

# Transnational Ties and Immigrant Political Incorporation: The Case of Dominicans in Washington Heights, New York<sup>1</sup>

Adrian D. Pantoja\*

## ABSTRACT

This study adds to the growing literature on transnational ties and our knowledge of the Dominican diaspora in New York City by analysing the impact of transborder ties on their political incorporation in the United States. Specifically, I analyse whether the “myth of return” or a belief among immigrants that they will return to the home country, having a transnational family, and participation in the politics of the Dominican Republic fosters or mitigates Dominican rates of naturalization and participation in US politics. The analysis is carried out through a unique survey of Dominicans residing in Washington Heights, New York City. The survey was randomly administered by telephone to 413 respondents between November and December 2003. A quota was included to ensure that half of the respondents were US citizens. The degree to which transnational ties foster or impede political incorporation is largely the result of how one defines and operationalizes political incorporation and transnational ties. When political incorporation is defined and measured by naturalization, two forms of transnational ties depressed its pursuit: (1) participation in the politics of the Dominican Republic and (2) having a transnational family. When incorporation is defined and measured by political participation: (1) participation in the politics of the Dominican Republic and (2) participation in hometown associations acted as catalysts. I find no evidence in support of the proposition that the “myth of return” exerts a powerful influence on immigrants’ decisions to naturalize or become politically engaged. The paper discusses the implications of the findings.

---

\* Department of Political Science, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona, USA.

## INTRODUCTION

Dominicans are one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States, rising from 170,817 in 1980 to 1,041,910 in 2000 (Hernández and Rivera-Batiz, 2003). By the decade's end, they are projected to overtake the Cuban population to become the third largest Latino group in the United States, after Mexicans and Puerto Ricans (Hernández and Rivera-Batiz, 2003). Studies on Dominicans characterize the diaspora as one that has sustained strong transnational ties with the homeland (DeSipio and Pantoja, 2004; Duany, 1994, 2002; Levitt, 2001; Pessar, 1995; Hendricks, 1974). A murky concept, transnational ties are often defined as “the process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Basch et al., 1994: 7). Although ties to the homeland are not unique to Dominicans and are not a new phenomenon (Morawska, 2001; Foner, 2000), it is argued that advances in technology facilitating communication and travel, increased economic and political ties between the United States and immigrant-sending countries, and intense outreach efforts by home countries to their diasporas have enabled immigrants to forge and sustain transnational links to a greater degree than immigrants from previous waves (Foner, 2001; Guarnizo, 2001).

The meaning and significance of transmigrant ties has become an emerging field, traversing many social science and humanities disciplines, with different scholars emphasizing different aspects of the transnational experience (Itzigsohn, 2000; Smith and Guarnizo, 1998; Glick-Schiller et al., 1995; Basch et al., 1994). The research has transformed our understanding of the immigrant experience by challenging the assumption that migration is a unidirectional process whereby uprooted migrants travel to a new country and begin a process of severing ties with the old country while developing closer ties with the new homeland. Yet, much of the extant literature on immigrant transnational ties analyses them along an economic (Portes and Guarnizo, 1991; Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991) or social-cultural dimension (Levitt, 1998; Duany, 1994) while marginally considering their political consequences (Jones-Correa, 2002; Graham, 1997).

This study adds to the growing literature on transnational ties and our knowledge of the Dominican diaspora in New York City by analysing the impact of transborder ties on their political incorporation in the United States. Specifically, I analyse whether the “myth of return”, or a belief among immigrants that they will return to the home country (Jones-Correa, 1998), having a transnational family, and participation in the politics of the Dominican Republic fosters or mitigates Dominican rates of naturalization and participation in US politics. The analysis is carried out through a unique survey of Dominicans residing in Wash-

ington Heights, New York. The survey was randomly administered by telephone to 413 respondents between November and December 2003. A quota was included to ensure that half of the respondents were US citizens. Among the sample, 87.9 per cent (363) completed the survey in Spanish. Unlike previous works on Dominicans which have largely been based on participant observation or interviews with a limited number of individuals, surveys with randomly selected samples have the advantage of allowing researchers to make more concrete generalizations about the population.

Beyond making generalizations about the Dominican population in Washington Heights, the data allow me to rigorously test two competing hypotheses on transnational ties and immigrant political incorporation. The first views transnational ties as incompatible with US political incorporation because they are argued to create a “transient mentality” among immigrants, leading them to devalue naturalization and/or political participation in the United States (Huntington, 2004; Torres-Saillant, 1989). An alternative hypothesis proffers that transnational ties co-exist and even foster US political incorporation. Research advocating this position argues that immigrants generally wish to stay connected with the ancestral homeland. Immigrants from countries that are supportive of transnational ties, such as offering dual nationality provisions, are more likely to seek US citizenship and participation in US politics because these latter activities will not lead to the severing of formal ties to the homeland (Jones-Correa, 1998, 2001). The converse is true of immigrants from countries that discourage the development of bi-national identities and loyalties. In this case, émigrés will be less inclined to pursue activities in the United States that may endanger their connections to the homeland.

This paper is divided into three sections. The first provides an overview of Dominican’s settlement patterns in the United States and their transnational political networks. The second section uses logistic and ordinary least squares regression analyses to test the effects of transnational networks on Dominican political incorporation in the United States. The final section discusses the implications of the findings.

## THE DOMINICAN DIASPORA IN THE UNITED STATES

The engine fueling Dominican’s demographic growth has been immigration. Migration from the Dominican Republic to the United States dramatically rose after the overthrow of the Trujillo dictatorship (1930-1961) and the easing of US immigration restrictions in 1965. The first wave of Dominican migrants came as a result of civil strife following Trujillo’s demise. Dominican migration

jumped from 9,897 in the 1950s to 93,292 in the 1960s (Duany, 2002). Among those leaving in the 1960s were middle-class Dominicans who were seeking to avoid becoming victims of political violence, and in an effort to stabilize the country, visas were granted to potential opponents of the US-backed regime (Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991). Since then, Dominican emigration has largely been motivated by economic push-pull factors and has risen dramatically. Between 1961 and 2000, 828,713 Dominicans legally immigrated to the United States. Estimates vary, but according to the former Immigration and Naturalization Service, 91,000 undocumented Dominicans reside in the country (US Immigration and Naturalization Service, 2001). While most Dominicans are immigrants, there is a rapidly growing second-generation. In 2000, one out of every three Dominicans (394,914) was born in the United States (for a detailed demographic overview of Dominicans see Hernández and Rivera-Batiz, 2003).

