to accommodate whoever was occupying your village. A young man interpreted the silence among Salvadoran immigrants on political issues differently: “I think a lot of people from El Salvador, and my parents- they weren't brain washed, but they just didn't know.” Another interviewee said that El Salvador still is not a democracy where people can speak freely, regardless of what political side you take. This interviewee expressed disappointment that the polarization from the years of violent conflict has not abated. He went on to describe how this political situation and history of El Salvador carries over to the United States:

“I do think the war does loom large for everybody of Salvadoran descent, because...you have to make a decision to not talk about it, and it's hard, to completely separate yourself from what was going on during all those years of the war.”

Interviewees talked about their appreciation for the ability to access and discuss political information in this country, and to live with a greater sense of physical security that a person has rights that will be protected. And yet none of the interviewees expressed a great deal of hope that U.S. federal leaders would do much to improve the situation of Latinos, immigrants and their families in the United States in the near future. One woman went so far as to say she did not think politics in El Salvador and in the U.S. differ significantly: “You know, presidents promise, and once they- they take over (laughs), a lot of them don't do what they promised.”

Participants expressed ideas about their citizenship, civic obligations, and civic orientations in response to questions that were meant to target self-identification with communities and social causes and those designed to elicit views about civic participation. This reflects the blurred line and mutually reinforcing relationship between the two areas of my investigation. For example, one young woman expressed a civic value for learning about the diversity in the U.S. when she was talking about why she does not like it when her co-workers refer to her as “Spanish lady,” (she identifies herself as “Hispanic Salvadoran.”):

“I would probably would call it ignorant (laughs) in a way, in a way, because there are some people that are not interested in learning other cultures, so it’s like, we in this country, and this country is like a whole world, it’s a lot of people, a lot of countries, people from other countries, so it would be nice if other people would be interested in learning.”

Growing up with exposure to their parents’ culture and to life in El Salvador may provide children of immigrants with experience in communicating and cooperating across cultural borders. My interviews suggest that this experience fosters a value for awareness about others. One parent, who immigrated as an adolescent, echoed this value for open-mindedness and learning about other ways of life:

“I can assure there are many people in this country that have never left their state and therefore, and this is not unique to the United States of course, they have no idea about foreign policy, and so the view of the world is very different than the view of someone who has been able to experience and learn about different, not only cultures, but systems of government and the way things are done.”

I also learned about the qualities that my interviewees associated with “being civic actors” by asking them about their own involvement in local, national or international issues, about the issues they were most interested in, and about what in society they would most like to change. Education, which also came up frequently when I asked the parents and young adults in

my study about the ways their parents had raised them and influenced them, came up as a way someone can make a difference in social issues they find important.

“I educate myself...and that doesn’t necessarily mean going to college and getting a degree. I mean, you have people like Malcolm X who self-taught themselves and look at the impact that they played in this country. It’s about taking the time to really educate yourself and figuring out, ‘ok, how am I supposed to do this?’ Knowing your history, what failed in the past, what worked in the past... what needs to be fixed, how do we go about doing it, that’s research. That’s definitely the only way to really do things. Anyone can be like ‘oh, I’m gonna fight for this’...”

Actively pursuing goals is another theme that came up as a civic value and that also connects to my earlier discussion on the lifestyles and values that Salvadoran immigrant parents may have helped to instill. Several interviewees pointed out that among the Latino population, and among the U.S. population in general, there are people who “will just not do anything for their life,” who will “just sit there and let everything come to them.” But according to these interviewees, Latinos who take an active role in community life help the image of Latinos and also serve to improve the community.

An immigrant mother addressed this theme, shedding more sensitivity on why immigrants may not engage in community life in the U.S. while she expressed high esteem those who do actively involve themselves and contribute to the community. She explained that when she came to the U.S. she had a “spirit of improving herself and her family’s situation” and that she wanted to contribute to the community by starting her own businesses, but upon arrival she found that her husband and many others around her were just trying to make it through the day and “conforming” to the situation already there. This woman expressed a great deal of respect for people in the community who “have gone out of their way” to contribute by “making themselves someone.” Her words are also interesting in the individualistically-focused approach she sees for serving her community.

Helping others was another, equally prominent, form of civic activity that interviewees discussed. Ideas of caring for those in need, which interviewees associated as much with their spirituality as with notions of citizenship and civic obligations, are also relevant to understanding the civic role people value. A woman talked about her and her husband's views, saying "We believe that there is a higher being out there and we're here to support and take care of everyone." She and her husband met while working at CentroNía, a non-profit that provides education and family support services to the community.

Studying civic participation with a focus on the psychological construct of sense of agency emphasizes *what* and *whose* goals motivate civic participation, challenging assumptions of a single, static set of goals. Zimmerman defines "Sense of agency," as "a combination of self-acceptance and self confidence, social and political understanding, and the ability to play an assertive role in controlling resources and decisions in one's community."<sup>74</sup> Asking "whose goals?" links civic participation with studies of communalism in identity processes.<sup>75</sup> For example, Cordova observes that political and social activism within the Salvadoran American community has focused on the goal of equipping this community to "critically affront the wide range of problems they face,"<sup>76</sup> suggesting that civic participation by members of the Salvadoran American community is based on common heritage and focused on the in-group. Cordova also considers engagement in associations with ties to regions and communities abroad to develop a "sense of belonging" for Salvadoran immigrants and Salvadoran Americans that enables "retention of strong cultural and national identification as Salvadoran and Central American."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Zimmerman, "Citizen Participation, Perceived Control and Psychological Empowerment," 726.

<sup>75</sup> Brewer, "Who is This 'We'?, Levels of Collective Identity and Self Representations," 84.

<sup>76</sup> Cordova, *The Salvadoran Americans*, 112.

<sup>77</sup> Cordova, *The Salvadoran Americans* 110.

Cordova's observations highlight the theoretical link between identification processes and civic participation that forms the basis of my inquiry into the concept of *civic self-understandings*.

I address Cordova's observations with an analysis of "whose goals." In doing so, I also relate my analysis to the literature on political transnationalism, which take into consideration civic goals not defined by territorial borders.<sup>78</sup> Rather than assume communities defined by the territorial borders of current residence or of family heritage, I identify the communities to which interviewees express an orientation, not only in their self-identification but also in their civic activities

With the exception of one man whose career in international service has oriented much of his civic activity to an international community, through work assisting political processes in developing countries, the interviewees seemed most focused on Latinos in general. Two young adults expressed a focus on U.S. foreign policy and issues in Latin America, particularly Central America. But both of these interviewees also have been involved in local community social issues and politics, with a focus on Latino issues and Latinos participation in the political process. The other young adults all knew much more about, and took a greater interest in, domestic politics and issues affecting Latinos living in the United States. Interestingly, when asked what they hope most for future generations of Salvadoran immigrants, only those with a foreign policy and international lens said they hoped situations in El Salvador could change so that people could stop immigrating. The others, when asked if this was something they thought about much, said they focused on the society at the "receiving" end of the migration, trying to make it better for immigrants to come and live in the U.S. through community support and services to help newcomers and immigration reform activism.

