

**Connectivity and Collectivity:
Immigrant Involvement in Homeland Politics**

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Abstract

In contrast to the literature on immigrant “transnationalism”, which conflates state and nation, we distinguish between the migrant social connections extending across territorial boundaries and those linking migrants to a cross-border, social collectivity, to inquire into the factors affecting home country political involvement. While the cross-state social connections of remittance sending, travel, and communications are a salient aspect of the migrant phenomenon, we hypothesize that pre-migration political experiences are key in conditioning migrants’ identification with, and interest in, home country affairs. To test this hypothesis, we use the Latino National Survey (LNS), a large-scale nationally representative telephone survey of the U.S. Latino population conducted in Spanish and English in 2006, focusing on the roughly 2,600 Mexican-born respondents who moved to the United States after the age of 18. Our analysis exploits two specific aspects of the LNS: its inclusion of questions about political involvement *prior* to migration, alongside other items related to cross-border activities.

Once, immigrants were known as “the uprooted”. Now they are often called “the transnationals.” Whereas it might be more accurate to say that the immigrants are really “the transplanted,” almost all scholars agree that to say international migration is to say cross-border connections.

In so doing, today’s literature rejects the mythology of the classic countries of immigration, which assumes that the newcomers are arriving in order to build a life in the new land. In reality, it is often not the case: many migrants instead want to take advantage of the gap between rich and poorer places in order to accumulate resources designed to be used upon return back home. Some eventually act on these plans; others, whether wanting to or not, end up establishing roots in the country of arrival. Given the uncertain, transitional nature of the migration process, connections linking origin and destination places are ubiquitous. Not only are large flows of remittances, migrant associations raising funds to help hometowns left behind, trains or airplanes filled with immigrants returning home for visits to kin and friends features encountered wherever large numbers of international migrants are found throughout the contemporary world.

These same phenomena trigger responses from emigration states, seeking to make the most of their citizens' movement to the richer states of the world, while minimizing the possible costs.

But just how to think about these home community connections has been a source of endless controversy. While the "transnational" concept has been the most popular tool, it yields limited value, as many critics have complained (e.g., Fitzgerald, 2004; Dufoix, 2007). As noted by Fox (2005: 172), the literature has typically defined transnational "...in common sense terms as 'cross-border' (and therefore, technically, 'trans-state')."'

The practice, however, is unfortunate, as it ignores the classic sociological distinction between "state" and "nation" (Weber, 1978), the first referring to territorial units, the second to social collectivities. By definition, international migration involves connections that cross the territorial units of the globe; consequently, a core contention advanced by the scholarly transnationalists -- that migrants "...may continue to participate

in the daily life of the society from which they emigrated but which they did not abandon (Glick Schiller, 1999: 94; emphasis added)” – simply restates the null hypothesis.

Since connectivity and social collectivity are analytically and practically distinct, home society “participation” is too imprecise a notion to be helpful.

Connectivity Does Not Imply Collectivity

Connectivity does not inherently imply collectivity, as cross-state connections are often part and parcel of the familial survival strategies that propel migration in the first place. As emphasized by a variety of different theories of migration, movement from poor to wealthy societies is often a means of generating resources for use at the point of destination. One household member migrates to a place where wages are high, sending home savings to be spent in consumption and/or investment in a place where the cost of living is low. Migrations of this sort are patterned, and are lubricated by egocentric ties between migrants and settlers, as well as community level social capital. Remittance sending is similarly a mass phenomenon, in turn, generating institutional responses, whether among persons who specialize in transporting remittances (e.g. viajeros) or

existing financial institutions that adapt to the emergence of a new market. Nonetheless, both migrations and the cross-state connections that they produce involve parallel, not concerted or coordinated, action. Individuals respond to similar circumstances in similar ways, without acknowledging membership in a collectivity of like persons or engaging with others in ways that extend beyond egocentric connections. Thus, while huge numbers of immigrants regularly send money to relatives still living at home, far fewer are involved in hometown associations, and a still smaller minority engages in expatriate voting or homeland politics.

Likewise, identification or affiliation with a collectivity defined in terms of place of origins does not inherently imply connectivity. Exile communities, for example, often frame identity in home country terms, but do so against the home regime, portraying any contact with persons still in the home country as betrayal of the émigré cause. By contrast, ethnic festivals give immigrants and their descendants a one-day opportunity to identify with the place left behind, happily waving the home country flag, but without entailing any cross-border activity that links up with a place or person in the country of

origin. As suggested by the experience of the turn-of-the-20th century migrants from Italy, for whom identification with Italy and as Italians came after settlement in the United States, and in reaction to rejection (Gabaccia, 2000), cross-state connections can wither even as home state identification takes root.

Distinguishing Between Local and National Collectivities

If the first step involves distinguishing between collectivity and connectivity, the second entails identifying the different cross-border collectivities to which international migrants are attached. Ironically, the literature on “immigrant transnationalism” has mainly focused on cross-border connections that take an intensely localistic form. Salient examples include Roger Rouse’s early work on the “migration circuit” linking a small community in Mexico’s central plateau with Redwood City, located in California’s Silicon Valley (1991; 1995); Peggy Levitt’s 2001 book, *The Transnational Villagers*, a study of the ties connecting a small community in the Dominican Republic and its migrants living in Boston; Robert Smith’s 2006 book on Mexican New Yorkers and the small town in Puebla from which they came and to which they, and some of their

children, recurrently return; and Michael Smith and Matt Bakker's 2008 *Citizenship across Borders*, examining the political involvements of Mexican migrants in the states and communities from which they come..

Robert Smith notes that cross-border life of this sort is "not cosmopolitan, but local and parochial (2006: 63)," The analytic problem, however, is that the localistic connections linking hometowners here and there don't distinguish cross-border movement from long distance population movements of any other sort. Whether international or internal, long-distance migrants undergo similar experiences, namely those of displacement and strangeness, which is why they suddenly discover a commonality in people originating from the same place, as noted by the anthropological literature on third world migrations, from which the scholarly transnationalists drew their inspiration.