Migration is primarily network-driven and as a consequence immigrant groups are not randomly dispersed through the United States but live in well-defined immigrant/ethnic enclaves. New York City is home to 53 per cent of the diaspora in the United States or 552,212 Dominicans. The city has the second largest concentration of Dominicans outside of the Dominican capital of Santo Domingo. Within New York City, the largest settlement of Dominicans is in a neighbourhood in upper Manhattan known as Washington Heights. Despite negative media portrayals of Washington Heights, the enclave has a culturally and economically vibrant community with Dominican grocery stores known as *bodegas*, restaurants, travel agencies, money transfer agencies, *botánicas* or stores selling folk remedies, hometown clubs, street vendors, and newspapers/magazine stands which carry several daily newspapers from the Dominican Republic (researcher's field notes). Their entrepreneurial spirit in New York City is documented by Portes and Guarnizo (1991) who note that more than 20,000 businesses and 70 per cent of Hispanic *bodegas* are owned and operated by Dominicans. Recent census data reveal that the diaspora is establishing similar communities in Queens (New York), Boston (Massachusetts), Paterson (New Jersey), Providence (Rhode Island), Miami (Florida), and San Juan (Puerto Rico) (Hernández and Rivera-Batiz, 2003). Yet the heart of the Dominican diaspora in the United States remains in Washington Heights (Pessar, 1995; Duany, 1994, 2002).

Despite the creation of vibrant ethnic enclaves throughout the east coast, most Dominican immigrants, as with other immigrants, see their stay in the United States as temporary (Jones-Correa, 1998; Pessar, 1995). Since economic necessity is frequently the motivating factor for migration, many migrants plan on returning to the island after accumulating enough income to purchase a home, land, and/or start a business in the Dominican Republic (Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991). Although most never return, or return temporarily, Dominican migrants

are argued to hold on to this “myth of return” (Jones-Correa, 1998), prompting Grasmuck and Pessar to label their settlements as “permanently temporary”. The myth of return, revolving migration, along with ties of responsibility to family and community in the homeland are the foundation for transnational socio-economic and political ties (Basch et al., 1994). Because of this study’s focus, I review what is currently known about Dominican transnational political ties. The brief review highlights that “transnationalism from below”, or initiated by immigrants was quickly formalized from “above” by the home country.

### **Dominican transnational political participation**

The participation of Dominicans abroad in the politics of the Dominican Republic, while becoming more formalized in the last decade, is not new. During the Trujillo dictatorship (1930-1961), Dominican exiles in the United States and Caribbean organized opposition parties and engaged in activities designed to monitor and highlight the regime’s human rights abuses. With the end of the Trujillo dictatorship the governments of Joaquín Balaguer (Reform Party, 1966-1978) and Juan Antonio Guzmán (1978-1982) pursued a policy of benign neglect toward its émigrés despite the diaspora’s efforts to create more formal ties to the homeland. The policy of benign neglect came to a dramatic end in the 1980s when the volume and value of remittances boomed during a period of economic stagflation. For the Dominican Republic, remittances from abroad constituted the second largest source of foreign exchange behind tourism, which averaged close to US\$2 billion in 2000 (Duany, 2002). According to Lizardo (2001), about 19.4 per cent of all Dominican households receive remittances from abroad.

The election of Salvador Jorge Blanco in 1982 signalled a shift in policy toward the diaspora. Since the 1970s Dominicans in the United States wanted the Dominican Republic to recognize dual nationality and secure the right of immigrants to vote by absentee ballot in Dominican elections. The Dominican constitution stipulated that any national who obtained another nationality would lose their Dominican nationality. Recognizing the economic and growing political importance of the diaspora, Blanco was sympathetic to their request for an amendment recognizing dual nationality as well as expatriate voting. The diaspora had become an important source of campaign contributions to candidates and parties in the Dominican Republic. Some accounts suggest that as much as 10 to 15 per cent of overall party fundraising came from abroad (Graham, 1997). To varying degrees each of the three major political parties, the PRD (Partido Revolucionario Dominicano), PLD (Partido de la Liberación Dominicana), and PRSC (Partido Reformista Social Cristiano), have established offices in Dominican communities throughout the northeast. Although Blanco’s attempts to have the legislature change the constitution failed, it nonetheless

signalled the beginning of a new attitude and policy toward the diaspora. In 1990 the Senate formed the non-partisan Committee on the Affairs of Dominicans Living Abroad. Its principle aim was to explore the issue of dual nationality. Exchanges between this and other entities on the island and within the diaspora continued throughout the 1990s (Graham, 1997).

Hometown associations and political clubs within the diaspora proved to be instrumental in lobbying the Dominican Congress to extend the rights of dual nationality to *émigrés* (Jones-Correa, 2001). In 1996, the constitution was reformed to recognize dual nationality. A year later, Congress passed a bill allowing *émigrés* to participate in Dominican elections and hold elective office (Levitt, 2001). As a result of these reforms, New York City has the second largest concentration of Dominican voters outside of Santo Domingo. Political parties and candidates from the Dominican Republic routinely campaign in Washington Heights and other enclaves.

Dominican interest and participation in the politics of the homeland led scholars to initially view these ties as an impediment to being political incorporated in the United States (Dwyer, 1991; Torres-Saillant, 1989; Waldinger, 1986; Hendricks, 1974). For example, Dominicans' low rate of naturalization was frequently attributed to their strong ties to the homeland. Among the foreign-born, 67 per cent have yet to become US citizens (Castro and Boswell, 2002). More recent studies by Levitt (2001), Graham (1997), and Hernández and Jacobs (2001) challenge these conclusions by noting that transnational political participation co-exists and may in fact foster participation in US politics. Among the most cited example was the 1990 and 1991 pursuit by activists for a "Dominican" city council district (District 10) in Washington Heights. After securing the district in 1991, Guillermo Linares became the first Dominican in New York City's city council. Prior to this, Dominicans were making significant inroads into the school boards and political advisory boards in New York City and Massachusetts (Hernández and Jacobs, 2001). All of these political gains occurred while intense transnational ties were being forged and formalized.

