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# Emigrant Politics, Immigrant Engagement: Homeland Ties and Immigrant Political Identity in the United States

ROGER WALDINGER AND LAUREN DUQUETTE-RURY

*Immigrants are also emigrants, possessing social ties that link them to people and places left behind. Although this duality is inherent to the migration process, researchers typically separate the study of emigration from that of immigration. Using new survey data on Latino immigrant social and political engagement in the sending and receiving society, we assess how political attitudes and national allegiance are shaped by social and political ties acquired at home and abroad. We find that immigrants' home country social ties yield modest political consequences, whereas the more important influences sustaining connections to homeland politics stem from premigration political experiences. Both cross-border social ties and premigration political experiences reinforce homeland national identities. Furthermore, the acquisition of U.S. citizenship tends to corrode homeland attachments and Latino immigrants are more likely to shift political allegiance from home to host state once legal status is obtained.*

**Keywords:** immigration, emigration, political engagement, cross-border ties, transnationalism

Every immigrant is an emigrant, every alien a citizen, every foreigner a national. These dualities lie at the heart of the migration process, leaving migrants caught in a dialectic of constant tension, but they are lost by the prevailing academic division of labor, which separates the study of emigration from the study of immigration. Because the students of assimilation stand with their back at the border, both the international and the inherently political nature of population movements across national boundaries fall out of view. Consequently, what they call assimilation turns out to be something different: namely, the transformation of foreigners into nationals, thus not just diffusing immigrants into a so-called mainstream, but replacing one particularism with another. Taking a similar stance, the

scholars of immigrant politics suffer from a like defect, in this case, aggravated by the failure to see that the arrival of international migrants does not simply produce the familiar American dilemma, in which status citizens lack first-class citizenship. The phenomenon, rather, entails a global dilemma inseparable from the nature of population movements across boundaries itself, as status citizenship in democratic nation-states is inherently exclusionary, leaving most foreigners on the “wrong” side of the territorial boundary and all foreigners initially crossing that boundary outside the citizenry.

By contrast, the proponents of the transnational perspective, understanding that networks of goods, ideas, and most importantly people regularly and normally spill across ter-

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ritorial lines, have demonstrated the importance and prevalence of the connections between places of origin and destination and the factors that make distant places so often interlaced. Although rightfully emphasizing the cross-state dimension, this approach is too pat, pretending that migrants can lead lives across borders, even though their alien status impedes incorporation in the receiving society, and their alien location distances them from their homeland and diminishes incentives to participate in homeland politics.

The current academic division of labor thus produces two strands of research often not in conversation with the other—one strand examines emigrant political engagement in countries of origin, and the other considers immigrant political incorporation in countries of destination. Recent research in political science, for example, is beginning to uncover factors associated with a diverse set of political practices emigrants engage in at home (Ahmadov and Sasse 2015; Burgess 2014), though the bulk of the research focuses on the propensity, incidence, and determinants of transnational absentee voting in home country elections (Escobar, Arana, and McCann 2015; Leal, Lee, and McCann 2012; Lafleur and Sánchez-Domínguez 2014). Other research has started to unpack not only when, why, and how emigrants engage in politics in the sending country, but also the diverse channels through which immigrants “remit” political opinions, attitudes, and behaviors to nonmigrant citizens as well as how individual migration experiences shift the political attitudes of migrants after return (Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow 2010; Careja and Emmenegger 2012; Rother 2009). However, this research rarely accounts for the ways in which immigrant experiences in the destination country condition home country attachments, national loyalty, and political interest and engagement.