While migrant bi-localism sometimes proves compatible with strong home country loyalties, the relationship is not predetermined, but rather varies across time and place. Coming from multi-ethnic empires or nation-states established before their

peoples had been nationalized – “Italy is made, now we must make Italians,” reportedly said the Italian nationalist Massimo D’Azeglio (Gabaccia, 2000: 10) -- the mass migrants of the turn of the 20th century often knew little of the “nation” to which they were supposed to belong. Instead, the relevant homeland was local, toward which the attitude often took the form of *campanilismo*, the term used for the southern Italians “whose attachment did not extend beyond the earshot of the single belltowers (*campanile*) of their” hometowns (Luconi, 2007: 466-7). While the mass migrants of the 21st century mainly originate from states where nation-building is more advanced, the proliferation of hometown associations among contemporary immigrants testifies to the continuing weight of the *patria chica* (the little homeland) and the strength of the loyalties it inspires.

Though pervasive, cross-border migrant localism is not the only option, as migrants often bring allegiances to broader cross-border social collectivities with them. In the last age of migration, cross-border, political solidarities also took the form of internationalism, as migration fostered the dissemination of laborist, socialist, or

anarchist ideals across national settings, as well as the circulation of activists from one national movement to another. At the time, internationalism competed with other long-distance, particularistic solidarities linking migrants to existing, but more often, putative, would-be nation-states. Internationalism, albeit under a somewhat different name, remains a force today, but it is mainly found among labor and human rights activists, *not* international migrants.

By contrast, what the literature calls migrant long-distance nationalism is alive and well, though long-distance patriotism might be a better term, as it can encompass the range of home country attachments in their benign as well as more malign or aggressive forms. Unlike the turn of the last century, today's migrants generally come from long-established, nation-states, most of which impart their peoples with a sense of national identity, both through socialization and opportunities for political involvement in national life. Although the literature on Mexican migration, for example, has mainly focused on Mexican bi-localism, data from the World Values Survey show that Mexicans exhibit high and growing levels of national pride (80 percent saying "very proud" in 2000), while

reporting levels of local attachment that are comparable to those found in the United States and are also declining in importance. Hence, national identities and political experiences, both of which are imparted *before* migration, make long-distance migrant political activity a salient feature of the immigrant experience, albeit one that can take multiple forms. Whether involving efforts to create new states, change existing regimes, alter nationality or voting laws in ways that would facilitate migrant participation in homeland politics, defend homelands beleaguered by enemies or disasters, or lobby hostlands on homelands' behalf, home country national loyalties are widely felt, with sufficient intensity to consistently impel a minority into activism.

In contrast to migrant bi-localism, moreover, migrant long-distance patriotism is a distinctive feature of international migration. As such, it both highlights the ways in which migration threatens to sever the alignment of territory, political institutions, and society, while also showing how states on both sides constrain migrants' options.

On the one hand, migration gives the newcomers access to the wealth contained within a rich country's boundaries, consistently providing the minority of migrant

activists with a material base that they can use to exercise leverage back home. The stateness of the receiving environment also constrains the tentacles of the sending state, furnishing the immigrants with freedom to organize, as well as new skills, ideas, and allies. The many exchanges linking places of origin and destination – whether involving remittance-sending, communication, travel, or the institutions that support these activities – effectively bring “here” and “there” together, thus facilitating and motivating continued involvement with home country politics, while diminishing its costs.

On the other hand, the fact that *international* migration involves a change in jurisdiction, as Aristide Zolberg (1999) has pointed out, works in the opposite direction. Though expatriate voting is actually more common than non-resident voting by immigrants, and political parties often maintain foreign branches in which emigrants can participate, the electoral infrastructure constructed on the other side is always far more rudimentary than that found in the sending state. Relative to the hostland, where one can participate on-site and non-citizens have numerous options for civic engagement,

homeland political involvement entails greater effort and therefore higher opportunity costs.

Moreover, migrant long-distance patriotism collides with host society expectations, in ways that conventional theory elides. Although the sociological dictionary defines “assimilation” as the decline of an ethnic difference (Alba and Nee, 2003), the very same process can also be described as one that transforms foreigners into nationals. In the case of the United States, as noted by the political scientist, Virginia Sapiro, “a citizen’s former nationality” has long been defined “as something either to leave behind or to transform into ‘ethnicity’, stripped of notions of current membership, or, certainly, citizenship (2004: 6).” Since, as Alba and Nee point out (2003: 145-53), acceptance is contingent on a transfer of loyalties from home to host state, with allowance provided for residual ethnic attachments, immigrants to the United States respond accordingly. Their adoption of a U.S. national identity is facilitated by the country’s pluralistic political cultures, where demands for exclusivity are modest and

immigrants can attach a hyphenated, cultural modifier (of Mexican-, Chinese- Italian-, etc) to the newly acquired national identity of American.

Intellectual goals

This paper seeks to advance our understanding of migrant home country political involvement through a study of Mexican migrants living in the United States. Picking up on our earlier distinction between social connectivity and social collectivity, we seek to understand how *pre*-migration experiences generating identification with the home country national collectivity affect *post*-migration home country engagement. Put somewhat differently, our interest does not focus on the “transnational” dimension in the etymologically true sense of ties “beyond the nation”, but rather on the cross-state, distinctively *national* attachments that some immigrants bring with them. By emphasizing cross-state, homeland ties, we seek to escape the twin dangers of “methodological nationalism” – assuming that social relations are fully contained within national borders – and “methodological transnationalism” – contending that “transnational phenomena and dynamics are the rule rather than the exception, the central

tendencies, rather than the outliers (Khagram and Levitt, 2005: 6). *While cross-state social connections are a salient aspect of the migrant phenomenon, we hypothesize that pre-migration political experiences exercise the fundamental influence in conditioning migrants' identification with, and interest in, home country affairs.*

Latino National Survey

We proceed via analysis of the Latino National Survey (LNS), a large-scale nationally representative telephone survey of the U.S. Latino population conducted in Spanish and English in 2006 and released as a public use sample in spring 2008. In addition to its large size, the survey contains many questions related to immigration experiences, and most importantly, for our purposes, a large and unusually useful battery of items pertaining to home country political involvements. Given our interest in pre-migration political experiences, we limit the analysis to foreign-born persons who emigrated when they were 18 or older. We focus on Mexicans (N=2,732) to isolate the impact of pre-migration political experience from effects related to variations in political systems or nation-state-level differences in national identity or nationhood. As Mexico

ranks 8th among the 68 countries polled in the 4th (1999-2004) wave of World Value Surveys and second among Latin American countries in the proportion reporting “very high” levels of national pride, it provides an excellent case for the question at hand.

The paper follows in the wake of previous efforts to use survey data to study immigrants’ homeland political involvements. Connecting to the homeland is a pervasive feature of the immigrant experience, as the burgeoning number of ethnographic studies of immigrant activists convincingly show. However, not all immigrants maintain these ties; among those who stay connected, levels of intensity and regularity seem to vary greatly. Unfortunately, these are precisely the people and experiences that fall out of the ethnographies and case studies focusing on the transnationals and the diaspora activists.