We then have two competing claims on the effects of transnational political participation on the political incorporation of Dominicans, both of which have been reached through very similar methods: participant observations and in-depth interviews. Despite the rich insights generated by such methods, establishing the validity and reliability of their inferences as well as the ability to generalize findings is severely constrained.

To address these shortcomings, some political scientists have recently opted to use survey research methodologies in the exploration of immigrant transnational

political participation (Pantoja and DeSipio, 2004; DeSipio, 2003; Barreto and Muñoz, 2003; Jones-Correa, 2001). These studies challenge those based on participant observations in that they generally find that most immigrants are not engaged in transnational projects. The studies by DeSipio (2003) and Pantoja and DeSipio (2004) show that less than 20 per cent of immigrants establish socio-economic connections with their home countries after immigrating. Nonetheless, studies based on quantitative methodologies have also yielded inconclusive findings on the effects of transnational networks on immigrant political incorporation. For example, the study by Jones-Correa finds that Latin American immigrants from countries offering dual nationality had a higher propensity to naturalize, while Yang (1994) finds that it has a depressing effect on naturalization. Regarding political participation, DeSipio observes that certain measures of transnationalism are positively associated with immigrants' desire to remain in the United States, participate in civic organizations, and naturalize. Yet, his findings are also tempered by those of Barreto and Muñoz (2003) who note that among Mexican American immigrants traditional determinants of voter participation exert a greater influence than transnational forces.

While it is true that most immigrants are not engaged in transnational projects, survey data has shown Dominicans to be on average more transnationally engaged vis-à-vis other Latin American/Caribbean migrants (Pantoja and DeSipio, 2004). This involvement even surpasses that of Puerto Ricans, a population long noted for having intense circular migration and ties to the island (Duany, 2002; Rodriguez, 1993). Dominicans' strong ties to the homeland coupled with high levels of immigration warrants a closer examination of this population because their experiences can provide insights into other emerging immigrant groups who are in the process of developing and strengthening transnational ties. To that end, I next turn to discussing the data.

## DATA AND ANALYSES

Political incorporation is a value-laden concept whose meaning and measurement is subject to contestation. Various political attitudes, beliefs, orientations, and behaviours have been used as measures of political incorporation. What is clear is that the degree to which individuals or groups are politically incorporated is largely based on whether one employs an expansive or narrow definition of politics (Jones-Correa, 2002). Here, I use two popular behavioural measures of political incorporation used by political scientists: (1) naturalization and (2) political participation (Barreto and Muñoz, 2003; Espenshade and Ramakrishnan, 2001; Jones-Correa, 1998; DeSipio, 1996). The decision to naturalize is part of a broader attachment to the values and political institutions of the United States

(Alvarez, 1987). Acquiring US citizenship is not merely a symbolic act, but “confers on the naturalized citizen the full set of rights and responsibilities of native-born American citizens” (Pachon and DeSipio, 1994: 6), among them is the right to vote and hold public office (except the presidency and vice presidency). The lack of US citizenship among Latinos is considered to be the single most important factor behind their low rates of electoral participation and may lessen involvement in non-electoral activities (DeSipio, 1996).

As noted, the survey was randomly administered by telephone to 413 adult Dominicans residing in Washington Heights, New York, between November and December 2003. In the survey, a quota was included to balance the sample between citizens and non-citizens. Of the 413 respondents, 367 (88.9%) were born in the Dominican Republic.<sup>2</sup> Of these respondents, 168 or (45.8%) are naturalized and of the 182 who are legal permanent residents, 150 or (82.4%) plan to seek US citizenship. The large number of Dominicans intending to naturalize is not surprising. Similar findings are reported in the National Latino Immigrant Survey (NLIS). Yet, despite these claims, Latinos are among the slowest to naturalize. In the multivariate model predicting naturalization, respondents who were born in the United States and those who are ineligible for naturalization, e.g. living in the United States less than five years, are dropped from the analysis, yielding a smaller sample size in the first model. The dependent variable *US Naturalization* is dichotomous, 1 for naturalized citizens and 0 for non-citizens.

A lack of citizenship, a critical prerequisite for voting, does not necessarily preclude participation in other political activities. These participatory political expressions can include but are not limited to canvassing, making monetary contributions, and voicing concern over an issue or supporting a candidate by displaying political materials or attending rallies (Garcia and Arce, 1988). The paper goes beyond analysing immigrants’ propensity to vote (Barreto and Muñoz, 2003) or participation in US civic organizations (DeSipio, 2003) by considering a wider range of political activities. The survey includes six questions tapping political participation in New York City and US politics. Specifically, respondents were asked if they had engaged in any of the six political activities shown in Table 1 in the past three years. Responses are divided according to citizenship status.

The results show that respondents generally were most likely to have worked with others to solve a city or neighbourhood problem (37.8%) and were least likely to contribute money to a US candidate (7%). Close to 29 per cent of Dominicans indicated signing a petition while smaller numbers, about 20 per cent, had engaged in contacting an elected or public official, displaying a political sign or attending a political rally. Despite the fact that non-citizens can participate in



these activities, the data show that they are less likely than citizens to be engaged in each of the six political activities. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test reveals that the mean difference between citizens and non-citizens overall is statistically significant ( $F 17.58$ ,  $prob > 0.000$ ). Finally, differences between citizens and non-citizens among each of the political activities, with the exception of making monetary contributions, are statistically significant. The six questions are summed to create the second dependent variable, *US Political Participation*. The variable has a Cornbach's Alpha reliability scale of .887.

TABLE 1  
DOMINICAN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION  
IN NEW YORK CITY AND US POLITICS (YES RESPONSES)

	Citizens	Non-citizens	Total
Signed a petition regarding an issue or problem that concerns you?	18.2% (75)	10.4% (43)	28.6% (118)
Written or called a New York City public official or United States public official about a concern or problem?	14.3% (59)	6% (25)	20.3% (84)
Worn a campaign button, put a political sticker on your car or sign in your window or in front of your house on behalf of a New York City candidate or United States candidate?	15% (61)	7% (28)	21% (89)
Gone to any political meetings, rallies, or speeches over a political issue, a New York City candidate, or a United States candidate?	13.1% (54)	7% (30)	20.3% (84)
Contributed money to a New York City candidate, United States candidate or political party?	5% (19)	2% (10)	7.0% (29)
Worked with others to try to solve some problem affecting the city or neighbourhood?	22.5% (93)	15% (63)	37.8% (156)
Mean Level of Political Participation	1.72 (1.78)	1.02 (1.52)	1.37 (1.69)

Note:  $n= 413$  respondents.