Similarly, despite a growing body of research on immigrant political incorporation in the United States, which this issue of *RSF* aims to significantly advance (Jones-Correa 1998; Bloemraad 2006; Hochschild et al. 2013; Barreto and Muñoz 2003), few studies consider how transnational ties—be they political, social, or economic—influence immigrants’

opinions on major issues, interest in politics, and formal and informal modes of political and civic engagement. The handful of studies that account for migrants’ transnational ties often use dual citizenship as a limited proxy given the dearth of data on individual immigrants’ transnational ties. Moreover, studies that assess how transnational ties affect immigrant political incorporation have not reached consensus. As Sarah Gershon and Adrian Pantoja (2014) explain, research is negative or positive, or as yet researchers remain unconvinced. The “pessimists” argue migrants’ “divided loyalties” are incompatible with naturalization, and the time and costs associated with simultaneous participation in home and host impedes positive orientations and political activism in the destination (Huntington 2004; Staton, Jackson, and Canache 2007; Cain and Doherty 2006). Other research arrives at more optimistic conclusions. Louis DeSipio (2006) shows that transnational networks had a positive effect on citizenship acquisition, but the substantive results were minimal; additional research finds that dual citizenship and other transnational activities enhance Latino immigrants’ propensity to naturalize (Jones-Correa 2001; Gershon and Pantoja 2014).

Although these studies are an important addition to our collective understanding of how transnational ties stymie or thwart political incorporation in the destination, data limitations have curtailed researchers’ ability to disaggregate transnational ties into different kinds of cross-border practices. We as yet do not have a clear sense of what kinds of transnational ties explain the variation in political incorporation. Moreover, no study to our knowledge, the Sears, Zavala, and Danbold contribution to this volume notwithstanding, accounts for the extent to which immigrant premigration political socialization in the country of origin affects various forms of political orientations and allegiances to host and home. Sears and his colleagues find that premigration political experience positively affects Latino and Latina immigrant partisan self-categorization. Our paper continues to push research in a direction that acknowledges and empirically examines that every immigrant is an emigrant and that transnational

ties may explain political engagement both here and there.

This paper thus demonstrates how attention to the dualities inherent in the migration process can shed new light on the ways in which international migrants from Latin America and the Hispanic Caribbean engage with polities and nations in both sending and receiving societies. As we show, these immigrants are indeed also emigrants, possessing social ties that link them to the people and places left behind. Yet these ties yield political consequences of modest effect. Our findings reveal the more important influences sustaining emigrants' connections to homeland polities stem from premigration political experiences. Both cross-border social ties and premigration political experiences sustain national identities based in the homeland left behind. We also find the acquisition of U.S. citizenship is accompanied by a decline in home country attachments as immigrants begin shifting allegiance from home to host state.

### **POLITICS ACROSS BORDERS**

Cross-border ties typically spring from the connected survival strategies pursued by both migrants and their closest relatives at home (Waldinger 2015). Emigration is often undertaken without the goal of immigration: rather, relocating to a developed society takes place so that emigrants can gain the access to the resources that can only be found there. In turn, those gains get channeled back home to stabilize, secure, and improve the options of the kin network remaining there. Relocation to a richer state yields the potential for enjoying the fruits of its wealth. However, the emigrants are also foreigners not knowing the ropes and aliens lacking the full protections granted to citizens and therefore encounter risks and uncertainties of myriad sorts. So when trouble strikes, the emigrants turn to the stay-at-homes for help. Because assistance from the latter is often the condition of exit, the emigrants' dependency on the stay-at-homes gives the former all the more reason to attend to the needs of the latter. These intertwined survival strategies yield continuing exchanges of money, support, information, and ideas; as migrant populations grow, those exchanges

broaden and deepen, producing an infrastructure that facilitates and reinforces these bidirectional flows (Mazzucato 2009).

Reinforcing the strength of those connections is that family migration is often a multi-stage process. Sometimes entire nuclear families move in one fell swoop; often, however, departures proceed one by one, the household head leaving first, only later followed by spouse and children. Alternatively, a young, unmarried person moves abroad and then, whether formally or informally, later sponsors the movement of the person who will become his or her spouse. Rarely does every significant other change place of residence: obligations to aging parents at home can keep remittances, letters, phone calls, and visits flowing well after roots in the host country have become deeply established.