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<sup>78</sup> Karunungan, *Civic and Cultural Identity Development of Filipino Students in the United States*, 10.

It is also worth mentioning that one of the two young adults who participate in foreign policy activism was the only one who grew up in an area with few other Latinos. He said that he has become more involved in the local Latino community after moving into that community as an adult, because, he said, he plans to live there for a while. The other young adult with a lot of interest in relations between the U.S. and Central America, and in changing the situations in Latin America, has by no means been less involved in local community issues. She has participated in multiple projects and information campaigns on domestic violence and on issues affecting Latino youth, such as teen pregnancy and STDs. Her case, growing up with a social worker mother who is also highly active regarding issues in the Latino community and regarding U.S. foreign policy seems exceptional. It does, however, suggest that parental influence can be quite powerful when parents themselves live a life of community participation and political activism.

The experience of one young adult suggests that there can be a cyclical affect of increased community involvement and political awareness regarding Latino and immigrant issues. This young adult grew up participating in the youth programs that are available in the Columbia Heights community largely because of a number of other Latinos who have a desire to give back and strengthen the Latino community there. The interviewee described how important relationships that developed through a summer youth employment program, where he learned photography three summers in a row, led him to participate in another organization, Gandhi Brigade, where he has learned about a wide array of social issues and participated in the creation of media on these issues. Through the organization he also went to El Salvador and did a project with a youth group there, and is currently hoping to go back to do a photo-journalism project there.

In response to the question posed by political engagement scholars, ‘whose goals motivate civic participation?’, my interviews show that the goals of civic activity are more domestically focused than might be expected based on Cordova’s observation that Salvadorans tend to find belonging and identity through associations with a focus on regions abroad.<sup>79</sup> My interviews suggest that ‘whose goals’ could be reasonably answered by identifying ‘the goals of a Latino community,’ and at times, ‘the goals of a Salvadoran or Central American community.’ At the same time, I am wary in with conclusions because the ‘whose goals?’ question invites over-generalizations about the goals of whole groups.

It is important to consider possible explanations for why my interviewees focus their civic attitudes and activities towards the Latino community. One young woman, who works at a non-profit that provides educational and family services to the community, described her desire to reach out to those in need. I asked how much this drive to “give back,” as she had described it, extended beyond the Latino community. Spanish language and her knowledge of her family members’ immigration experiences were important tools that she said empowered her to help others, which focused her work on Spanish-speaking immigrants and their families. However she also said:

“It goes across all. It’s not just Salvadorans. Of course it’s easier to help them because you understand them and where they’re coming from and like I said you can switch back in either language, but yea, I’m open to everyone, because I do understand what it’s like to have nothing. So I understand, if you have a member of the Asian American group who needs something, I can help them too.”

Interviewees did express concern about social issues that are not exclusively Latino issues. For example, interviewees discussed such as criminal justice reform, educational inequality and lack of resources in schools, health care, and issues affecting the low socio-

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<sup>79</sup> Cordova, *The Salvadoran Americans*, 110.

economic status working class in general, such as community gentrification, and internationally, interviewees expressed concern for the lack of resources in poor countries like El Salvador, even though most did not get involved in foreign policy or international issues campaigns.

Although she says “I’m open to everyone,” her words just following suggests that more specifically, she is oriented towards those “who have nothing,” or are at least in a vulnerable social position. One interviewee, an immigrant father, explained that in wherever he was living, “I would be a part of that society and I would throw myself at that society at every level, every aspect,” which he specified entailed political involvement, such as voting, and also serving the society through one’s career, as a parent who raises one’s child to be a good person, and through service to the less fortunate.” At the same time, he acknowledged that the Latino community in DC “has a great deal of need”, which he said explained why many civic-minded Latinos may choose to focus their attention and efforts inwards in a Latino community.

This analysis of people’s civic values and beliefs is not an evaluation of how an immigrant group has assimilated to, adapted to, or become something ambiguously identified as “mainstream American.” Hoffman makes an important redefinition of the concept of acculturation in his analysis of how Iranian immigrants “integrate certain domains of meaning and value from American culture within an Iranian frame of reference.”<sup>80</sup> This idea of various elements of “American culture,” which a person can internalize or reject to varying degrees, does not only pertain to immigrants and their children. It helps to understand and talk about the experiences all individuals living in the United States.

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<sup>80</sup> Hoffman, “Language and Culture Acquisition among Iranians in the United States,” 130.

Like Hoffman, and like Coutin<sup>81</sup>, I reject the task of evaluating whether individuals are “American” or “Salvadoran,” as if the two national identity labels were mutually exclusive packages of values and perspectives that are either identified with in their entirety or not at all. On the same line of argument, I am not trying to describe one “civic culture” that encompasses all second-generation Salvadoran-Americans living in Washington DC. Still, the concept of culture is relevant to my objective to describe particular “civic cultural make-ups” which individuals acquire through unique experiences. These “civic cultural make-ups” can be considered a ‘civic self’, a part of, and response to, the self-understandings and self-identifications constructed through individual’s integration of their social experiences and expressed through individuals’ attitudes about civic life and the orientations they take as civic actors.

### **Conclusion**

In what ways did the experiences of Salvadoran immigrant parents influence their children? The divisions in this paper reflect a hypothesis in answer to this question. I have presented my analysis of interviews in the three domains of parent-child relationships, self-understanding and self-identification, and ‘civic self’. My purpose in analyzing and presenting interviewees’ expressed experiences with this categorization has been to show how the children of Salvadoran immigrants construct ‘civic self’ in the contexts of their parents’ experiences, perspectives and values.

In my introduction I presented a research question worded to reflect the function of self-understandings and self-identifications in my model of parental influence on civic roles. I asked: To what extent, and in what ways, do the experiences, attitudes, and parenting practices of

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<sup>81</sup> Coutin, *Nation of Emigrants: Shifting Boundaries of Citizenship in El Salvador and the United States*, 95-99.

immigrants influence their adult children's *understandings of self* as civic actors in the U.S. and in the parent's birthplace? "*Understandings of self* as civic actors" represents the connection between constructions of self and civic implications. I have shown how the young adults self-understandings and self-identifications respond to their parents' experiences as immigrants who left El Salvador for the U.S. during the civil war. I then showed how civic attitudes and civic orientations reflect, and seem to be in response to, the way the young adults understand themselves and the groups or communities with which they identify.

The section of self-understandings and self-identifications is important to my findings because it connects my analyses of parent-child relationships and of "civic self." It begins to answer *how* parental influence relates to civic attitudes. Some parents did not *explicitly* model, discuss or encourage notions and behaviors that can be classified under "civic life," "community involvement," "political activism" or "political participation." However, my analysis of self-understandings and self-identifications provides support for the hypothesis that parents did influence the civic attitudes and orientations that young adults express. Self-understandings and self-identifications contribute to views about others, goals and priorities that suggest civic implications. Civic implications were supported by young adults who, in addition to expressing self-understanding, self-identification and views of their parents, explicitly expressed ideas about citizenship and civic life. Interviewees expressed that the ways they see themselves, including their goals in life and their membership in social groups, connects with, and draws from, the ways they see their parents, their upbringing, and their parents' Salvadoran immigrant background.