In order to understand the factors that foster or mitigate political incorporation among Dominicans in Washington Heights, I use multivariate analyses to isolate the relevant predictors and assess their relative causal importance. The *US Naturalization* model includes 11 predictors. Five predictors fall under the cat-

egory of individual demographic characteristics. These include a respondent's age, education, income, sex, marital status, and length of residency. The variable *Age* is a continuous variable ranging from 18 to 86 years. *Education* is a categorical variable with 0 for "No schooling to Grade 8", (1) for "Some high school (Grade 9-12)", (2) "High school graduate", (3) "Some college/vocational (technical) school", (4) "College graduate (BA, BS)", and (5) for "Graduate degree (MA, MS, Ph.D., MD, JD, etc)". The variable *Income* is an eight-point scale: (0) Less than \$20,000, (1) \$20,000-\$30,000, (2) \$30,000-\$40,000, (3) \$40,000-\$50,000, (4) \$50,000-\$60,000, (5) \$60,000-\$70,000, (6) \$80,000-\$90,000, and (7) Greater than \$90,000. The variable *Married* is dichotomous, 1 for married individuals and 0 for all others. *Length of Residency* measures the length in years of continuous residency in the United States among the foreign born. The variable *Sex* is a dichotomous variable with 1 for "female" and 0 for "male." *Age*, *Education*, *Income*, *Married*, *Length of Residency* and being a female are hypothesized to be positively related to naturalization (DeSipio, 1996; Yang, 1994; Garcia, 1981).

A variable measuring discrimination toward Dominicans is included. Responses range from 0 "not at all" to 3 "a lot." Experience with discrimination has been found to foster naturalization and civic engagement among Latinos (DeSipio, 2003; Wrinkle et al., 1996). Experience(s) with discrimination serves to enhance ethnic conscious, a critical resource for ethnic/racial political engagement (Dawson, 1994; Uhlaner, 1991). Also, and specific to naturalization, discrimination may foster a sense of vulnerability leading immigrants to seek citizenship in order to enhance their legal rights and social standing, both of which can reduce overt acts of discrimination. Among the sample, 51 per cent indicated there was "some" to "a lot" of discrimination against Dominicans.

The variables listed above serve mainly as controls to the variables measuring transnational ties. Four variables capture transnational ties among Dominicans. The first captures Jones-Correa's (1998) "myth of return". Respondents were asked: "How likely is it that you will return to the Dominican Republic to live..." The variable takes on a four-point range with (0) for "Not at all likely", (1) "Not very likely", (2) "Somewhat likely", and (3) for "Very likely". In the survey, 49 per cent of respondents indicated they were "somewhat" to "very likely" to return to the Dominican Republic. Two of the variables are direct measures of involvement in transnational political activities which may have been engaged in during the past three years. The first measures whether a respondent is a member of an "organization or club that is *mostly* concerned with issues in the Dominican Republic" (*italics my own*). In the sample, 17.4 per cent of respondents were active in a hometown association. The second asks whether the person has helped a candidate or political party win office in the Dominican Republic

through donations, campaigning, voting, or some other political activity. Twenty per cent of respondents stated they had engaged in transborder political activities. The variables *Home Country Association* and *DR Political Participation* are dichotomous variables with 1 for engaged respondents and 0 for respondents who are not engaged in these activities. Finally, I include a variable measuring the presence of a transnational family. Specifically, I ask whether most of their family resides in the United States or the Dominican Republic. The variable *Family in DR* is dichotomous, 1 for respondents' whose families mostly reside in the Dominican Republic and 0 for families who mostly reside in the United States. Thirty per cent of respondents had most of the family living in the Dominican Republic. As previously discussed in the review of the literature, little consensus exists over the impact these variables will have on Dominican political incorporation.

The *US Political Participation* model includes 15 predictors, nine of which are used in the *US Naturalization* model. Among the standard predictors associated with political participation are individual demographic characteristics. These include a respondent's age, education, income, marital status, and sex. Respondents who are older, have higher rates of education and income participate at rates higher than those who are younger or have lower socio-economic and educational statuses (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980). Resourced-based explanations for political participation are well supported by studies on Latino political behaviour (Highton and Burris, 2002; Pantoja et al., 2001; Arvizu and Garcia, 1996). The impact of being female or married on political participation is less certain. While a gender gap in political participation is well documented, more recent studies show a narrowing or disappearance of a gender gap in political participation. In other words, after controlling for socio-economic status and other characteristics, men and women participate at similar rates (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993). Yet, these conclusions are largely based on surveys sampling non-Hispanic whites. The degree to which Latinas participate at rates comparable to Latinos is an open question, some finding a positive relationship (Leal, 2002; Wrinkle et al., 1996), others a negative (Lein, 1998) or no relationship (Santoro and Segura, 2003). Quantitative studies generally find little to no connection between being married and participating in politics (Verba et al., 1995; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980), however, some qualitative research finds that politically active Latina women are often single (Hardy-Fanta, 1993).

Two additional demographic variables are included, *US Citizenship*, a dichotomous variable (1 = US citizen and 0 = non-citizen) and *Length of Residency*. *US Citizenship* has been associated with higher rates of electoral and non-electoral political engagement and is anticipated to be positively associated with political participation (Leal, 2002). *Length of Residency* is frequently used as a

proxy measuring a familiarity and socialization with US political processes. Length of residency is hypothesized to be positively associated with higher rates of political participation (DeSipio, 1996; Uhlaner et al., 1989).

The variables *Discrimination*, *Myth of Return*, *Home Country Association*, *DR Political Participation*, and *Family in DR* are included in the model. For reasons previously noted, *Discrimination* is anticipated to have a positive effect on political participation. I remain agnostic as to the effects the four variables measuring transnational ties will have on Dominican political participation.