However, these cross-border ties do not necessarily act as vectors of homeland political engagement or connection. To begin with, some migrants entirely fall out of the cross-border circuit, though generally only a minority cuts the tie altogether. As for those who remain connected, some cross-border exchanges do not involve communication—remittance sending, for example, can be done electronically—which means that some of the interactions across borders may be entirely devoid of political content. Likewise, contacts that take place long distance may not yield political information of the same quality or with the same content as exchanges occurring in person. Politics might well filter into the course of weekly communications typically focusing on other matters. In-person visits, however, will yield opportunities for the transmission of indirect information that can only be gleaned in situ, as when a visit coinciding with a homeland political campaign brings the migrant face-to-face with the politics left behind.

Moreover, migration is an implicitly and double-pronged political act. In departing home, the migrants vote with their feet, taking a step of quiet rebellion against the state of origin. Although economically induced migrations are explicitly apolitical, representing exit, not voice, a tacitly political conclusion may be behind that apolitical act. As argued by the Mexican sociologist Arturo Santamaria Gómez

in words that could easily apply to countless other migrations, “the deepest experience, the most strongly felt discomfort of the migrants toward the Mexican government was the conviction that with a ‘good government’ they would not have had to leave their country” (1994, 165). Indeed, when interviewed during the mid-2000s by a team of Mexican political scientists, Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles repeatedly sounded this point of view: “The perception that the interviewees have of Mexican politics is in general negative, repeatedly associated with corruption, violence, poverty and incapacity to govern, independent of the political party. A very significant indicator consists of the fact that, of the 90 interviewees there was not one positive opinion about politics in Mexico” (Alarcon, Rabadan, and Ortiz 2012, 298).

Because migrant behavior often reflects widespread cynicism toward political action, institutions, and leaders, it is also often the product of childhood socialization, the lessons of which may last for a lifetime. Because not everyone leaves, but rather only those who decide to take matters into their own hands, migrants may also be less disposed from the outset to look to government or politics to provide a solution for their needs. Because moving to a richer country usually turns out better for migrants, it can reinforce the same cynical political worldview that motivated the decision to abandon home.

Though infra-political beliefs may motivate emigration, politics as such are unlikely to have been of salient importance before migration. Migrants detached from home country politics before leaving home are unlikely to reconnect once abroad. To begin with, younger, not older, people are the more likely to depart for a foreign land. Because most electoral systems bar minors from voting, many migrants are likely to leave with little if any experience in formal politics and limited prior exposure. Political conditions at home are also an influential factor: undemocratic, partially democratic, or even democratizing nations may provide limited opportunities for engagement with electoral politics, even for those eligible to vote prior to migration.

Conditions after migration are also likely to

exercise a depoliticizing effect on inclinations to engage with homeland matters. Social networks linking less politically attentive migrants to those more politically engaged could transmit needed homeland political signals, but without a history of expatriate engagement, that group is small. Likewise, mobilization could occur were homeland political parties present, but their absence is the overwhelming rule. As noted, all migrants begin as aliens, which means that they start in a state of nonincorporation and it is there that many long remain. Until the migrants become citizens, they stand outside the polity, which keeps them distant from the efforts at mobilization that so often trigger political interest and knowledge. And in the event that other aliens dominate the social environment, local ties and networks are unlikely to offer the capacity needed to make politics—whether of the homeland or hostland sort—salient.

Although detached from and possibly repelled by homeland politics, migrants arrive from contemporary nation-states as nationals, emotionally tied to the putative nation, people, and land left behind. In the event that homeland national identity is wanting, the encounter with a foreign environment and treatment as unwanted foreigners convinces a migrant that he or she is the very foreign national that the native nationals perceive. As the Mexican anthropologist and sociologist Manuel Gamio noted almost a century ago in the very first work of social science on Mexican immigration, the displaced Mexican peasants then arriving in the United States had “little notion of their nationality or their country” but on arrival in the United States “learn immediately what their mother-country means, and they always think of it and speak of it with love” (1930, 128). Roughly seventy years later, studying a union local with a large Mexican immigrant workforce, the sociologist David Fitzgerald came across a myth that quelled members’ interest in naturalization: the fear “that becoming a U.S. citizen requires a ritualistic rejection of Mexican nationality that includes stomping and spitting on the Mexican flag” (2004, 236).