Recent work by a number of authors analyzing has now begun to provide us with a fuller picture. Publications analyzing the home country connections of Latinos (Guarnizo et al. 2003; Waldinger, 2008b), and Asians (Lien, 2006; Wong, 2006) immigrants in the United States, Middle eastern immigrants in the Netherlands (citation), and a variety of Asian immigrants in Canada (Hiebert and Ley, 2006) show that while

homeland ties of varying sorts (cultural, economic, political, and social) persist, they compete with new allegiances that bind immigrants to their hostlands, which, in turn, weaken the homeland connection. While valuable, these are all cross-sectional studies, making it difficult to determine whether immigrants who maintain an interest in home country politics do so because they remain in frequent contact with home country friends and relatives, or whether the causal arrows points in the operation direction. Although the LNS is also a cross-sectional survey, it contains an important element not found elsewhere, one that allows us to move the discussion further: namely, time order. In particular, the LNS includes two questions pertaining to political experiences undergone *prior* to migration:

“Before coming to the U.S., did you ever vote in [country of origin] elections?”

(yes/no);

“Before you came to the United States, how active were you in a political party, a political organization, or in any other type of organizations such as labor unions, student

organizations, or paramilitary organizations” (very active, somewhat active, a member but not active, not active at all, never joined, refused).

Utilizing these items, this paper asks how and to what extent the pre-migration political experiences of Mexican immigrants to the United States affect their post-migration engagement with home country politics. Making use of the richness of the LNS, we now seek to answer these questions, controlling for a host of other relevant factors and exploiting the survey’s large sample size.

Variables

Dependent Variables

Although the relevant literature revolves around the concept of immigrant transnationalism, migrant long-distance particularism, as we have argued, provides the more accurate label. While many migrations generate a cadre of involved homeland-oriented activists, this typically involves a small, sometimes, very small proportion of the migrant population, though in case of a migration like Mexico’s, a relatively small

proportion means large absolute numbers. Despite the influence exerted by activists seeking expatriate voting rights and the burgeoning interest among scholars and policy makers in hometown associations, this survey, like many others, shows that there is limited evidence of direct engagement with homeland matters. Less than four percent of all Mexican immigrants answered yes to a question asking them whether they ever voted in a home country election after having been in the United States; barely one percent reported having made a contribution to a Mexican political candidate or party after having come to the United States.

Those who responded yes to these questions comprise the homeland-oriented activists, whose engagements have been the focus of the burgeoning case study literature. These activists often have a dual focus, acting to pursue homeland goals via influence exercised on the hostland government or simply applying leverage upon/against the homeland state. Either way, their influence is likely to depend on “a supportive constituency available for mobilization” (Wald, 2008: 275). That constituency might be available for mobilization, were it impelled by the sort of long-distance “nationalism”

discussed in the literature, or the more neutral concept, advanced above, of “long-distance patriotism.” An alternative formulation suggests that migrants possessing a “politicized ethnic identity” – evinced when “self-conscious group members engage in a power struggle on behalf of their group” (Simon and Klandermans, 2001) -- might “accord priority to the homeland in their political thinking and behavior,” as recently argued by Wald (2008: 276). Although the LNS included a large battery of questions regarding homeland-oriented activities, those items lack the degree of specificity implied by either set of concepts. We opt for the less demanding option of “interest in homeland politics” as indexed by the following questions:

“Some people believe that it is appropriate for (Answer to country of birth) living in the United States to be able to cast their ballot in (country of birth) from the United States. Would you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree, or haven’t you thought much about that?”

“How much attention would you say you pay to politics in (country of birth). Would you say you pay a lot of attention, some attention, a little attention, or none at all?”

Independent variables

Pre-migration experiences: Present and future patterns of political engagement are generally shaped by prior experiences, whether involving the institutions that transmit political ideas, values, and norms, or the practice of political participation itself. Drawing an analogy to the “civic voluntarism” model of Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, who show how institutional involvements in adulthood affect political participation, we contend that pre-migration political participation will generate continued interest in homeland matters after migration.

As shown by studies of American political behavior, voting history is a powerful predictor of future behavior (Plutzer). While migration may disrupt the norms that support continued voting, we anticipate that voting, as a symbolically important act

undertaken in public, generates other commitments, such that persons with a pre-migration experience of voting (coded 1 if voted before migrating, 0 otherwise) will retain greater interest in home country politics than those without.

As membership in civic and political organizations imparts political dispositions as well as skills, we expect that persons with a prior record of activism or membership will have a stronger homeland orientation than those lacking such an experience. Similarly, we expect that the higher level of pre-migration activism, the greater the level of post-migration homeland interest.

We enter each response category as a dummy variable, with never joined as the omitted category. Building on our distinction between collectivity and connectivity, we anticipate that pre-migration political experiences will yield strong effects, after controlling for the intensity of cross-border contacts.

Post-migration connectivity: As emphasized by the literature on immigrant transnationalism, ongoing contacts between immigrants in the host country and friends and relatives in the home country is a salient feature of the immigrant phenomenon. One

anticipates that frequent home country contact will increase interest in home country politics; it might also yield support for expatriate voting, though, absent mobilization it is likely that the linkage is more indirect.

We employ two indicators to measure connectivity. One comes from responses to a question asking “How often are you in contact with friends and family [in the country of origin]?”, allowing for the response categories of once a week or more, once a month or more, once every few months, never, or don’t know/no answer. Our second indicator comes from a question asking about the frequency of remittance sending, with respondents selecting from “more than once a month, once a month; once every few months; once a year; less than once a year; never; don’t know/no answer”.

Settlement: As noted earlier, return, *not* settlement, is the goal that frequently impels international migration, a pattern that has historically characterized Mexican migration to the United States. While many migrants end up settling, the “myth of return” has long-lasting power. We anticipate that plans to return will foster an interest in homeland politics; by contrast, uncertainty over settlement prospects, and even more so, a

decision to live permanently in the United States, will weak interest and desire to participate in homeland matters.

Control variables

The basic approach is to estimate the impact of pre-migration experiences and then test for persistent effects, upon the application of a variety of controls. We now describe the control variables and their anticipated effects.

Exposure: The huge corpus of research on assimilation shows that social and affective attachments to the home country weaken as the migrant's experience of life in the receiving country grows. We measure the impact of experience in the receiving country with two continuous variables: numbers of years that the respondent has lived in the United States; and years squared.