Three other exogenous variables not included in the first model are frequently used to tap respondents' attitudinal orientations toward political engagement. These include a measure capturing how actively a respondent follows politics and public affairs in the United States. *Follows US Politics* is based on a four-point scale ranging from 0 "never" to 3 "most of the time". Individuals who closely monitor political affairs typically display high rates of political participation (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996). Variables measuring internal political efficacy and external political efficacy are included and are also associated with high rates of political engagement. Internal political efficacy can be defined as "a sense of personal competence in one's ability to understand politics" while external political efficacy can be defined as "a sense that one's political activities can influence what the government actually does" (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993: 15). To measure internal political efficacy, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: "Sometimes the politics and government of the United States seem to be so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on". External political efficacy is measured by the following question: "People like me don't have any say about what the United States Government does". Both are coded on a five-point scale, capturing the *inefficacious* response, or 0 "strongly disagree" to 4 "strongly agree". Hence, the variables are labelled *Internal Inefficacy* and *External Inefficacy*.

Table 2 reports the results of the multivariate estimations. Since the dependent variable *US Naturalization* (Model I) is dichotomous, logistic analysis is used to estimate the impact of the predictors. Because logistic coefficients are not directly interpretable, the second column reports the changes in the predicted probabilities. Essentially, this provides the probability of a change in the dependent variable as a result of the minimum to maximum change in the independent variable (Long, 1997). Overall, the model correctly predicts 77 per cent of the cases and has a proportional reduction of error (PRE, Lambda-p) of .539. As is readily apparent, the demographic variables work as expected, four of the six demographic predictors are significant in the model. Higher rates of education and income were associated with higher rates of naturalization. Moving from the lowest to highest value in education results in a 42 per cent increase in the

probability of naturalizing while a change in income from the lowest to highest value results in a 40 per cent increase. Individuals who have resided for long periods in the United States were also more likely to be naturalized. The variable yields the strongest impact – 63 per cent. All else being equal, women were more likely, by 34 per cent, to pursue naturalization than men. The finding is consistent with qualitative research on Caribbean and Latin American transmigration which finds women are more likely to favour staying in the United States because of greater economic mobility and social freedoms (Levitt, 2001; Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991; Pessar, 1987). Finally, individuals who perceived Dominicans to experience high levels of discrimination were also likely to seek US citizenship. As noted, citizenship may be rightly perceived to provide a buffer against future acts discrimination.

Turning to the variables measuring transnational ties, it is evident that individuals who are active in the politics of the Dominican Republic and have most of their families in the Dominican Republic are less likely to pursue US citizenship, *ceteris paribus*. Having ones family mostly abroad reduces the probability of naturalizing by 25 per cent while participating in the politics of the home country reduces naturalization by 28 per cent. The effects of having one's family residing primarily in the Dominican Republic on naturalization seem obvious. Ties and obligations to family in the home country will likely lead transmigrants to see themselves as sojourners and therefore less likely to pursue US citizenship. This finding is consistent with research on immigrant remittances, which finds that transnational ties in the form of money transfers abroad decline as more members of the household join the émigré in the United States (Menjívar et al., 1998). Less clear are the reasons why participation in the politics of the Dominican Republic depresses naturalization since having dual nationality means that naturalized Dominicans are not prevented from participating in the political life of the Dominican Republic. Perhaps participation in the politics of the Dominican Republic while residing in the United States is driven by a deep affection toward the island and this in turn may lead these individuals to devalue US citizenship since its pursuit also entails a high level of affection and commitment to the United States (Yang, 1994). Also, among those who are politically active it may be that acquiring US citizenship is seen by them and others as a betrayal of the *patria* or homeland (Jones-Correa, 1998). After all, these individuals will have greater contact with politicians from the home country, individuals who for personal or strategic reasons are likely to hold and transmit strong feelings of patriotism and nationalism. These of course are inferences and more rigorous analysis is needed before definitive conclusions can be made. The findings in Model I seem to support the critics of migrant transnationalism who argue that transnational ties prevent immigrants from deepening their ties to the host country. Before discussing the implications of these findings in greater detail, I will discuss the results found in Model II, estimating the determinants of political participation.

TABLE 2  
DETERMINANTS OF NATURALIZATION AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION  
AMONG DOMINICANS IN WASHINGTON HEIGHTS

	Model I		Model II	
		Predicted probabilities min>max		Standardized beta
Age	.019 (.015)	.318	.003* (.009)	.024
Education	.363*** (.136)	.425	.159* (.085)	.115
Income	.264** (.122)	.318	.130 (.069)	.116
Married	.074 (.446)	.018	-.317† (.213)	-.087
Length of residency	.057*** (.017)	.632	.013 (.012)	.081
Sex (female)	1.424*** (.343)	.341	.051 (.217)	.014
US citizenship	-		.049 (.254)	.013
Discrimination	.240† (.160)	.177	-.048 (.100)	-.028
Ideology of return	-.063 (.158)	-.047	.086 (.096)	.053
Home country association	-.102 (.468)	-.025	1.244*** (.285)	.276
DR political participation	-1.188** (.477)	-.281	.528* (.266)	.127
Family in DR	-1.045*** (.366)	-.252	-.211 (.229)	-.053
Follows US politics	-		.354*** (.099)	.212
Internal inefficacy	-		-.175** (.075)	-.141
External inefficacy	-		-.048 (.074)	-.038
Constant	-3.678*** (9.64)		.261 (.543)	
Model test	Chi <sup>2</sup> =94.08		R <sup>2</sup> =.320	
Significance	.000		.000	
PPC	77.02			
PRE	.539			
Sample size	235		240	

Note: Significance levels: †  $p < .075$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , two-tailed.

The estimations in Model II are derived from OLS regression analysis.<sup>3</sup> Overall, the model accounts for 32 per cent of the variance. Beyond reporting the coefficients with their standard errors, standardized beta coefficients are included to assess the relative impact of each variable. The results support the resource model of political participation. Individuals who are older and have higher levels of education are more likely to participate politically in New York City and US politics. It is no surprise that among the demographic variables education exerts the strongest influence. The model also shows that being married has a depressing effect on political participation. This result is likely driven by the nature of the political activities studied. Non-electoral or participatory political activities are more labour and time intensive than voting, which is why fewer individuals engage in these activities (Verba et al., 1995). Consequently, individuals who are married are less likely to have the time, and perhaps discretionary monetary resources, to devote to these activities. This proposition is supported by qualitative research on participatory political expressions in Latino communities (Cruz, 1998; Hardy-Fanta, 1993). As anticipated, following US political affairs had a positive affect on political participation while having low levels of internal efficacy had a depressing effect. Although bi-variate comparisons in political behaviour reveal statistically significant differences among citizens and non-citizens (Table 1), the multivariate results show that these differences disappear once additional controls are taken into account (Barreto and Muñoz, 2003).