Paradoxically, the encounter with an alien environment increases the salience of homeland national identity, thereby reducing the in-

centives to obtain receiving society citizenship, which is the condition of formal host society political participation. Because citizenship is tied to national identity, acquisition of a new citizenship is a matter of the heart, not just the brain. As clearly implied by the myth that Fitzgerald discovered, abandoning one's nationality and replacing it with another may seem like an act of betrayal, one in which one turns one's back on family as well as country. Because the returns to any investment in host society naturalization are variable and the expenditures in time, effort, and money significant, powerful rational reasons may also lie behind the decision to remain an alien and thereby retain one's home nationality. And of course, these considerations only apply to aliens eligible for naturalization, a condition inapplicable to the eleven million undocumented immigrants in the United States.

But because the emigrants are also immigrants, the decision to move to another country also often represents an implicit vote for that state. In particular, when crossing into the borders of the rich democracies, the migrants opt for a state organized in a way that promotes economic growth, provides the public services and investments needed for that continued productivity, and maintains public order. The combination of rules, norms, and institutions that migrants find in their new homes makes for societies that are generally more successful than those the migrants have left behind (Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2005), which is precisely why migration is usually good for the migrants.

The encounter with those rules, norms, and institutions also imparts lessons that are at least implicitly political. Because bureaucratic organizations are preferable to those that are predatory, safe streets to those that are dangerous, (reasonably) honest elections to those that are chronically stolen, the migrants come to both recognize and appreciate the social model that prevails in the new environment. Hence, though the heart may constrain the affective change needed to transfer national loyalties and the brain may recoil at the costs of doing so, no such barriers prevent migrants from perceiving the advantages of the social model that makes movement to a new country such a good

idea and from preferring that arrangement to the one left behind.

## EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT

The Latino Immigrant National Election Study (LINES) provides an unparalleled opportunity to empirically assess these ideas, because the survey provides an abundance of information regarding these dualities at the core of the migrant experience. In this paper, we focus on aspects relating to interest in politics and national identity, whether linked to home or host state, as well as political attitudes related to trust and responsiveness of government. The paper analyzes responses to questions from waves 1 and 2 regarding interest in homeland politics, interest in the 2012 U.S. presidential election, attitudes about trust and responsive government, and questions regarding attachment to the United States and the home country. We present descriptive statistics of relevant variables in tables 1 and 2.

Both waves 1 and 2, conducted before and after the 2012 U.S. national elections, asked about interest in home country politics, though with differences in question wording making it difficult to interpret the diverging response patterns. In wave 1, most respondents reported that they either paid "a lot" (35 percent) or "some" (18 percent) attention to home country politics. When asked about interest in home country politics in wave 2, however, 63 percent of respondents answered "none at all" or "a little." A cross-tab of the panel of 427 respondents for which there are valid data indicates that the proportion answering "a lot" declined from 39 percent in wave 1 to 18 percent in wave 2. A look at other sources of data suggests that wave 2 may provide the more accurate view. Although not strictly comparable, because a different question was asked, most immigrants interviewed by the 2006 Latino National Survey (LNS) reported paying little to no attention to home country politics, only 15 percent reporting a lot of attention (Fraga et al. 2006). Compared with Mexicans in Mexico, the 2006 Mexican Expatriate survey reported that immigrants were far less likely to talk about or pay attention to Mexican politics (McCann, Cornelius, and Leal 2006). Almost two-thirds of the Mexican immi-