There are two important points that put my findings in perspective. First, I do not consider this model unique to Salvadoran immigrant families. I do suggest that the experiences

of parents who immigrated due to the Salvadoran civil war, and other groups of immigrant parents with backgrounds of political violence, poverty, and scarce opportunity for legal migration, may particularly influence civic attitudes related to interdependence, concern and respect for those in need of support, and awareness of the power of structural forces and political context over peoples' lives.

My second point about interpretation of interviews is that understanding of self as civic actor, as expressed during interviews, is a constructed perception and a projected image being communicated to the researcher. These images may mostly reflect authentic understandings of self, but my data is also a form of image construction in social interaction that may not always translate into actions and interactions within civic society. Pine prefaces *Working Hard, Drinking Hard* with the acknowledgement that the researcher's interactions with participants are always "colored by the identities" that both researcher and participants assign to one another.<sup>82</sup> This does not delegitimize my findings, but it does mean that the understandings and identifications of self expressed in interviews cannot tell the whole story of how parent-child relationships among Salvadoran immigrant families contribute to the ever changing dynamics of civic society. More interviews and ethnographic field research can capture a more complete picture of how the children of Salvadoran immigrants interact in society in civic ways, and how this, via self-understanding and self-identification, may be importantly influenced by having parents whose experiences were often shaped largely by political violence, by lack of opportunity and security, and by tenuous legal status in the United States.

## **Findings**

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<sup>82</sup> Pine, *Working Hard, Drinking Hard: On Violence and Survival in Honduras*, 6.

Taken together, my three sections of analysis allow me to conclude four themes of “civic self” that the young adults in my study expressed, and that can be considered at least partly a response to the influence of the immigration experiences and parenting practices of their Salvadoran parents. These attitudes stand somewhere between parent-child relationships and a possible translation into social interactions. Therefore, these attitudes and values expressed in interviews are “civic” because they suggest implications for individuals’ interactions and goals in society. I synthesize these attitudes as follows:

(1) *Empathy* for Latin American immigrants and their families stems from a heightened awareness of their situation.

(2) *Desire to “give back”* is inspired when individuals see people whose need for assistance and support reminds them of their parents or of themselves, growing up in the context of their parents’ immigration.

(3) *Gratitude for opportunities*, especially educational opportunities, is influenced by their view of their parents’ perspectives regarding opportunity, their awareness of the situation in El Salvador, and their awareness of their parents’ sacrifice to make opportunities available.

(4) *Appreciation for open political discussion and learning*, which includes learning about and talking about history, socio-political-economy issues, and politics, seems to be partly a response to a political culture of silence and contexted by young adults’ knowledge of the political nature of their parents’ experiences, including civil war in El Salvador and legality upon arrival in the United States.

My analysis sections on parent-child relationships and on self-understandings and self-identifications show how these four general attitudes stem partly from a knowledge and

awareness base somewhat unique to growing up with parents who immigrated, often illegally, to the United States from El Salvador in the 1980s and early 1990s. My analysis suggests that the young adults have formed these attitudes due to a heightened awareness of their parents' experiences of political violence, insecurity and lack of opportunity in El Salvador, compounded with another set of experiences in the United States that included insecurity and hardship in the context of structural violence in the form of immigration policies and anti-immigration sentiments. In some cases, these experiences also translated into more explicit parenting practices that reflected parents' values or priorities. Sometimes the things parents said and did augmented their children's knowledge and awareness of parents' experiences. Parents also constituted a highly personal example of the issues their children also confronted outside the home, even when parents said or did little that young adults associated with the so-called realms of "civic" or "political" life. The young adults whom I interviewed seem to have integrated their social experiences and learning by drawing from knowledge of their parents' experiences in El Salvador and in the United States.

Young adults sometimes talked more about their experiences in school than about their experiences with their parents when I asked about their childhood and about influences on their social and political views today. But a closer look at the interviews shows that parents ultimately are an important influence that interacts with school experiences to determine how the young adults make sense of their school experiences and the material learned in classes. This finding reveals a flaw in research that fails to include an ethnographic approach. Such research cannot fully address questions about intricately linked experiences that play a role in processes of self-understanding and self-identification important to civic attitudes and commitments.

Interviewees sometimes talked about “Salvadoran culture” to suggest a static notion. In drawing conclusions from what interviewees expressed in interviews, it is important to consider when experiences may be better analyzed as responses to structural factors than as the aspects of “culture” that interviewees talk about. Parenting characteristics that interviewees sometimes attributed to Salvadoran “traditional culture” may in fact be a reaction to violence. For example, young adults tended to use “Salvadoran culture” to explain why their parents were adamant about keeping their children close by and about not “getting in trouble,” but these aspects of parenting are likely influenced by the violence experienced in El Salvador, and sometimes upon arrival to U.S. communities that were plagued by crime and gang violence. The effect of violence, fear and anxiety that characterizes many people’s experiences of the Salvadoran civil war and the immigration process should not be underestimated regarding its influence on parenting. It is important to my conclusions to acknowledge how violence and the process of immigration add its own elements to the “culture” that people bring to the U.S. and that continue to change upon arrival. These influences on “culture” are relevant to my question in that they contribute to the parent-child relationship experiences that can influence civic life.

My study supports the hypothesis that parents play a role in transferring structural factors of the immigrant experience into their children’s lives, and about the bearing this has on the social interactions and civic attitudes that contribute to civic society dynamics. My interviews suggest that young adults’ understandings of civic self have formed in response to the structural factors affecting their parents (i.e. government imposed obstacles that made immigrants lives harder and more insecure and, in El Salvador, violence and political persecution to which parents often responded with silence regarding politics). These structural

factors have particular emotional weight for the young adults in my study because of who their parents are: parents who emigrated from El Salvador during its Civil War.

### *Empathy and “giving back”*

My conclusions about the orientations that individuals take as civic actors draw most from the themes of empathy and desire to “give back,” because these two themes relate most closely with self-identification. The young adults’ identification with groups and communities reflects parental influence, both via notions of a broader Salvadoran culture in general and via knowledge of the complexity of Salvadoran immigrants’ experiences in particular. Self-understandings and self-identifications are constructed in the context of parent-child relationships, but they are also constructed in the context of the discourses in which people interact and acquire experiences when outside the realm of family. I acknowledge that it makes little sense to argue that parents are the only factor influencing self-identifications relevant to empathy and “giving back” mentalities. What I do argue is that a child’s relationship with their immigrant parent, and the notions and knowledge that this relationship provides him or her, plays an important role in the way this child makes meaning out of his or her experiences.

It is not hard to see why the particular parent-child relationships represented in my study might contribute to empathetic and “giving” attitudes towards a Latino community, and especially towards a community affected by immigration and other political experiences similar to those of their parents. The immigrant parents in my study are linked to a brutal part of political history. They have experienced a great deal of hardship and sacrifice in order to exist and survive in the United States. Living in Washington DC, they are also members of a sizable and relatively dense community with which their children interacted while growing up. Considering this, and in light of my interviews, Salvadoran immigrant parents seem to be, perhaps more so than many

other parents, particularly influential when it comes to the way children think about and respond to those in need of support or assistance.