Against this background, what impact do transnational ties have on political participation? It is evident that belonging to an association concerned with events in the Dominican Republic and participation in the politics of the Dominican Republic exert a powerful positive influence on US political participation. In fact, the former is the strongest predictor of political participation. Why might participation in transnational politics coexist with and reinforce political participation in the United States? Beyond socio-demographic factors, political participation is strongly influenced by the presence of certain psychological orientations and civic/political skills. These orientations and skills are often transmitted through participation in civic organizations and non-political associations (Verba et al., 1995). It is likely that participation in hometown associations transmits skills to members which enable them to engage in higher rates of US political activities. Finally, the skills acquired through participation in transnational politics clearly carry over into US politics. The model demonstrates that participation in transnational politics is positively correlated with participation in US politics. Having a transnational family or the myth of return did not affect levels of political engagement.

Taken together, the results show that transnational ties can simultaneously foster and mitigate Dominican political incorporation. The degree to which either

occurs is largely the result of how one defines and operationalizes political incorporation and transnational ties. When political incorporation is defined and measured by naturalization, two forms of transnational ties depressed its pursuit: (1) participation in the politics of the Dominican Republic and (2) having a transnational family. When incorporation is defined and measured by political participation, (1) participation in the politics of the Dominican Republic and (2) participation in hometown associations acted as catalysts. Finally, I find no evidence in support of the proposition that the “myth of return” exerts a powerful influence on immigrants’ decisions to naturalize or become politically engaged. Why participation in the politics of the home country had mixed effects on incorporation is unclear at present. What is clear is that future studies must consider the attitudinal underpinnings of transnational political participation in order to identify whether certain beliefs, values, or orientations found to influence political participation in the home country simultaneously depress the pursuit of citizenship in the host country. Because naturalization is a critical first step toward participating in formal politics because it grants the right to vote, it may appear at first glance that transnational ties on the whole are an impediment toward immigrant political incorporation. Yet, because certain forms of transnational engagement foster participation in non-electoral activities, these latter activities may lead immigrants to desire a greater voice in politics through voting. Hence, transnational ties may have an *indirect* impact on citizenship acquisition and are on the whole catalysts for immigrant political incorporation.

## DISCUSSION

The decade of the 1990s witnessed, to date, the largest number of immigrants admitted to the United States (9,095,417). Previously the largest wave occurred between 1901 and 1910 when 8,795,386 immigrants entered the country (US Immigration and Naturalization Service, 2001). Much of the growth is the result of immigration from Latin America. Among the 38 million Latinos in the United States, 40 per cent are immigrants. The degree to which the large numbers of Latino and non-Latino immigrants are incorporated into the civic and political life of the nation will be one of the biggest challenges facing the United States into the twenty-first century. Consequently, there is renewed interest among political scientists to study the forces that impede or foster immigrant political incorporation. Traditionally this research has looked to past research and the experience of previous immigrations to explain the low rates of naturalization and civic/political participation found among Latin American immigrants. While much has been gained by these studies, they nonetheless present an incomplete picture of the dynamics of immigrant incorporation since they largely ignore the role of transborder networks in the immigration experience.



In recent years, transmigration research has gained greater prominence in political science research. At its core, the debate in this literature centres on whether transnational ties are an impediment or conduit for political engagement and incorporation. The growth of the Dominican diaspora in the United States, along with their intense ties to the homeland offers an opportunity to explore the nexus between transborder ties and immigrant political incorporation among an emerging minority group. Rather than resolving the debate between those who argue transborder ties are an impediment toward US political engagement and those who argue the converse, the results here present a more complex picture by supporting both perspectives. It finds that certain types of transnational ties simultaneously impede and foster certain measures of political incorporation. In short, the pathways to immigrant political incorporation vary across different conceptualizations of transnationalism and political incorporation.

Whether these findings can be generalized to other groups in other settings is an open question. Because of the diverse characteristics, experiences, and histories of contemporary immigrant groups, it may be that there are multiple routes to political incorporation and that the effects of transnational ties on the incorporation of immigrants will be equally varied. Yet, there remains a lacuna of comparative studies on immigrant political participation because of the absence of reliable multilingual, cross-cultural survey data. Unfortunately multilingual, cross-cultural surveys on immigrants are not underway. Until this research is undertaken policies aimed at incorporating contemporary immigrants are likely to be guided by false assumptions and faulty comparisons which in the end may do little to bring in those on the outside.

## NOTES

1. The study was made possible through a grant from the University of Connecticut. The author wishes to thank the anonymous reviewers for their comments and in particular Ramona Hernández, Director of the Dominican Studies Institute at City University of New York, for her invaluable assistance. Finally, my research assistants, Susana Ulloa and Rosemary Diaz, were my eyes and ears in New York City. All results and conclusions are solely the responsibility of the author.
2. While this distribution mirrors official Census figures (Hernández and Rivera Batiz, 2003), it should be noted that official figures on this population are frequently questioned by scholars. As a result, the data in this analysis is not weighted.
3. Technically, the dependent variable in Model II is not continuous but ordered. This implies that, for all observations, the dependent variable can take on only a limited number of discrete values rather than the infinite possible values within

the range. The analysis is re-estimated using ordered logistic analysis. Because the results are essentially unchanged, the OLS regressions are reported, but the ordered logistic results are available upon request.

## REFERENCES

- Alvarez, R.  
1987 "A profile of the citizenship process among Hispanics in the United States", *International Migration Review*, 21(2): 327-351.
- Arvizu, J., and F.C. Garcia  
1996 "Latino voting participation: explaining and differentiating Latino voting turnout", *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 18(2): 104-128.
- Barreto, M., and J. Muñoz  
2003 "Reexamining the 'politics of in-between': political participation among Mexican immigrants in the United States", *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 25(4): 427-447.
- Basch, L., et al.  
1994 *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States*, Gordon and Breach Publishers, Basel, Switzerland.
- Castro, M., and T. Boswell  
2002 "The Dominican diaspora revisited: Dominicans and Dominican-Americans in a new century", *The North-South Agenda*, no. 53, University of Miami.
- Cruz, J.E.  
1998 *Identity and Power: Puerto Rican Politics and the Challenge of Ethnicity*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia.
- Dawson, M.  
1994 *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African-American Politics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Delli Carpini, M.X., and S. Keeter  
1996 *What Americans Know about Politics and Why it Matters*, Yale University Press, New Haven.
- DeSipio, L.  
1996 *Counting on the Latino Vote: Latinos as a New Electorate*, University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville.  
2003 "Learning there and doing here: transnational politics and civic engagement among Latino migrants", paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia.
- DeSipio, L., and A.D. Pantoja  
2004 "Puerto Rican exceptionalism? A comparative analysis of Puerto Rican, Mexican, Salvadoran and Dominican transnational civic and political ties", presented at Latino Politics: The State of the Discipline, Texas A&M, College Station, 30 April - 1 May.