Acculturation: The convention which describes assimilation as a "decline in an ethnic difference" implies that convergence toward US patterns of language and media use will weaken interest in home country matters. One expects English monolinguals to lack either the capacity to follow home country matters or the affective ties (produced, in

part, by mother tongue proficiency) that would motivate such engagement. Theory is unclear, however, as to the impact of language: to the extent that bilingualism is a mechanism of ethnic retention (as argued by Portes and Rumbaut, 2001), one would expect bilinguals to engage in home country ties or maintain home country attachments in ways similar to foreign-language dominants. We used information about the language in which the interview was conducted by language ability to classify respondents into three mutually exclusive categories: interviewed in English only; interviewed in Spanish only; switched language during the course of the interview.

Media usage: As foreign-language media has historically devoted considerable attention to home country matters, we anticipate that respondents mainly relying on Spanish media will also display higher levels of interest in home country matters. We enter media usage as a series of dummies (Spanish more; both equally; other/dk/na); English more is the omitted category.

Legal status: While unauthorized (“undocumented) migrants represent a large proportion of the foreign-born population, the LNS (like most other such instruments) did

not inquire into legal status. However, the survey did ask both about citizenship and about efforts to apply for citizenship. Consequently, the regressions include four legal status dummies (non-citizens currently applying for citizenship; planning to applying for citizenship; not planning to apply for citizenship; dk/na); naturalized citizenship is the omitted category.

Social and economic resources: In general, higher levels of education and income are associated with higher levels of knowledge of and participation in politics, as well as greater access to bureaucratically controlled resources, such as citizenship. The regressions enter education as a set of dummy variables (primary, some high school, some college, college degree and higher; high school is the omitted category). As the survey only collected data on household income, with very limited categories and a high (20 percent) refusal rate, we decided not to include this variable in the regressions.

Place where education completed: In modern nation-states, schools play a central role in transmitting national identity. Consequently, we expect that respondents who

completed their education in the country of origin will display higher levels of interest in home country politics than persons who completed their education in the United States.

Religion: Unlike nationalisms, which may cross-state boundaries without being transnational, religious beliefs and practices are often universal, maintain by denominations organized on a transnational basis (Levitt, 2008). On the other hand, migration often leads to a change in religious affiliation, as the new environment both provides exposure to religious alternatives not known before migration and, by distancing migrants from traditional sources of authority, facilitates conversion. We distinguish Catholics from all others (Catholic=1, all others=0), hypothesizing that immigrants retaining the religious affiliation dominant in Mexico will be most likely to retain an interest in home country matters.

Political knowledge: Interest in home country politics may instead be the result of interest in U.S. politics, which in turn, is best indexed by knowledge of current political conditions. To assess political knowledge, we add dummies for knowing which US party is currently the more conservative, which party had a majority in the House of

Representatives at the time of the survey, and which 2004 Presidential candidate won the most votes in the respondent's current state of residence.

Other Controls: The regressions also included dummy variables for sex (1 if male).

Methodology

As the dependent variables of this paper are measured with ordinal scales, we use ordinal regression models. From several competing regression models designed for ordinal dependent variables (Long, 1997), we chose an ordinal logit regression model known as the cumulative logit model (or the proportional odds model). We chose this model for its parsimony without any additional loss of overall fit of the model to the underlying data. This particular model has a familiar structure between the dependent variable and the independent variables, except for additional intercept terms representing different levels of the dependent variable.

To formally describe the model, we will use a clear description offered in Allison (1999). Allison started by defining p_{ij} as the probability that a respondent i choose a

category j of the dependent variable. Assuming that the categories are ordered in the sequence $j = 1, \dots, J$, the cumulative probabilities can be defined as $F_{ij} = \sum_{m=1}^j p_{im}$, where F_{ij} is the probability that a respondent i chose the j th category or lower. Therefore, each F_{ij} corresponds to a different dichotomization of the dependent variable. Combining these elements, we can express the model as:

$$\log\left(\frac{F_{ij}}{1 - F_{ij}}\right) = \alpha_j + \hat{\mathbf{a}}\mathbf{x}_i \quad j = 1, \dots, J - 1$$

where $\hat{\mathbf{a}}\mathbf{x}_i = \beta_1 x_{i1} + \dots + \beta_k x_{ik}$, k represents the number of independent variables.

Hence, the regression results show that there is a single set of coefficients (β s) and a different intercept term for each of the equations. As a result, the effect of each independent variable, a regression coefficient (β), do not vary across the level of the dependent variable. Instead each coefficient (β) indicates a change in the likelihood of a respondent choosing a higher level of dependent variable, measured in log-odds, for one unit change in an independent variable.

Log-odds are not the most natural unit of measurement. To aid interpretation, we interpret the results in terms of change in more natural units of measurement: percent change in the likelihood by transforming each coefficient ($= 1 - \exp(\beta)$). Moreover, for key independent variables, we compute predicted probabilities based on certain values of independent variables. We estimated the statistical models using Stata and a routine developed by Long and Freese (2006).

Descriptive statistics

Sample

Since our interest focuses on those whose pre-migration experience might have provided opportunities for prior political engagement, we limit our analysis to persons who were 18 or older when they moved to the United States

Descriptive statistics for dependent and independent variables are found in Table 1.

< Insert Table 1 here.>

Dependent variables:

Views towards our two measures of interest in homeland politics display a clear contrast. On the one hand, the majority of respondents agree that “it is appropriate for Mexicans living in the United States to cast their ballot in Mexican national elections from the United States;” just over a third answer “strongly agree” and just under tenth respond “strongly disagree.” On the other hand, a comparably sized majority pays little attention to Mexican politics, with “none” being the response chosen by over one third, and just over ten percent saying “a lot”.

< Insert Table 2 here. >

Independent variables

The sample is evenly split between persons having voted prior to migration (48 percent) and those with no pre-migration history of electoral activity (49 percent). By contrast, activism is relatively rare: more than half answered “never joined;” and more than a quarter answered “not active”. Just over a tenth reported activism, with only 2.5 percent describing themselves as having been “very active”.