**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables, Pre- and Postelection Waves

Independent Variable	Preelection	Independent Variable	Preelection
<b>Premigration voting</b>		<b>Immigrant march in metro 2006</b>	43
Yes	57	<b>Consulate in metro</b>	35
No	43	<b>Education*</b>	
<b>Plan to return to home country</b>		Less than high school	62
Plan to return	22	High school	20
No plan to return	70	Some college	12
Don't know	7	BA or BS or greater	7
<b>Active in political party in home country</b>		<b>Premigration voting</b>	
Not active	71	Yes	48
Somewhat active	19	No	52
Very active	10	<b>Frequency of contact with friends</b>	
<b>Language</b>		Never	9
Only English	1	Every couple months	13
Mostly English	1	Monthly	28
Both	26	Weekly	49
Mostly Spanish	34	<b>Frequency of home country visit</b>	
Only Spanish	38	Never	20
<b>Children living in household in United States</b>		More than five years ago	24
Yes	78	Once in last five years	8
No	22	Once in last three years	14
<b>Legal status</b>		Yearly or more	34
Undocumented	46	<b>Frequency of sending remittances</b>	
Legal permanent resident	12	Never	30
Naturalized citizen	42	Once a year or less	19
<b>Born in Mexico*</b>	45	Every few months	19
<b>Born in Central America*</b>	10	Once a month	24
<b>Mean years lived in United States*</b>	23	More than once a month	8
<b>Mean age*</b>	49	<b>Legal status</b>	
<b>Gender*</b>		Undocumented	37
Male	45	Legal permanent resident	20
Female	55	Naturalized citizen	43
<b>Marital status*</b>			
Not married	40		
Married	60		

Source: Author's calculations based on McCann and Jones-Correa 2012.

Note: Percentages are rounded up and totals may exceed 100 percent.

\* indicates pooled results across waves 1 and 2.

grants queried that same year by a nationally representative survey undertaken by the Pew Hispanic Center agreed with the statement "I am insufficiently informed about Mexican politics to vote" (Suro and Escobar 2006).

Wave 2 included several questions regarding

national identity in both home and host states. A first battery of questions asked about feelings associated with seeing the American flag as well as general feelings about the United States. Later in the survey, two identical questions were posed, this time regarding the

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics of Dependent Variables, Pre- and Postelection Waves

Preelection Wave	Home	Host	Postelection Wave	Home	Host
<b>Government run</b>			<b>Attention to home country politics</b>		
By a few big interests	83	45	None	28	—
For the benefit of all	17	55	Only a little	18	—
<b>People in government</b>			Some	18	—
Waste a lot	72	41	A lot	35	—
Waste some	13	33	<b>Interest in politics</b>		
Don't waste very much	7	12	None at all	30	—
Don't know	8	14	A little	33	—
<b>How many in government are corrupt</b>			Some	18	—
All	30	4	A lot	18	—
Most	41	8	<b>Patriotism (feelings for flag)</b>		
About half	16	25	Not good at all	4	1
A few	12	53	Slightly good	5	5
None	1	10	Moderately good	14	14
<b>Trust government to do the right thing</b>			Very good	52	56
Just about always	6	22	Extremely good	25	24
Most of the time	5	18	<b>Patriotism (love of country)</b>		
Only some of the time	61	58	Hate it	<1	<1
Never	28	3	Dislike it	2	1
<b>Elections make government responsive</b>			Neither like nor dislike it	6	1
A good deal	56	25	Like it	37	53
Some	36	48	Love it	54	44
Not much	8	27	<b>Mean warmth toward government</b>		
				36	68

Source: Author's calculations based on McCann and Jones-Correa 2012.

Note: Percentages are rounded up and totals may exceed 100 percent.

homeland state. Most immigrants answered positively (extremely or very good, like or love) to all four questions. Nonetheless, respondents were more likely to display negative feelings toward the home country than the United States. Questions regarding the national flag, whether that of the home country or of the United States, elicited similar responses, as did the question regarding overall feeling. We also analyze a variable created by subtracting answers to the home and host country feeling thermometer to gauge a comparison between host and home country patriotism.