Young adult interviewees tended to especially identify with, and empathize with, people who share with their parents' experiences of migration from El Salvador or from another Latin American country. My interviewees also expressed that their interests and efforts are oriented toward these people and their families with whom they identify and empathize. Many of the interviewees also expressed identification with Latinos living in Latin America and also specifically with Salvadorans in El Salvador, which suggests an orientation to foreign policy and to efforts directed towards communities and society in El Salvador. However, identification with Latinos living in the United States seemed to more strongly influence civic orientations than identification with Latinos living in Latin America, or in El Salvador specifically. Six of the eight young adult interviewees in my study focused more domestically and locally. They talked most about the Latino community in the Washington DC area, and also about the United States in general regarding federal immigration legislation. The finding that experiences and difficulties associated with immigration form the basis of the young adults' identifications suggests the importance of immigration to the young adults' perception of their parents' experience, to their relationship with their parents, and to their constructions of civic self.

My findings support the "organismic" and context models that I reviewed in my section on parent-child relationships. Many interviewees expressed the sense that El Salvador is a "home," but this perception did not seem to detract from interest in local community social issues in the United States. Instead, my interviews suggest that parent child-relationships, via empathy increasing awareness, contribute to construction of civic identities rooted in local communities. Furthermore, parent-child relationships, by also contributing to

the perception of having “roots” in El Salvador, help explain why young adults’ expressed particular identification with newcomers from El Salvador. It seems that perceptions of the parents’ country and perceptions of the immigrant experience in the U.S. are both important for understanding the influences of immigration on immigrant children’s self-understandings and on the roles they desire to take in civil society.

In making conclusions about how parents influence civic orientations by influencing how young adults identify with others, it is important to consider how this claim relates to other interpretations of how identification relates to civic participation. Some newer literature on social movements considers identity to be a *product* of social and political actions.<sup>83</sup> In this framework, political participation constitutes a process of “interactive development of a kind of collective self-understanding, solidarity and groupness,” which, once formed, motivates and rationalizes further political action in the name of this collective. On the other hand, Cooper observes that the term identity, understood as “sameness among members of a group or category,” has also been considered primary and “expected to manifest” in acts of solidarity. My findings relate to a blend of these two views in which identity neither entirely causes nor results from participation in social movements and political activity. It is perhaps impossible to discern the ultimate origins of any given collective identity, but in the scope of my study, the immigrant parents influenced their children’s construction of a collective identity, which I have discussed as self-identification with communities.

I found that the young adults interviewed expressed *identification as* Salvadoran and/or Latino and *identification with* Salvadoran culture and collective history, Salvadoran and Latino immigrants and their descendants in the United States, and in some cases, with Central

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<sup>83</sup> Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, 65.

Americans living in Central America. It makes little sense to assert that collective identity exists autonomously from collective action given the long history of interactions between any individual's perception of a collective identity and the social movements and leaders that have invoked that identity to inspire participation. Studies that address "groupist rhetoric," "activists of identity politics," and questions about what constitutes "groupness" suggest the existence of political processes linking civic participation with varieties of identification and self-understanding.<sup>84</sup> A mutually reinforcing relationship between collective identification and acts of solidarity is highly relevant to a study that seeks to understand orientations towards civic participation by interviewing individuals about their self-understandings and self-identifications. The concept of identity is also used in relation to civic participation regarding the relevant topic of transnationalism and studies of how groups work within transnational issue networks that "cross cultural and state boundaries and link particular places and particularist concerns."<sup>85</sup>

My findings contribute to this collective identity literature and to civic participation studies about the "allocation of economic, social, and cultural benefits" that contribute to "the achievement of collective purposes,"<sup>86</sup> because my findings suggest ways in which immigrant parents may influence their children to act in society in ways that reflect the "collective purposes" of the Latino and immigrant communities in the United States, and in doing so, create civic participation resources in Latino communities in the form of non-profits and community-based organizations that provide services specifically targeting the Latino and immigrant community. My framework and findings challenge the literature that assumes a national community orientation for civic participation,<sup>87</sup> because interviewees reflected an orientation to a

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<sup>84</sup> Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* 87.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 89.

<sup>86</sup> Verba, *Voice and Equality*, 5-7, 15.

<sup>87</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

community that was not defined by nation, but instead existed as a subgroup within the United States, and for some interviewees also existed outside U.S. borders.

### ***Opportunities and political openness***

The other two attitudes I identify across my interviews, gratitude for opportunities, and appreciation for open political discussion and learning, contribute to self-understandings that inform “construction of civic self.” Appreciation for opportunities responds to knowledge of parents’ sacrifice, and knowledge about El Salvador and the immigration process that their parents shared with their children. Parents also contribute to this attitude by making explicit to their children their priorities in parenting and that lack of opportunity in El Salvador factored into their reasons for immigrating. Interviewees also said that their parents role modeled strong work ethic, which is particularly relevant in an analysis of parental influence on young adults’ expressions of personal drive to take advantage of opportunities. My interviews revealed that parents tended to instill in their children appreciation for the opportunities for education, for improving one’s life, and for achieving family economic stability, and also a value for making it a life priority to take full advantage of these opportunities. This attitude about taking responsibility for one’s life can be considered “civic” in the sense that it informs the decisions people make about how they will engage in and contribute to society.

In forming and expressing these attitudes, young adults seemed to draw from parent-child relationships partly in the form of conscious *knowledge of* parents’ experiences, hardships and sacrifices, but parents seemed to influence an appreciation for open political discussion and learning in a variety of ways including but not limited to the knowledge parents explicitly provided. Some parents did so partially by their lack of openness on political issues. My analysis of interviews suggests that when children were at least somewhat aware of their parents’ reasons

for immigrating, but learned the details of the political situation and the extent of the violence and persecution in El Salvador primarily from sources other than their parents, they were significantly affected by their parents' silence on such an emotionally and politically loaded topic. Regardless of whether young adults perceived their parents as more politically active and open about their stance on political and social issues, their parents had a story that made the issues and policies affecting Latino immigrant communities more personal and emotionally charged for the young adults in my study than is likely to be the case for children whose families and whose parents' lives were not so dramatically affected by social conflict and by the domestic and foreign policies involved.

### **Future Research**

My study leaves many questions unanswered. Future research can continue to look for specific ways parents influence civic self-constructions and for other factors that interact with individuals' experiences of their parent-child relationships in the processes of self-understanding and identification that have implications for civic society. For one, the role of church in the home lives among immigrants from countries with strong religious foundations and complex histories of religion influencing societal interactions, like El Salvador, deserves more future inquiry.