Control variables

The LNS captured a relatively newly arrived population, with years of residence in the U.S. averaging 13.6, with a median of 12. Not surprisingly, respondents report regular contact with home country friends and relatives still living in Mexico, with 57 percent in contact once a week or more and 28 percent in contact several times a month. While not quite as frequent, remitting is still common: 14 percent send money home more than once a week and almost thirty percent do so once a month; on the other hand, almost 30 percent report never sending money home. Recency of arrival and intensity of connection notwithstanding, a majority of the sample is committed to permanent settlement in the United States; however, almost as many lean in another direction, with one third reporting plans to return, and 12 percent not knowing. Schooling levels in the sample reflect the pattern characteristic of this population, with 5 percent reporting no schooling, 35 percent reporting some primary school education, 18 percent reporting some secondary education, and not quite 16 percent reporting any post-secondary schooling. 9 percent of the respondents completed their highest level of schooling in the

United States. Three quarters of respondents mainly relied on Spanish language media, with only 6 percent reported mainly English media use. 70 percent of respondents were interviewed in Spanish only, with another 22 percent switching language during the course of the interview, mainly from Spanish to English. The great majority of respondents did not provide correct answers to the questions about political knowledge, with incorrect answers varying between 75 and 80 percent for the three items measured. Only one fifth of respondents were naturalized; the modal category was comprised of persons who responded “no plan to naturalize”, a group that likely includes many undocumented persons. 54 percent of respondents were women and 80 percent were Catholic.

< Insert Table 3 here. >

Regression Results

Interest in Mexican politics: As shown in Table 3, pre-migration political experiences, whether involving activism or voting, yield strong effects on post-migration interests in Mexican politics. Engagement of any sort made a difference: those

respondents reporting membership but not activism were 89 percent ($= 1 - \exp(0.64)$) more likely to report paying greater attention to Mexican politics than were those respondents without an experience of either membership or activism in Mexico. For instance, those respondents who reported “somewhat active” are 118% and “very active” 236% more likely than “never active” to express higher interest in Mexican politics.

Likewise, pre-migration voting made a difference, as those with no prior experience in voting half as likely as the prior voters to report paying a lot of attention to Mexican politics. As Table 3 also shows, these patterns persist after controls, with differences significant at the .01 level for respondents reporting that they were “somewhat” or “very” active, and differences significant at the .05 level for those reporting membership, but not active.

Connectivity also matters, but less consistently, and, when influential, with less impact. Respondents who have weekly contact with friends and relatives living in Mexico are more likely than all others to pay a lot of attention to Mexican politics. Those in monthly contact are more likely to be attentive to Mexican politics than those who

have disengaged from contact altogether, but other differences in contact have no statistically significant impact on interest in politics. These differences again are robust across models. Curiously, however, the frequency with which respondents send money to Mexico bears no relationship to their interest in Mexican politics.

Settlement plans, however, make a difference. Those not certain whether to stay or return are also less interested in Mexican politics than the prospective returnees, as those do not plan to go back to Mexico are 30 percent ($= 1 - \exp(-.39)$) less likely to pay attention to Mexican politics than those still intending to return.

While our measure of pre-migration collectivity yields significant impact across all models, selected, other control variables are also influential. In some cases, effects align with the predications made earlier: U.S. exposure, as indexed by years of residence in the United States, has a negative impact on interest in Mexican politics; likewise, possession of post-secondary education increases interest in Mexican politics, as do each of the three indicators of knowledge of U.S. politics. On the other hand, respondents *not* planning to apply for U.S. citizenship are *less* interested in Mexican politics than those who have already

obtained U.S. citizens, a result that is difficult to interpret. Also counterintuitive is the finding that those who rely on both English *and* Spanish language media are more interested in Mexican politics than those who rely on Spanish media alone, though this difference does not quite attain conventional levels of statistical significance.

< Figure 1 here. >

A comparison of predicted probabilities for key variables, with other variables set at the mean, helps compare the influence of collectivity and connectivity. Among respondents reporting a high level of pre-migration activism, the probability of having “a lot” of interest in Mexican politics is .26. Though voting, frequent contact, and plans to return were all positively related to interest in Mexican politics, the probabilities of reporting “a lot” of interest were a good deal lower (at .14 for the voters; .13 for those planning to go home, and .12 for those with weekly contact or more). At the other end of the spectrum, the probability of having no interest in Mexican politics is close to .5 among those who never have contact with friends or relatives in Mexico, a level approached, but not quite attained by those who never joined any political party or social

movement in Mexico (.35), those planning to stay in the U.S. (.38), and those who never voted in Mexico (.4). Comparison across remitting types shows no relationship to interest in Mexican politics, as the most frequent remitters are as likely to report no interest as those who never remit.

Support for expatriate voting: Those with pre-migration political experiences and ongoing connections to Mexico are more likely than others to express strong support for expatriate voting, but to a modest extent, given the overall balance of opinion.

Respondents who report being “somewhat” or “very” involved in activism prior to migration are almost twice as likely to express strong support for expatriate voting than those with no such history. That pattern persists across all models, though coefficients and significance levels change slightly (falling just below conventional levels of statistical significance among the most active in the second and third models). Prior voting – an experience shared by roughly half the sample – has no effect on expatriate voting. Similarly, given that the great majority of the sample is in frequent contact with friends and relatives in Mexico, contact only matters at the extreme, with those who

never have contact about 32 percent less likely to support expatriate voting than those who have weekly contact or more. Settlement, however, matters: controlling for other factors, those planning to stay in the United States are 26 percent less likely to express strong support for expatriate voting than those planning to return.

Covariates yielding significant effects are generally likely to align with predictions made above. Strong support for expatriate voting was found among respondents who completed their schooling in Mexico, as opposed to the United States and among respondents who relied on Spanish media exclusively. Persons interviewed in Spanish or who switched languages during the interview, as opposed to those exclusively interviewed in English were also more likely to strongly support expatriate voting, though not quite at conventional levels of statistical significance. Unlike the responses produced when asked about levels of interest in politics, neither level of education nor legal status were related to support for expatriate voting.

< Figure 2 here. >

Predicted probabilities again allow us to assess the relative impact of key variables. Activism strongly affects support for expatriate voting, with the probability of answering “strongly agree” at .5 among those who report having been “very active”, at .45 among those who report having been “somewhat active”, but .32 among those who report never having joined. By contrast, the probability of expressing strong agreement is .39 among those planning to go back as contrasted to .32 among those planning to stay in the U.S. Similarly, differences in contact yield only modest changes in probabilities of strong agreement: those reporting the most regular contact have a probability of .36 whereas those without any contact have a probability of .28. We again see that remittance behavior bears no relationship to views regarding homeland politics.