Both waves 1 and 2 include questions pertinent to understanding immigrants' comparative assessment of the social models found in home and host states. Wave 1 includes five

questions related to government effectiveness and responsiveness in home and host states. Although the answers to these queries about "the government in Washington" versus the "government in the country of origin" do not suggest that Washington is viewed uncritically, it is nonetheless perceived in a far more positive light than the home country government. For example, 71 percent of respondents thought that "all or most" of the people in the home country government were corrupt, as opposed to only 12 percent holding that opinion when asked about Washington. Although opinion toward Washington could also lean in a negative direction, as indicated by the large proportion of respondents who thought that Washington "wastes a lot" and is run by "a few



big interests,” the corresponding views towards the home country were still far more critical. Wave 2 includes a number of questions measuring immigrants’ warmth towards the federal and local (U.S.) governments and their home country government. As indicated by the response to these queries using the standard “feeling thermometer” on a zero (cold) to 100 (warm) gauge, respondents felt a good deal more warmth, toward both “the federal government in Washington” (69) and the “local police in your community” (68) than toward “the government in the country of origin” (36). As further indication of the low esteem in which they held home country governments, the same respondents gave an identically low rating to Romney, but a 75 to Obama.

Following the approach outlined, in the analysis to follow we principally focus on the influence of variables related to cross-border ties, premigration home country political experience, and legal status in the United States. Information about legal status and premigration voting appears in both waves of LINES. Both waves contain almost identical proportions of U.S. citizen respondents (42 versus 43 percent); however, wave 1 contains a higher proportion of undocumented respondents (46 versus 37 percent). Just under half of the respondents to wave 1 (57 percent) reported having voted prior to migration whereas just under half (48 percent) provide the same answer in wave 2. Wave 1 also includes a question about activity in a political party or some other organization prior to migration; the great majority (71 percent) report no activity; just 10 percent report having been very active.

Data on cross-border ties are only to be found in wave 2; in wave 1, we use a question regarding plans for return migration as a limited proxy. The great majority of respondents report frequent contact with persons in the home country; about half report that contact is weekly. Not surprisingly, the interviews report that visits and remittances—both much more materially demanding—occur at lower rates. Moreover, a sizeable proportion seems to have dropped out of at least one of these

cross-border activities (20 percent never having visited and 49 percent never remitting or remitting yearly or less). Nonetheless, the majority remit at least every few months or more frequently and 48 percent report visiting home at least once in the past three years, yearly, or more. As other studies have shown, a very small proportion of the respondents have completely abandoned these cross-border activities; on the other hand, the proportion engaging in all three forms of cross-border activity at the most frequent is only slightly larger (Soehl and Waldinger 2010). As suggested by the polychoric correlations, sending money and visiting are more likely to be mutually exclusive alternatives, with remitting more likely to be accompanied by the sending of money. The great majority of respondents (70 percent) asked, in wave 1, about plans to return home answered no, an additional 7 percent saying that they did not know.<sup>1</sup>

The analysis includes a number of other, generally standard migration variables used here as controls, including years in the United States and a squared term for years, age, gender, marital status, education (the four-category recode contained in the original dataset), English language proficiency, separate indicator variables coding the respondent’s metropolitan area for the presence of a consulate from the country of origin and whether the area had been the site of an immigrant rights demonstration in 2006, and dummies for Mexicans and Central Americans. The analysis of wave 1 questions also includes a variable indicating whether the respondent has a child living in the home country. The analysis of wave 2 also includes a variable concerning the respondent’s principle source of news, whether in English, Spanish, or both languages.

Because the measures of interest and patriotism and most of the governmental effectiveness questions are ordinal, those analyses use ordinal logistic regression. Because the question regarding government’s possible domination by big interests is binary, we use logistic regression. The tables reporting the results of the ordered logit and logistic regressions dis-

1. We also included an indicator for whether the respondent was a member of a hometown association, but the results were not significant.

play predicted probabilities for key variables of interest. The feeling thermometers vary on a 0 to 100 scale and hence ordinary least squares (OLS) is used; the relevant table displays the coefficients for the key variables of interest.

RESULTS

*Interest in Home Country Politics*

As noted, interest in home country politics appears to have declined during the course of the U.S. election, though differences in the questions used in waves 1 and 2 (attention versus interest) make definitive interpretation elusive.