More research is also needed to explore the influence of the demographics of the schools and community where the children of immigrants grow up and interact. My interviews suggest that whether or not "ethnic enclaves" context most of immigrant children's experiences may be a factor influencing the extent to which the individual identifies with an ethnic group and with a sense of collective oppression. It seems that an interest in the local community politics and social issues is encouraged by growing up in, or at least currently living in, an area with many others of similar immigrant backgrounds. Foreign policy interests and a stronger identification with, and

interest in, communities in El Salvador may be associated with growing up with Salvadoran immigrant parents in a community where Salvadorans are a small minority.

My presentations of four generalized attitudes expressed in my interviews deserve more investigation, among Salvadoran immigrant families, but also among other immigrant groups that constitute significant parts of U.S. society and affect society with their other unique sets of immigration-related experiences. Questions about the intersection of parenting, self understandings and identifications, and civic attitudes are also worth asking not only from immigrant families, but for all families in the U.S.

This research focuses on families with backgrounds that share many elements of history in the parents' country of origin and of a particular wave of immigration. However, the anthropological concept that everyone has a different voice,<sup>88</sup> because everyone has a unique set of experiences, is crucial to the way researchers analyze interviews to contribute to the study of the ways particular groups influence dynamics in civic society. I do not claim, nor was it ever my intention to do so, that my findings constitute generalizations about a single voice of all second generation Salvadoran Americans whose parents emigrated from El Salvador during the Civil War. This being said, this study does offer a basis for further explorations. My analysis of what people expressed to me in interviews allows me to conclude that parents can affect attitudes and group orientations that contribute to their children's construction of a civic self.

Explorations of "how young adults become and are prevented from becoming civically enfranchised" tend to employ classic political socialization theory that assumes mechanisms that

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<sup>88</sup> Giroux, Henry, and Maclaren, Peter (editors), *Between Borders: Pedagogy and the Politics of Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 159-161.

“renew and sustain civil society,” rather than consider alternative social purposes for inquiry.<sup>89</sup>

Guy Trombley questions the relevancy of institutions such as formal education for civic participation.<sup>90</sup> My query into how immigrants contribute to changes in civil society via intergenerational pathways responds to this by looking at less obvious ways civic self can be constructed. Future research should continue to challenge assumptions about how civic values are transferred, and transformed, through time.

My analytical approach to my research question about civic identification responds to Cooper’s review and critique of the field of identity-related social science research: “Setting out to write about identifications as they emerge, crystallize, and fade away in particular social and political circumstances may well inspire a rather different history than setting out to write of an identity, which links past, present and future in a single word.”<sup>91</sup> My research contributes to this endeavor by attempting to link identifications with the ways people are motivated to take on roles in civic society as a response to, and as reinforcement of, the way they construct their understanding of self. I contribute one plausible model for exploring how parents influence these processes. More research is needed to build a larger body of scholarship about how immigration affects society across generations, and more specifically, how the children of immigrants may add to and change the character of social and political participation.

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<sup>89</sup> Trombley, *Transmission, Acquisition, and Creation of Civic Culture*, 25, 32-33; Watts & Flanagan, “Pushing the Envelope on Youth Civic Engagement: A Developmental and Liberation Psychology Perspective,” 788.

<sup>90</sup> Trombley, *Transmission, Acquisition, and Creation of Civic Culture*, 33.

<sup>91</sup> Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, 85.

## Appendix

## Participant Recruitment

Some of the recruitment occurred through the distribution of fliers without initial face-to-face interaction. The organizations listed below helped me by making my fliers available in reception and waiting room offices and by distributing them via email to people who work in or with the Salvadoran and Salvadoran-American community. In addition to the distribution of fliers, I reached some interview participants through face-to-face interaction in one-on-one or group presentations of my research. These interactions occurred in the spaces of organizations that agreed to allow me to talk with their clients and members, either informally in reception rooms or in formal group presentations at member/client meetings and classes. I conducted all presentations in Spanish, because that was most appropriate in all the contexts of my formal presentations. The best language use for one-on-one recruitment interactions was determined case by case. Following is a list of organizations and my primary contacts within each of these organizations that helped me access potential interview participants with flier distribution and/or face-to-face recruitment.

*Ayuda; Executive Director Christina Wilkes*

*Central American Resource Center; Director of Outreach and Advocacy Ana Negoescu*

*CentroNía; Family Literacy Department Director Irma Rivera*

*Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador; National Office Director and Local Committee Leader*

*CLASE at American University; Coordinator Julia Young*

*Clínica del Pueblo; Executive Director Alicia Wilson*

*Comité de Solidaridad Monseñor Romero*

## Two-sided Participant Recruitment Flyer (Spanish side)

### ¿Nació en El Salvador? O ¿Nacieron sus padres en El Salvador? **Una investigación sobre la comunidad salvadoreño en Washington D.C.**

#### Los planes para una investigación:

- ☼ Voy a entrevistar padres y madres que vinieron de El Salvador en los años 1980.
- ☼ Quiero entrevistar también uno de los niños del padre si el niño o niña tiene entre 18 y 27 años y vive en Washington D.C.
- ☼ Estoy haciendo planes para empezar las entrevistas para febrero del 2010.

#### El propósito de las entrevistas es:

1. para aprender sobre las relaciones entre los padres inmigrantes salvadoreños y sus niños en Washington D.C.
2. para aprender la medida en que estas relaciones familias afectan o influyen en las perspectivas y valores cívicos y políticos de los niños. Tengo interés en las perspectivas de sus papeles sociales. Mi pregunta es ¿Cómo son las actitudes, los valores y las creencias tienen en relación con la comunidad en Washington D.C., con el gobierno de los Estados Unidos, y con las comunidades y gobiernos en El Salvador.

### **Espero que algunos de ustedes tendrán interés para participar en las entrevistas para mi investigación.**

☼ ¿Tiene interés y quiere hablar más sobre las entrevistas? Por favor contactarme por teléfono o por email.

☼ ¿Tiene ustedes parientes, amigos o compañeros de trabajo que posiblemente quieran participar? Por favor les da esta información a ustedes.

#### **Para Contactarme:**

**Greta Wicklund**

**617-224-3784**

**[Rambleonrose55@aol.com](mailto:Rambleonrose55@aol.com)**

**American University**

**No puedo entrevistar todos que ofrecen a participar.** Si usted ofrece a participar, le mandaré un cuestionario que me ayudará escoger 4 padres, 4 madres, 4 hijos y 4 hijas. Daré prioridad a los que tienen un padre, una madre o su hijo(a) que también ofrece a participar en una entrevista y a los que satisfacen **Los Requisitos:** (1) que usted o su padre/madre emigró de El Salvador durante la guerra civil de la década de 1980s; (2) Si usted es un inmigrante, que tiene un(a) hijo(a) que nació en los Estados Unidos o tenía 5 o menos años cuando inmigró a los Estados Unidos; (3) Si usted nació en EE.UU o inmigró a aquí para la edad de 5 años, que tiene un padre/madre que inmigró a EE.UU. de El Salvador

durante la década de 1980s. También, yo **buscaré personas que tienen una variedad de papeles en la comunidad, en sus familias y en la nación.**

**La investigadora no puede pagar a usted para su tiempo durante la entrevista.**

### **Two-sided Participant Recruitment Flyer (English side)**

**Were you born in El Salvador?**

**Or: Were your parents born in El Salvador?**

**Research about the Salvadoran Community in Washington D.C.**

### **Plans for the research:**

- ⊗ I will interview parents who emigrated from El Salvador in the 1980s.
- ⊗ I also want to interview one of their children if the child is 18-27 years old and lives in Washington D.C.
- ⊗ I am planning to begin interviews by February 2010.