Conclusion

Pathbreaking work by anthropologists launched the “transnational perspective” in the early 1990s. Underscoring the ways in which the migration of peoples recurrently produces a spillover of ideas, goods, and civil and political engagements across national boundaries, it triggered an outpouring of research, now laying claim to a new research

field which it calls “transnational migration studies.” The cross-state attachments that the scholarly transnationalists have flagged comprise an integral part of the migrant reality, one that that traditional approaches, assuming that state and society converge, have also obscured.

If we now all agree that to say international migration produces ongoing involvements with the places and people left behind, there is still a long-way to go. By definition, international migration generates connections extending across state boundaries, linkages that at once lubricate migration and get reinforced, as the migration stream widens.

Though an inherent part of the migration phenomenon, those connections are the result of individual and familial survival strategies, and therefore, don’t imply identification with a home society, social collectivity. Moreover, the ties linking migrants and stayers “here” and “there” are common to all forms of long-distance and don’t illuminate the specifically cross-state dimensions of international migration.

Similarly, collectivity doesn't imply connectivity. Exile nationalism has recurrently generated powerful identification with the home society collectivity, but as it involves opposition to the existing regime, it also often entails opposition to any ongoing connection that might imply political support. Likewise, the symbolic ethnicity supported by American political culture, legitimates a costless identification with a place left behind, without imposing any requirements to engage with the people still on the other side of the border.

Often, the relevant social collectivity takes a local form, reflecting the displacements associated with long-distance, but not necessarily, international migration. But it frequently involves identification with the nation-state from which the migrants come, a phenomenon often described as "long-distance nationalism," but perhaps more accurately and neutrally called "long-distance patriotism." Migrants' interest in and involvement with homeland politics highlights what is distinctive aspect to spillovers generated by international migration, as the people thought of as "immigrants" are instead behaving as "emigrants", living in one territory, but engaging with the polity of

another. To a large extent, those home country involvements reflect, not the ebbing of national identities, as the scholarly transnationalists maintain, but rather the imprint of pre-migration, nationalizing experiences.

In part, this paper confirms what other research on the topic has shown, namely, that migrant interest in home country matters is generally a minority phenomenon. Yes, if asked, the migrants report a desire to engage with the country they left behind. In practice, however, active home country political engagement is the province of a very small minority. Though most migrants are busy supporting and communicating with their relatives and friends back home, the relatively undemanding activity of simply attending to homeland political events gets scant attention.

But not all migrants are the same. Those who do attend bring some pre-migration experience that appears to have deepened their attachment to the national collectivity left behind. Activism is the most powerful such experience, as migrants with high to moderate levels of pre-migration activism – whether in a party, union, or other social movement – are also much more likely than all others to maintain persistent homeland

interest, and also to express strong support for expatriate voting rights. A prior experience of voting also leaves a legacy in greater interest in home country politics, though having less affect on support for expatriate voting, a proposal that most migrants endorse, however passively.

From the variable-oriented perspective thus far adopted in this paper, pre-migration political experiences exercise the decisive influence on post-migration political involvements. If powerful, however, the most politicizing pre-migration experiences are shared by only a few. Barely a half of the migrants who left Mexico after adulthood ever voted; many fewer engaged with a political party or social movement. For most migrants, rather, connectivity and settlement influence interest in home country matters, doing so, however, with relatively modest impacts. And given the little interest exerted by homeland politics, at a time when this population is recently arrived, mainly speaks Spanish and is reliant on Spanish language media, there is every reason to expect that concern with host country, not homeland issues, will take on greater priority.

But one shouldn't dismiss the off-diagonal phenomena too soon. While activists, motivated by strong homeland concerns, may be a small minority, the size of the denominator – ten million, in the case of Mexican immigrants -- is huge. Consequently, any cause that engages the energies of one, two, or three percent of all migrants can impel significant numbers into action, a group that is all the more important since their concerns resonate more broadly. As we know, the activists can mobilize resources that augment the impact of their numbers, drawing on ties to materially successful immigrants, activating connections to influence in both home and host country, and exploiting the freedoms found in the host country to pressure leaders back home. In the end, many immigrants don't care about home country matters. But those who do care – largely because of the political experiences acquired before migration – happen to count.

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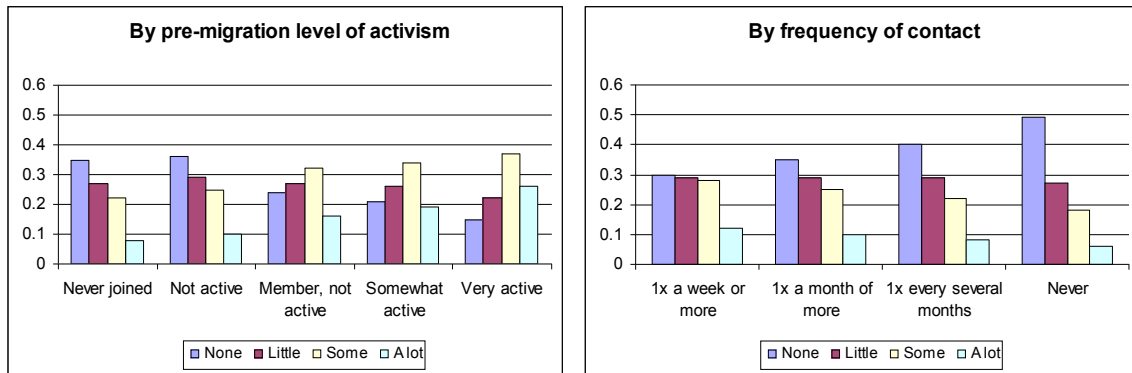
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Figure 1: Predicted probabilities of level of interest in Mexican politics, by specific variable, rest at mean

How much attention would you say you pay to politics in Mexico?