- Duany, J.  
 1994 *Quisqueya on the Hudson: The Transnational Identity of Dominicans in Washington Heights*, The CUNY Dominican Studies Institute, Dominican Research Monographs.
- 2002a *The Puerto Rican Nation on the Move, Identities on the Island and in the United States*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.
- 2002b “‘Los países’: transnational migration from the Dominican Republic to the United States”, paper presented at the seminar on Migration and Development; Focus on the Dominican Republic, sponsored by the Migration Dialogue, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 7-9 March.
- Dwyer, C.  
 1991 *The Dominican Americans*, Chelsea House, New York.
- Espenshade, T.J., and S.K. Ramakrishnan  
 2001 “Immigrant incorporation and political participation in the United States”, *International Migration Review*, 35(3): 870-909.
- Foner, N.  
 2000 *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York's Two Great Waves of Immigration*, Yale University Press, New Haven.
- 2001 “Transnationalism then and now: New York immigrants today and at the turn of the twentieth century”, in H.R. Cordero-Guzman, et al. (Eds), *Migration, Transnationalization, and Race in a Changing New York*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 35-57.
- Garcia, J.A.  
 1981 “Political integration of Mexican immigrants: explorations into the naturalization process”, *International Migration Review*, 15(4): 608-625.
- Garcia, J.A., and C.H. Arce  
 1988 “Political orientations and behaviors of Chicanos: trying to make sense out of attitudes and participation”, in F. Chris Garcia (Ed.), *Latinos in the Political System*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame: 125-151.
- Glick-Schiller, N., et al.  
 1995 “From immigrant to transmigrant: theorizing transnational migration”, *Anthropological Quarterly*, 68: 48-63.
- Graham, P.M.  
 1997 “Reimagining the nation and defining the district: Dominican migration and transnational politics”, in P. Pessar (Ed.), *Caribbean Circuits, New Directions in the Study of Caribbean Migration*, Center for Migration Studies, New York: 91-125.
- Grasmuck, S., and P. Pessar  
 1991 *Between Two Islands: Dominican International Migration*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Guarnizo, L.E.  
 2001 “On the political participation of transnational migrants: old practices and new trends”, in G. Gerstle and J. Mollenkopf (Eds), *E Pluribus Unum? Contemporary and Historical Perspectives on Immigrant Political Incorporation*, Russell Sage Foundation, New York: 213-263.

- Hardy-Fanta, C.  
 1993 *Latina Politics, Latino Politics*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia.
- Hendricks, G.  
 1974 *The Dominican Diaspora: From the Dominican Republic to New York City: Villagers in Transition*, Teacher's College Press, Columbia University, New York.
- Hernández, R., and G. Jacobs  
 2001 "Beyond homeland politics, Dominicans in Massachusetts", in C. Hardy-Fanta and J.N. Gerson (Eds), *Latino Politics in Massachusetts, Struggles, Strategies, and Prospects*, Routledge, New York: 277-295.
- Hernández, R., and F.L. Rivera-Batiz  
 2003 *Dominicans in the United States: A Socioeconomic Profile, 2000*, The CUNY Dominican Studies Institute, Dominican Research Monographs.
- Highton, B., and A.L. Burris  
 2002 "New perspectives on Latino voter turnout in the United States", *American Politics Research*, 30(3): 285-306.
- Huntington, S.P.  
 2004 *Who are We? The Challenges to American National Identity*, Simon and Schuster, New York.
- Itzigsohn, J.  
 2000 "Immigration and the boundaries of citizenship: the institutions of immigrants' political transnationalism", *International Migration Review*, 34(4): 1126-1154.
- Jones-Correa, M.  
 1998 *Between Two Nations: The Political Predicament of Latinos in New York City*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca.  
 2001 "Under two flags: dual nationality in Latin America and its consequences for naturalization in the United States", *International Migration Review*, 35(4): 997-1029.  
 2002 "Bringing outsiders in: questions of immigrant incorporation", paper prepared for the Conference on the Politics of Democratic Inclusion, University of Notre Dame, 17-19 October.
- Leal, D.L.  
 2002 "Political participation by Latino non-citizens in the United States", *British Journal of Political Science*, 32: 353-370.
- Lein, P.T.  
 1998 "Does the gender gap in political attitudes and behavior vary across racial groups?", *Political Research Quarterly*, 51(4): 869-894.
- Levitt, P.  
 1998 "Social remittances: migration driven local-level forms of cultural diffusion", *International Migration Review*, 32(4): 926-948.  
 2001 *The Transnational Villagers*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Lizardo, F.  
 2001 *Altas Remesas En Los Ultimos Años*, <http://www.intec.edu.do/~indes>.
- Long, J.S.  
 1997 *Regression Models for Categorical and Limited Dependent Variables*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, California.