### **The Purpose of the interviews is:**

1. to learn about the relationships between Salvadoran immigrant parents and their children in Washington D.C.
2. to learn the extent to which family relations affect or influence the children's civic and political perspectives and values. I am interested in their perspectives about social roles. My question is: What types of attitudes, values and beliefs do they have with respect to their local community in D.C., the U.S. government, and the communities and governments in El Salvador?

**I hope that some of you will be interested in participating in the interviews for my research.**

⊗ **Are you interested and do you want to talk more about the interviews?** Please contact me by telephone or by email.

⊗ **Do you have relatives, friends or co-workers who might want to participate?** If yes, please give this information to them.

### **To Contact Me:**

**Greta Wicklund**  
**617-224-3784**  
**Rambleonrose55@aol.com**  
**American University**

**I cannot interview everyone who volunteers.** If you volunteer to participate, I will send you a questionnaire that will help me choose 4 fathers, 4 mothers, 4 sons and 4 daughters. I will give priority to those who have a parent, daughter or son who also volunteers to participate in an interview and to those

who meet **The Requirements:** (1) that they or their parent emigrated from El Salvador during the civil war in the 1980s; (2) If you are an immigrant, that you have a son or daughter who was born in the U.S. or immigrated here by the age of 5; (3) If you were born in the U.S. or immigrated here by the age of 5, that you have a parent who immigrated to the U.S. from El Salvador during the 1980s. Also, **I will look for a people who take on a variety of roles in the community, in families and in the nation.**

**The researcher cannot offer any payment for your time during the interviews**

### **Pre-Interview Questionnaire**

This form is for people who volunteer to participate in the project (“participant volunteers”). It is a preliminary questionnaire to assist the researcher in preparing for interviewees and verifying that the volunteer fits the study sample. I altered the formatting in the version presented here. The document provided to participants had more spacing between questions and for visual ease and for space to answer longer responses.

#### **English version**

#### Preliminary Volunteer Questionnaire

**Phone number or email address** (for the researcher to contact you to schedule an interview if she has not already done so): \_\_\_\_\_

**I am volunteering to participate in this research as:**

- A Salvadoran Parent in the United States
- A Salvadoran-American child of a Salvadoran immigrant

**I am:**

- Male    Female
- My parent or child is also volunteering to participate. His/Her name is \_\_\_\_\_

This parent or child is:  Male    Female

Please send a participant volunteer questionnaire to my parent or child:

By email \_\_\_\_\_ or by mail \_\_\_\_\_

- My parent or child is volunteering and already has informed you of his/her interest.
  - My parent or child cannot participate
- 

1. Do you live in Washington, D.C.?
  - Yes, I grew up in Washington D.C.
  - Yes, but I did not grow up in Washington D.C. I grew up in: \_\_\_\_\_
  - No, but I grew up in Washington D.C. and only moved away as an adult.
  - No, I have never lived in Washington, D.C.
2. Do you have a parent who was born in El Salvador and who immigrated to the United States between 1980 and 1991?
  - Yes
  - No, my parent immigrated at a different date
  - No, my parent is Salvadoran-American and was born in the United States
3. Did you emigrate from El Salvador between 1980 and 1991?
  - Yes, I immigrated to the United States from El Salvador between 1980 and 1991

- Yes, I left El Salvador between 1980 and 1991 and lived in one or more countries before immigrating to the United States before 1991.
- Yes, I left El Salvador between 1980 and 1991 and lived in one or more countries before immigrating to the United States after 1991. Year I arrived in the United States: \_\_\_\_\_
- No, I emigrated from El Salvador at a different time
- No, I was not born in El Salvador. I was born in: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Are you between the ages of 18 and 30?
- Yes
- No
5. Were you born in the United States?
- Yes
- No, I was born in El Salvador but I arrived in the United States by the time I was 5 years old.
- No, I was born in a country other than El Salvador, but I arrived in the United States by the time I was 5 years old.
- No, I was born in a country other than El Salvador, and I arrived in the United States when I was older than 5 years old.
6. If you were born in a country other than El Salvador or the United States, please explain:
7. Do you have any children who were born in the United States?
- Yes, and they live in the United States now
- Yes, but they now live in another country.
- No, I have children living in the United States who were born in \_\_\_\_\_ and arrived to the United States **before** they were 5 years old.
- No, I have children living in the United States who were born in \_\_\_\_\_ and arrived to the United States **after** they were 5 years old.
- No, I have children who were born outside of the United States and live in another country. They live in \_\_\_\_\_
- No, I have no children.
8. Whom did you live with while growing up (i.e, in the same household)? Did the members of your household remain the same during your childhood and adolescence, or did different people come into the household while others left?
9. While you were growing up, which members of your household were immigrants from El Salvador and which members were not born in El Salvador?
10. Did you attend schools in Washington D.C.?
- Yes, D.C. Public Schools
- Yes, schools other than DC Public Schools: \_\_\_\_\_
- No, please explain:
11. Please describe any services offered in your community that benefit you or someone close to you:
12. Please describe any volunteer work are you currently involved in and what motivates you to volunteer your time in this way:
13. Please describe any volunteer work you did in the past. Why did you do it and how was your experience?
14. Please explain why you are no longer involved in the volunteer work you did in the past:
15. If you have a paid job, what are the reasons you chose that job, or line of work (other than to make money)? Please explain:

16. Other than your volunteer work or your paid job, in what other ways do you contribute to your community? Is there a cause that is important to you? Please explain how you contribute and to what you contribute:
17. Are you politically involved?
- If yes, in what ways do you think you are politically involved?
  - If no, why not?
18. Are you a citizen of the United States?
- Yes, I am a born citizen
  - Yes, I have become a citizen of the United States after immigrating
  - No, but I plan to be in the future
  - No, and I have no plans to become one
19. What political issues are important to you? Do you think these issues have affected you personally?
- If yes, then how?
  - If not, why are they still important to you?
20. What other things are highly important to you? In what ways would you be willing to make sacrifices for these things?

Thank you for volunteering to participate in the selection of interviewees for this study. I appreciate and value your participation. Please let me know here if you have any concerns about the research project. Please also let me know if there is something you hope will be a topic in the interviews.

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## Spanish version

### Cuestionario preliminar para los voluntarios

**Número de teléfono o email** (para que la investigadora contacte a usted): \_\_\_\_\_

**Estoy ofreciendo voluntariamente a participar en esta investigación como:**

- Un padre o una madre salvadoreño(a) en los Estados Unidos
- Un niño(a) salvadoreño(a)-americano(a) de un padre o una madre inmigrante salvadoreño(a)

**Soy:**

- varón
- mujer

Mi padre/madre/niño(a) también está ofreciendo a participar. Su nombre es: \_\_\_\_\_

Este padre o niño(a) es:  varón  mujer

Por favor le manda este cuestionario a mi padre/madre/niño(a):

Por email \_\_\_\_\_ o por correo \_\_\_\_\_

Mi padre/madre/niño(a) está ofreciendo a participar. Ya le ha informado a la investigadora de su interés y tiene un cuestionario.