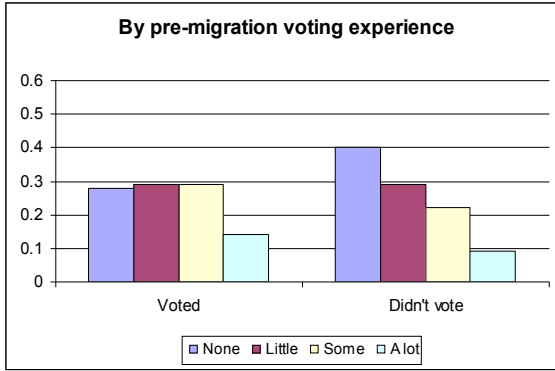
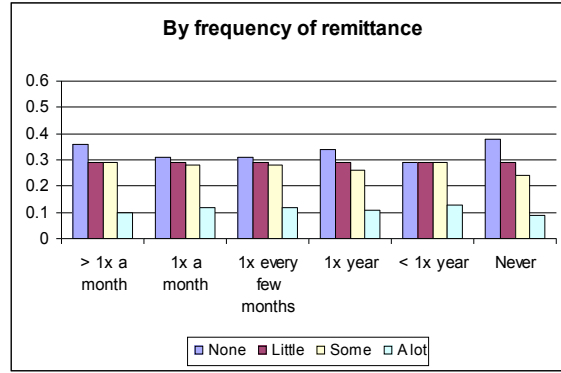
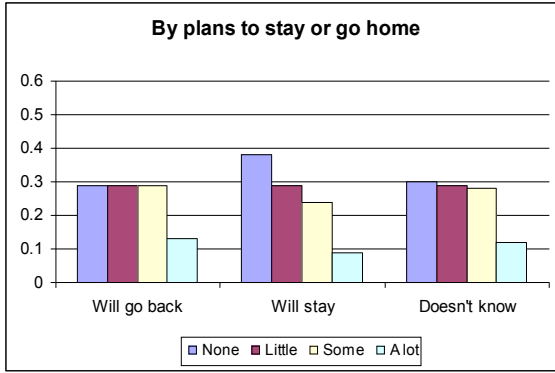
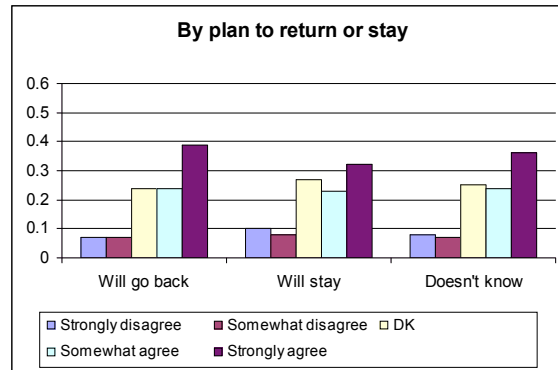
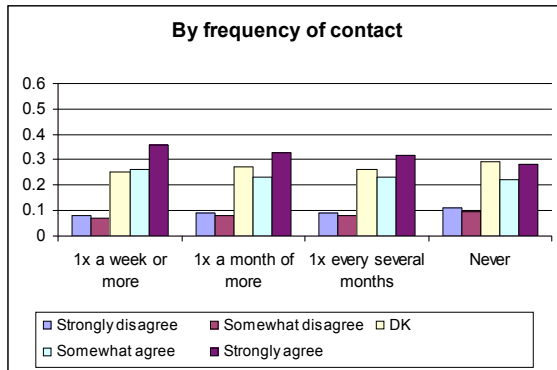
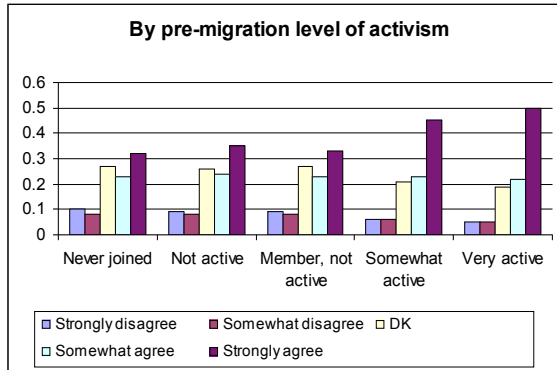


Figure 2: Predicted probabilities of views toward expatriate voting, by specific variable, rest at mean
 “It is appropriate for Mexicans living in the United States to be able to cast their ballot in Mexican national elections from the United States”



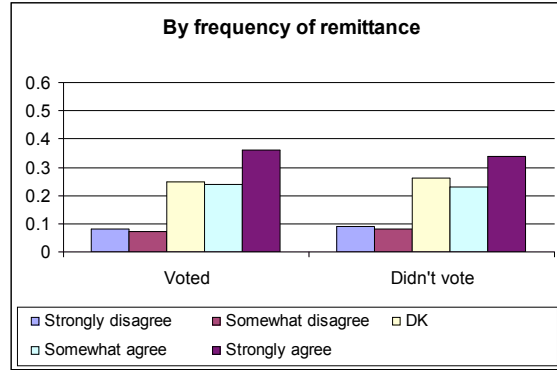
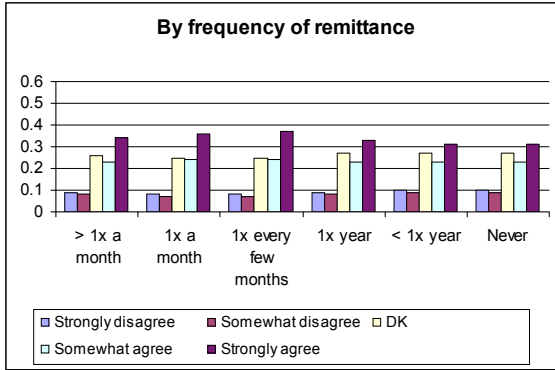


Table 1: Dependent variables

Expatriate Voting

Some people believe that it is appropriate Mexicans living in the United States be able to cast their ballot in Mexican national elections from the United States.

Would you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree, or haven't you thought much about that?

Strongly Agree	10%
Somewhat Agree	8%
Don't Know / Haven't Thought About It	25%
Somewhat Disagree	22%
Strongly Disagree	35%
Total	100%

Interest in Mexican Politics

How much attention would you say you pay to politics in Mexico?