- Menjivar, C., et al.  
1998 "Remittance behavior among Salvadoran and Filipino immigrants in Los Angeles", *International Migration Review*, 32(1): 97-126.
- Morawska, E.  
2001 "Immigrants, transnationalism and ethnicization: a comparison of this great wave and the last", in G. Gerstle and J. Mollenkopf, *E Pluribus Unum? Contemporary and Historical Perspectives on Immigrant Political Incorporation*, Russell Sage Foundation, New York: 175-212.
- Pachon, H., and L. DeSipio  
1994 *New Americans by Choice: Political Perspectives of Latino Immigrants*, Westview Press, Boulder.
- Pantoja, A., et al.  
2001 "Citizens by choice, voters by necessity: patterns in political mobilization by naturalized Latinos", *Political Research Quarterly*, 54(4): 729-750.
- Pessar, P.R.  
1987 "The Dominicans: women in the household and the garment industry", in N. Foner (Ed.), *New Immigrants in New York*, Cornell University Press, New York: 103-129.  
1995 *A Visa for a Dream, Dominicans in the United States*, Allyn and Bacon, Boston.
- Portes, A., and L.E. Guarnizo  
1991 "Tropical capitalists: US-bound immigration and small-enterprise development in the Dominican Republic", in S. Diaz-Briquets and S. Weintraub (Eds), *Migration, Remittances and Small Business Development*, Westview Press, Boulder: 103-131.
- Rodriguez, C.E.  
1993 "Puerto Rican circular migration: revisited", *Latino Studies Journal*, 4(2): 93-113.
- Rosenstone, S.J., and J.M. Hansen  
1993 *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America*, Macmillan Publishing Company, New York.
- Santoro, W.A., and G.M. Segura  
2004 "Generation, assimilation, and Mexican American participation in ethnic and non-ethnic political activity", paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago.
- Smith, M.P., and L. Guarnizo (Eds)  
1998 *Transnationalism from Below*, Comparative Urban and Community Research, volume 6, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, New Jersey and London.
- Torres-Saillant, S.  
1989 "Dominicans as a New York community: a social appraisal", *Punto 7 Review: A Journal of Marginal Discourse*, 2(1): 7-25.
- Uhlener, C.J.  
1991 "Perceived discrimination and prejudice and the coalition prospects of Blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans", in B.O. Jackson and M.B. Preston (Eds), *Racial and Ethnic Politics in California*, IGS Press, Berkeley: 339-371.

- Uhlener, C.J., et al.  
1989 "Political participation of ethnic minorities in the 1980s", *Political Behavior*, 11(3): 195-231.
- US Immigration and Naturalization Service  
2001 *Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*, National Technical Information Service, Springfield, Virginia.
- Verba, S., et al.  
1995 *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge.
- Waldinger, R.  
1986 *Through the Eye of the Needle: Immigrants and Enterprise in New York's Garment Trade*, New York University Press, New York.
- Wolfinger, R.E., and S.J. Rosenstone  
1980 *Who Votes?* Yale University Press, New Haven.
- Wrinkle, R.D., et al.  
1996 "Ethnicity and nonelectoral political participation", *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 18(2): 142-153.
- Yang, P.Q.  
1994 "Explaining immigrant naturalization", *International Migration Review*, 28(3): 449-477.

ATTACHES TRANSNATIONALES ET INTÉGRATION POLITIQUE  
DES IMMIGRANTS : LE CAS DES DOMINICAINS  
DE WASHINGTON HEIGHTS, À NEW YORK

Cette étude vient enrichir les publications de plus en plus nombreuses sur les attaches transnationales et nos connaissances sur la diaspora dominicaine établie à New York, par une analyse de l'incidence des attaches transfrontalières sur l'intégration politique de cette diaspora aux États-Unis. Nous nous penchons sur la question de savoir si le « mythe du retour » ou la conviction des immigrants qu'ils vont rentrer dans leur pays d'origine parce qu'ils ont une famille transnationale, et la participation à la politique de la République dominicaine encouragent ou limitent, chez les Dominicains, les taux de naturalisation et de participation à la politique des États-Unis. L'analyse s'appuie sur une enquête unique menée auprès des Dominicains habitant le quartier de Washington Heights, à New York. L'enquête aléatoire a été menée par téléphone auprès de 413 personnes entre novembre et décembre 2003. Un quota a été introduit pour garantir que la moitié des personnes sondées avaient la citoyenneté américaine. Jusqu'à quel point les attaches transnationales encouragent ou limitent l'intégration politique dépend en grande partie de la façon dont on définit et traduit en termes opérationnels l'intégration politique et les attaches transnationales. Lorsque l'intégration politique est définie et mesurée par la naturalisation, deux formes d'attaches transnationales font diminuer la recherche de cette naturalisation : (1) la participation à la politique de la République dominicaine ; (2) le fait d'avoir une famille transnationale. Lorsque l'intégration politique est définie et mesurée par la participation politique : (1) la participation à la politique de la République dominicaine, et (2) la participation à des associations de la ville d'origine servaient de catalyseurs. Nous n'avons rien trouvé qui prouve que le postulat du « mythe du retour » exerce une forte influence sur la décision des immigrants de se faire naturaliser ou de s'engager politiquement. L'article commente les implications de ces résultats.

## VÍNCULOS TRANSNACIONALES E INCORPORACIÓN POLÍTICA DE LOS INMIGRANTES: EL CASO DE LOS DOMINICANOS EN WASHINGTON HEIGHTS, NUEVA YORK

Este estudio complementa la creciente literatura sobre los vínculos transnacionales y nuestro conocimiento de la diáspora dominicana en la ciudad de Nueva York al analizar las repercusiones de los vínculos transfronterizos en su incorporación en el ámbito político en los Estados Unidos. Concretamente, se examina el “mito del retorno” o creencia entre los inmigrantes de que retornarán al país de origen, teniendo una familia transnacional, y si la participación en la política de la República Dominicana fomenta o reduce las tasas de naturalización de los dominicanos y su participación en la política en los Estados Unidos. Este análisis se realiza a través de una encuesta única de los dominicanos residentes en Washington Heights, en la ciudad de Nueva York. Se trata de una encuesta telefónica aleatoria efectuada a 413 personas, entre noviembre y diciembre de 2003. En dicha encuesta, se estipuló un cupo para cerciorarse de que la mitad de los encuestados fueran ciudadanos estadounidenses. El grado en que los vínculos transnacionales fomentan o impiden la incorporación política depende principalmente de cómo se define y traduce la incorporación política y los vínculos transnacionales. Cuando la incorporación política se define y cuantifica por la naturalización, hay dos formas de vínculos nacionales que impiden dicha incorporación: (1) la participación en la política de la República Dominicana y (2) el tener una familia transnacional. Cuando la incorporación se define y cuantifica por participación política: (1) participación en las políticas de la República Dominicana y (2) participación en asociaciones comunitarias que hacen las veces de catalizadores. No se han encontrado pruebas que corroboren la propuesta de que el “mito del retorno” ejerce una influencia poderosa en las decisiones de los emigrantes de naturalizarse o participar activamente en la vida política. En este documento se analizan las repercusiones de estos hallazgos.