Mi padre/madre/niño(a) no puede participar pero quiero participar como un individuo.

1. ¿Vive usted en Washington, D.C.?

- Sí, pero no era pequeño(a) o un adolescente en Washington, D.C.. El lugar o los lugares donde era pequeño (a) y adolescente

es: \_\_\_\_\_

- No, pero vivía en Washington, D.C. cuando era pequeño(a) en Washington D.C. y luego me mudé como un(a) adulto(a).
- No, nunca he vivido en Washington, D.C.
2. ¿Tiene un padre que nació en El Salvador y que llegó a los Estados Unidos entre 1980 y 1991?
- Sí
- No, mi padre llegó a los Estados Unidos durante otra época.
- No, my padre nació en los Estados Unidos
3. ¿Llegó de El Salvador entre 1980 y 1991?
- Sí, llegué a los Estados Unidos de El Salvador entre 1980 y 1991.
- Sí, salí de El Salvador entre 1980 y 1991 y vivía en uno o más otros países antes de llegar a los Estados Unidos. Llegué a los Estados Unidos antes de 1991.
- Sí, salí de El Salvador entre 1980 y 1991 y vivía en uno o más otros países antes de llegar a los Estados Unidos. No llegué a los Estados Unidos hasta después de 1991. El año o en que llegué a los Estados Unidos: \_\_\_\_\_
- No, llegué de El Salvador durante otra época.
- No, no nació en El Salvador. Nació en : \_\_\_\_\_
4. Tiene entre 18 y 30 años?
- Sí
- No
5. Nació en los Estados Unidos?
- Sí
- No, nació en El Salvador pero llegué a los Estados Unidos para mi cumpleaños de 5 años.
- No, nació en un país otro de El Salvador, pero llegué a los Estados Unidos para mi cumpleaños de 5 años.
6. Si nació en un país otro de los Estados Unidos o de El Salvador, por favor explícame:
7. ¿Tiene un niño o niños que nació/nacieron en los Estados Unidos?
- Sí, vive(n) en los Estados Unidos hoy en día.
- Sí, pero vive(n) en otro país hoy en día.
- No, pero tiene un niño o niños que está(n) viviendo en los Estados Unidos que nació /nacieron en \_\_\_\_\_ y llegó/llegaron a los Estados Unidos antes de que tenía(n) 5 años.
- No, pero tiene un niño o niños que está(n) viviendo en los Estados Unidos que nació /nacieron en \_\_\_\_\_, pero llegó/llegaron a los Estados Unidos después de que tenía(n) 5 años.
- No, tiene un niño o niños que nació/nacieron afuera de los Etsdos Unidos y viven(n) ahora en otro país. Vive(n) en \_\_\_\_\_
- No, no tiene ningunos niños.
8. ¿Con quién vivía mientras era pequeño(a) y adolescente (en el mismo hogar)? ¿Cambió las personas con que vivía?
9. Mientras ere pequeño(a) y adolescente ¿Cuales miembros de su casa nacieron en El Salvador? ¿Cuales miembros no nacieron en El Salvador?
10. ¿Asistía usted a una(s) escuela(s) en Washington, D.C.?
- Sí, las escuelas públcias de D.C.
- Sí, escuelas otras de las escuelas públcias de D.C.: \_\_\_\_\_
- No. Por favor explica:
11. Por favor describe algunos servicios ofrecidos en su comunidad que le beneficien a usted o a alguien de quien usted es amigo(a) íntimo(a).

12. Por favor describe algunas actividades que hace como un voluntario (puede incluye cualquier de las actividades que hace sin paga y que son un parte de su vida). ¿Qué le motiva a usted para pasar su tiempo en esta manera?
13. Por favor describe algunas actividades que hacía como un voluntario en el pasado. ¿Porqué las hizo y cómo era la experiencia?
14. Por favor explica las razones por cuales ya no está involucrado(a) en el trabajo que hacía en el pasado:
15. Si tiene un trabajo con un salario, ¿Qué son las razones que escoge eso trabajo o tipo de trabajo (otro del propósito de hacer dinero)? Por favor, explica:
16. Además su trabajo voluntario y su empleo con un salario, ¿en qué otras maneras contribuye a su comunidad? ¿Hay una causa que importa a usted? Por favor explica las maneras en que usted contribuye y a que contribuye:
17. ¿Está usted involucrado(a) políticamente?
  - a. Si usted está, ¿En que maneras piensa que está involucrado(a) políticamente?
  - b. Si no está, ¿Por qué?
18. ¿Es usted un ciudadano de los Estados Unidos?
  - Sí, soy un ciudadano por nacimiento.
  - Sí, me puse un ciudadano de los Estados Unidos después inmigró.
  - No, pero planea ponerse un ciudadano de los Estados Unidos en el futuro.
  - No, y no tengo planes para ponerse un ciudadano.
19. ¿Qué temas o asuntos políticos le importa a usted? ¿Piensa que estos temas le ha influido a usted personalmente?
  - a. Si piensa sí, ¿Cómo?
  - b. Si no piensa, ¿Por qué le importan estos temas a usted?
20. ¿Qué otras cosas son importantes a usted? ¿En qué maneras esté dispuesto(a) a hacer sacrificios para estas cosas?

Gracias por su oferta voluntaria a participar en la selección de los entrevistados para esta investigación. Por favor me escribe a mí en esta página algunas preocupaciones sobre el proyecto de investigación. También, por favor me dice alguno asunto que espera que sea un tema en las entrevistas.

## Interview Questions

These questions reflect the themes and topics which I brought up in interviews. At times these questions were asked in close to this order and more or less word for word, but more often the questions were addressed in a more fluid fashion, as the themes and topics were brought up by participants in response to previous questions and in a more natural conversation style.

### Questions for adult sons and daughters:

1. Can you tell me about yourself?
2. What was your childhood like?
3. What things were most important to your parents as you grew up?
4. What was it like growing up with a parent who immigrated to the U.S.?
5. What language did your parents use and what language did they encourage you to use? How did you feel about English and Spanish while growing up? What do they mean to you now? What does speaking either English or Spanish say about yourself and others?
6. Can you share any experiences that have made you more aware of what it is like in the U.S. for immigrants from El Salvador, or for immigrants in general?
7. Why did your parents come here? Have these motivations for immigrating influenced any of your views?
8. How do you think government and politics differ in El Salvador and in the U.S.?
9. What important aspects of your life have nothing to do with El Salvador or your parents' experience of immigration?
10. What does it mean to you to be a U.S. citizen? (why/how much does it matter?)
11. Regardless of whether you are a citizen by legal documentation, in what ways other than official documents do you think you are like a citizen in the United States or in El Salvador?
12. If you could be both a citizen to El Salvador and to the U.S.A. would you apply for citizenship in El Salvador? Why?
13. What can make parenting difficult? In your experience, were there any challenges for your parent in providing ideal parenting (or the parenting you think they would have liked to provide)?
14. What do you see your life being like in the future? Do you have any goals or hopes for your future?
15. Do you identify as Salvadoran, Salvadoran-American, or do you prefer other ways of identifying yourself? Why do you consider that the best way to identify yourself?
16. What do you hope for future generations of Salvadoran immigrants and those born of Salvadoran immigrant parents? What about for the children of second generation Salvadoran-Americans?
17. What does it mean to be a member of the Salvadoran or Salvadoran-American community? What are the differences between members of the Salvadoran-American community and those who do not identify with the Salvadoran-American community, or as a Salvadoran-American?
18. What does it mean to say someone is Latino or Hispanic? Do you feel you are more Latino, Hispanic or Salvadoran or American and Why? Do you feel you are part of a Latino or Hispanic

community? How is this community different from a Salvadoran or Salvadoran-American community?