We report the effects of pre- and postelection wave political interest in home and host country in table 3 and in the third column of table 4. Both wave 1 and wave 2 point to the likely importance of premigration political experience, as at both times, voting prior to migration was associated with significantly higher interests in home country politics, though point estimates differ. The analysis of wave 1 shows that prior political experience had a stronger association with interest in home country politics than a prior experience of voting: going from respondents with no prior history of political engagement to those who had

**Table 3.** Changes in Predicted Probabilities, Political Interest in United States and Country of Origin, Preelection Wave

	Host Country	Home Country
	"Very Interested" in Political Campaigns	"A Lot" of Interest in Politics
<b>Plan to return to home country</b>		
Plan to return	37	49
No plan to return	32	36
Don't know	29	24
<b>Premigration voting</b>		
Never voted	31	34
Voted	35	42
<b>Active in political party in home country</b>		
Not active	30	34
Somewhat active	38	48
Very active	39	51
<b>Education</b>		
Less than high school	31	36
High school graduate	27	38
Some college	36	42
B.A. or B.S. or greater	55	48
<b>Years in United States</b>		
Ten	28	42
Twenty	33	35
Thirty	37	24
<b>Legal status</b>		
Undocumented	31	37
Legal permanent resident	26	41
Naturalized citizen	37	40

Source: Author's calculations based on McCann and Jones-Correa 2012.  
Note: Predicted from the ordered logit results for most positive outcomes.

**Table 4.** Changes in Predicted Probabilities, Political Interest and National Identity, Postelection Wave

	Host Country		Home Country		
	Patriotism ("Extremely Good" Feelings for Flag)	Patriotism ("Loves" Country)	"A Lot" of Interest in Politics	Patriotism ("Extremely Good" Feelings for Flag)	Patriotism ("Loves" Country)
Cross-Border Ties					
<b>How often contact friends</b>					
Never	25	56	23	18	52
Every couple months	20	48	14	25	54
Monthly	22	43	15	23	47
Weekly	26	40	17	31	56
<b>How often visits</b>					
Never	26	47	16	28	48
More than five years ago	29	39	14	27	53
Once in last five years	17	52	17	20	50
Once in last three years	23	33	14	24	50
Yearly or more	22	46	20	30	60
<b>How often sends money</b>					
Never	22	34	12	23	51
Once a year	29	54	22	29	48
Once a month	23	42	18	26	56
More than once a month	25	47	19	30	56
<b>Premigration voting</b>					
Never voted	24	45	13	23	45
Voted	25	41	21	32	63
<b>Legal status</b>					
Undocumented	22	39	15	23	27
Legal permanent res.	23	36	20	15	20
Naturalized citizen	27	52	16	19	22
<b>Years in United States</b>					
Ten	24	39	16	56	56
Twenty	24	43	17	51	51
Thirty	24	46	17	50	50
<b>Education</b>					
Less than high school	27	54	13	28	55
High school	18	58	15	21	48
Some college	25	52	21	33	55
College or more	25	51	30	28	57

Source: Author’s calculations based on McCann and Jones-Correa 2012.

Note: Predicted from the ordered logit results for most positive outcomes

been very active increases the probability of having “a lot” of interest in home country politics from 34 percent to 51 percent.

Otherwise, however, the factors of influence seem to vary from one wave to another. Thus, education is associated with statistically significant higher levels of attention to home country politics in wave 2, especially among the college educated. In wave 1, however, the coefficients lack statistical significance, though as shown in the predicted probabilities, the association between college education and interest in home country politics is high. In wave 1, interest in home country politics declines significantly with years of settlement; in wave 2, however, years of residence in the United States yield no effect.

Both waves 1 and 2 hint at the possibility that cross-border ties may foster an interest in home country politics, though the supporting evidence is limited and inconsistent. Wave 1 respondents, uncertain whether they planned to stay in the United States or return home, were significantly less likely to report having a lot of interest in home country politics than those planning to return, though the factors making for uncertainty about settlement may be related to those diminishing interest in home country politics.