Table 1: Dependent variables

A lot	13%
Some	25%
Little	26%
None	36%
Total	100%

Table 2: Independent Variables

Pre-migration political participation

Never Joined	56%
Not Active	26%
A Member But Not Active	2%
Somewhat Active	8%
Very active	2%
REFUSED	5%

Voted before migration

Yes	48%
No	49%
Don't kn	1%
NA	2%

Send money back to Mexico

More than once a month	14%
Once a month	28%

Table 2: Independent Variables

Once every few months	15%
Once a year	8%
Less than once a year	3%
Never	29%
DK/NA	3%
Contact with friend in Mexico	
Once a week or more	57%
Once a month or more	28%
Once every several months	7%
Never	6%
DK/NA	1%
Do you plan to go back to Mexico to live there permanently	
Yes	34%
No	52%
DK	12%
NA	1%

Table 2: Independent Variables

Highest education

None	5%
Eight grade or below	35%
Some high school	18%
High school graduate	26%
Some college	9%
College graduate	4%
Graduate school	3%

Earned highest education in US

Yes	9%
-----	----

Rely on English only media

Yes	6%
-----	----

Rely on bi-lingual media

Yes	20%
-----	-----

Don't know / no media reliance

Yes	1%
-----	----

Table 2: Independent Variables

Language of interview

English	9%
Switched between English and Spanish	22%
Spanish only	70%

Know which party is conservative in US

Yes	23%
-----	-----

Know the majority party in US Congress in 2006

Yes	23%
-----	-----

Know who won the 2004 presidential election in the state of residence

Yes	26%
-----	-----

Immigration status

Naturalized	20%
Applied	5%
Plan to apply for citizenship	28%
No Plan to apply for citizenship	44%
DK/REF	4%

Table 2: Independent Variables

Sex

Male 46%

Religion

Catholic 80%

Migration intensity of state of birth in Mexico

Very Low 9%

Low 12%

Medium 22%

High 25%

Very High 29%

DK 1%

Missing 2%

US state of residence

AR 8%

AZ 5%

CA 17%

Table 2: Independent Variables

CO	6%
DC	0%
FL	3%
GA	8%
IA	6%
IL	9%
MD	0%
NC	9%
NJ	2%
NM	4%
NV	6%
NY	3%
TX	9%
VA	1%
WA	5%

Years in US

Table 2: Independent Variables

13.60

Table 3

Outcome	Attention Paid to Mexican Politics	
	Coefficient	Percent Change in Odds
Pre-migration political participation		
Never Joined		
Not Active	0.06	6%
A Member But Not Active	0.64 [*]	89%
Somewhat Active	0.78 ^{***}	118%
Very active	1.21 ^{***}	236%
Voted before migration		
No	-0.53 ^{***}	-41%
Send money back to Mexico		
More than once a month		
Once a month	0.24	26%
Once every few months	0.24	27%

Table 3

Outcome	Attention Paid to Mexican Politics	
Once a year	0.11	11%
Less than once a year	0.34	41%
Never	-0.07	-6%
Contact with friend in Mexico		
Once a week or more		
Once a month or more	-0.21*	-19%
Once every several months	-0.44*	-35%
Never	-0.77***	-53%
Plan to go back to Mexico to live		
Yes		
No	-0.39***	-32%
Don't know	-0.21	-19%
Immigration status		
Naturalized		
Applied	-0.28	-24%

Table 3

Outcome	Attention Paid to Mexican Politics	
Plan to apply for citizenship	-0.05	-5%
No Plan to apply for citizenship	-0.35 [*]	-30%
Language of interview		
English		
Switched between English and Spanish	0.06	6%
Spanish only	0.12	13%
Highest education		
None	0.17	19%
Eighth grade or below		
Some high school	0.09	9%
High school graduate	0.23 [*]	25%
Some college	0.17	19%
College graduate	0.58 ^{**}	78%
Graduate school	1.11 ^{***}	204%
Completed highest ed in US	0.16	17%

Table 3

Outcome	Attention Paid to Mexican Politics	
Years in US	-0.04 ^{***}	-4%
Years in US (Squared)	0.000673 ^{**}	0%
Relies mainly on English media	-0.15	-14%
Relies on bilingual media	0.18	20%
Don't know / no media reliance	-0.11	-10%
Knows which party is conservative	0.18	20%
Knew majority party in HseRep in 2006	0.32 ^{***}	38%
Know who won the 2004 presidential election in the state of residence	0.24 [*]	27%
Male	-0.01	-1%
Catholic	0.15	16%
Migration intensity of state of birth in Mexico		
Very Low		
Low	0.06	6%
Medium	-0.01	-1%

Table 3

Outcome	Attention Paid to Mexican Politics	
High	0.05	5%
Very High	0.00	0%
cut1		
Constant	-1.00**	
cut2		
Constant	0.21	
cut3		
Constant	1.77***	
cut4		
Constant		
Observations	2586	

Table 4

Outcome	Appropriate to Vote in Mexican election?	
	Coefficient	Percent Change in Odds
Pre-migration political participation		
Never Joined		
Not Active	0.13	14%
A Member But Not Active	0.05	5%
Somewhat Active	0.54 ^{***}	71%
Very active	0.75 [*]	111%
Voted before migration		
No	-0.08	-8%
Send money back to Mexico		
More than once a month		
Once a month	0.08	9%
Once every few months	0.09	9%

Table 4

Outcome	Appropriate to Vote in Mexican election?	
Once a year	-0.07	-6%
Less than once a year	-0.15	-14%
Never	-0.15	-14%
Contact with friend in Mexico		
Once a week or more		
Once a month or more	-0.12	-11%
Once every several months	-0.15	-14%
Never	-0.35*	-30%
Plan to go back to Mexico to live		
Yes		
No	-0.30**	-26%
Don't know	-0.20	-18%
Immigration status		
Naturalized		
Applied	0.11	11%

Table 4

Outcome	Appropriate to Vote in Mexican election?	
Plan to apply for citizenship	0.04	4%
No Plan to apply for citizenship	0.04	5%
Language of interview		
English		
Switched between English and Spanish	0.28	32%
Spanish only	0.28	33%
Highest education		
None	-0.02	-2%
Eight grade or below		
Some high school	-0.01	-1%
High school graduate	-0.15	-14%
Some college	-0.11	-10%
College graduate	-0.22	-20%
Graduate school	-0.07	-7%
Completed highest ed in US	0.32*	38%

Table 4

Outcome	Appropriate to Vote in Mexican election?	
Years in US	0.02	2%
Years in US (Squared)	-0.000403 [*]	0%
Relies mainly on English media	-0.58 ^{***}	-44%
Relies on bilingual media	-0.16	-15%
Don't know / no media reliance	-0.29	-25%
Knows which party is conservative	-0.06	-6%
Knew majority party in HseRep in 2006	0.03	3%
Know who won the 2004 presidential election in the state of residence	0.15	17%
Male	0.162 [*]	18%
Catholic	0.38 ^{***}	45%
Migration intensity of state of birth in Mexico		
Very Low		
Low	0.21	23%
Medium	0.29	33%

Table 4

Outcome	Appropriate to Vote in Mexican election?	
High	0.43**	54%
Very High	0.33*	39%
cut1		
Constant	-1.57***	
cut2		
Constant	-0.85*	
cut3		
Constant	0.47	
cut4		
Constant	1.44***	
Observations	2719	