19. Are there issues outside this country's domestic issues that are important to you or to people you know personally or to others in your community?
20. Is there anything you wish you could help change, in this country or elsewhere? What would a person like you need in order to be effective in addressing this issue?
21. Do you think that things your parents said, thought or did affected your views about issues either within or outside this country? Which of your concerns or views, if any, seem most influenced to your relationship with your parent?
22. Did your parents discuss pride in being American or in being Salvadoran? Did this influence you and how?
23. If you are a parent, or if you were to become a parent, what do you think are some of the important things you hope you can provide for your children? What do you hope they learn from you as their parent? How important is it to you that they identify with America, with Salvadoran-American community in the U.S., and/or with El Salvador?

### **Questions for parents:**

1. Can you tell me about yourself?
2. What is your family like?
3. What was it like being a parent from El Salvador and raising your child in the U.S.?
4. What are families like in El Salvador?
5. Can you share any experiences that have made you more aware of what it is like in the U.S. for immigrants from El Salvador, or for immigrants in general?
6. What motivated you to immigrate to the United States?
7. How do you think government and politics differ in El Salvador and in the U.S.?
8. Do you think your family is different from what it would have been like in El Salvador?
9. Did anything prevent you from providing the kind of parenting you would have liked to provide for your child? Do you think this affected your child? In what ways (just during a period in the past, or has it continued to affect them)?
10. What language did you encourage your children to speak and why? How important to you is it that your children can speak Spanish? How important is it to you that they can speak English?
11. How comfortable are you speaking English and how does that affect your daily life? In what ways have you tried to either learn or practice using more English or to hold onto your Spanish?
12. Does speaking Spanish have any special meaning for you about who you are, and about how you relate to others?
13. What do you think about being a citizen of El Salvador / the U.S.A.?
14. Regardless of whether you are a citizen by legal documentation, in what ways other than official documents do you think you are like a citizen in the United States or in El Salvador?
15. Do you want to be or plan to become a citizen of the U.S.A.? If you have kept your citizenship to El Salvador (or if want to keep it if you also become a citizen of the U.S.A. in the future) why did you (or why do you want to) have citizenship in both countries?
16. What do you see your life being like in the future? Do you have any goals or hopes for your future?
17. Do you identify as Salvadoran, Salvadoran-American, or do you prefer other ways of identifying yourself? Why do you consider that the best way to identify yourself?
18. What do you hope for future generations of Salvadoran immigrants and those born of Salvadoran immigrant parents? What about for the children of first generation Salvadoran-American parents?
19. What does it mean to be a member of the Salvadoran or Salvadoran-American community? What are the differences between members of the Salvadoran-American community and about those who do not identify as Salvadoran-American?

20. What does it mean to say someone is Latino or Hispanic? Do you feel you are more Latino, Hispanic or Salvadoran or American and Why? Do you feel you are part of a Latino or Hispanic community? How is this community different from a Salvadoran or Salvadoran-American community?
21. Are there issues outside this country's domestic issues that are important to you or to people you know personally or to others in your community?
22. Is there anything you wish you could do something about to change it, in this country or elsewhere? What would a person like you need in order to be effective in addressing this issue?
23. What is your greatest source of personal pride? Have you tried to influence your children to share this source of pride and the pride about it?

### **Flexibility in Conducting Research**

I had to become more flexible in my selection of interviewees than I originally set out to be. I found that the trend in immigration patterns from El Salvador during the civil war era meant that I had to adjust somewhat the parameters of the “children of immigrants” and the “immigrant parents” groups in my sample. Many parents immigrated before their children. They left their children in El Salvador and it was generally at least several years, and sometimes longer, before their child joined them in the United States. I interviewed two young adults who came to the U.S. after their parents and when they were elementary school age (a little older than the cut-off age for immigration that I originally set). It was important to adjust my research population because my original specifications do not match the reality that many Salvadorian immigrants during the 1980s and early 1990s were not able to bring their children with them when they first migrated to the U.S. The children who grew up for the first half of their childhood in El Salvador and the second half of their childhood and adolescence in the U.S. are an important group for a study of parent-child relationships among the Salvadorian community in D.C.

Immigrants during the 1980s often waited to have children until more recently, so there is a significant group of Salvadoran immigrants who have young children, although their parents immigrated as adolescents or young adults and have lived in the United States for twenty years or more. I have already interviewed one parent who immigrated in 1984 but whose children are only in elementary school. My IRB approval did not permit me to interview his children, nor was that the appropriate for my research interests. I did, however, find it valuable to talk to this parent about his immigration, parenting and other experiences, even though he does not perfectly fit the narrower description for interview participants that I originally set.

I was able to interview one mother and her young adult daughter. However, I was not able to interview parent-child sets for the other 10 interviews that I conducted. Given more time I might have been able to talk with more parents of the young adults with whom I did interview, but it turned out to take longer than I had anticipated before I reached the interviewing stage with any potential interviewee with whom I began communicating. When I asked interviewees for their help in arranging an interview with their parent or child I frequently met resistance, skepticism about the likelihood that their family member would agree, or simply a lack of follow-up on their part. Given my narrow time frame and this recruitment difficulty, I focused on finding members of the two broad sample groups rather than on finding parent-child pairs. I do not see this as a great sacrifice to my project, especially because it allows my study to include parent-child relationships.

Ideally I would have interviewed the same number of parents and children, but partly due to the difficulty scheduling interviews around the availability of my translator, I was able to conduct eight interviews with the young adult group but only four interviews with the immigrant parent group. For the

immigrant parents group, I interviewed one father and three mothers. For the young adults, I interviewed five daughters of immigrants (including two who also immigrated during the late 1980s and early 1990s) and three sons of immigrants (including one who immigrated as a four year old). There is some cross-over between the parent and child groups. One interviewee identified volunteered as an immigrant parents immigrated as an adolescent, at a younger age than the other immigrant parents in my study. He was older slightly older than the young adult age range, because he waited until later in life to have children, but he also could offer the perspective of immigrating with his mother and because of his mother's decision rather than his own. Three of the young adult women interviewed are now parents of young children.

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