By contrast, cross-border ties, measured in wave 2, yield contradictory effects. Respondents who sent money home were more likely to report paying a lot of attention to home country politics than those who did not remit were, though among those who did remit, differences in rates appeared to not matter. Going from the lowest level of remitting (none) to the next highest (once a year) was associated with a 10 percentage point increase in the fraction reporting that they had paid a lot of attention to home country politics (0.12 to 0.22), but attention to home country politics fell off slightly at higher levels of remitting. Surprisingly, attention to home country politics was lower among those who had at least some contact as opposed to those (decidedly few) who had stopped communicating altogether. More frequent home country visitors were no more likely to pay attention to home country politics than respondents who had never returned home after migration to the United States. In

neither wave 1 nor wave 2 did legal status alter interest in home country politics, thus contradicting prior studies arguing that hostland political incorporation would reinforce homeland political engagement (Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003).

### *Patriotism*

Because questions regarding patriotism only appear in wave 2, our indicators of premigration political participation are limited to premigration voting. We report the results of these models in table 4. Nonetheless, this variable has a consistently positive effect on both measures of home country patriotism, whether elicited by feelings about seeing the home country flag or by a query about overall feeling for the country. Thus, moving from no prior voting to prior voting shifts the probability of answering “extremely good” about the feelings generated by seeing the flag from 0.23 to 0.32; in regard to overall feelings, the same contrast increases the probability of answering “love” from 0.45 to 0.63. By comparison, the indicators of cross-border connectedness have weak and inconsistent effects. Respondents who report having weekly contact with home country relatives and friends were almost twice as likely as those who had entirely fallen out of contact to feel extremely good when seeing the flag (0.31 versus 0.18). However, the coefficient for weekly contact was significant only at the 0.1 level and these same respondents were no more likely to report love for the home country than those who never had any contact with home country friends. Likewise, those respondents who sent remittances more than once a month were somewhat more likely to feel extremely good when seeing the home country flag than those who never remitted, but the coefficient was significant only at the 0.1 level, its impact was slight (0.23 versus 0.30) and overall feelings about the home country entailed no such association.

By contrast, patriotic feelings toward the United States (see table 4) seem to derive from quite different sources. Not one of the variables of interest was related to feelings elicited by seeing the U.S. flag. In addition, Mexican-born respondents were less well inclined toward the United States, showing a 0.19 proba-

bility of reporting feeling extremely good when seeing the U.S. flag, as opposed to 0.27 for Central Americans and for all others. By contrast, the model more effectively predicts overall feeling for the United States (measured in five categories, going from hate to love), though with results that are not fully expected. More home country contact and more frequent remitting are associated with less patriotic feelings toward the United States. Greater home country contact has a linear, negative relationship with U.S. patriotism, because going from those with weekly home country contact to those never having home country contact changes the probability of reporting love from 0.40 to 0.56. Likewise, those who have never visited the home country report more love for the United States (0.47 versus 0.34) than those who have visited once in the past three years, though none of the other categories are significantly different from never. Surprisingly, higher remitting frequencies, as opposed to never remitting, are generally more closely associated with more patriotic feelings toward the United States, though the relationship is not linear. Last, naturalized citizens are a good deal more likely than either undocumented or green card respondents (probability of love 0.52 versus 0.36 for green card holders and 0.39 for undocumented respondents) to report patriotic feelings for the United States.

### *Perceptions of Government*

As noted, respondents queried in LINES rated home country governments far more critically than Washington. As shown in table 5, an experience of prior voting made for a significantly warmer rating of the home country government. By contrast, only two of the indicators of home country connectedness had statistically significant coefficients—remitting ( $p < .1$ ) and visiting ( $p < .1$ ) and curiously only those who remitted once a year thought more favorably of the home government than did those who never remitted. Those respondents who had obtained U.S. nationality were significantly more likely to give the home country government a more negative rating than either green card holders or undocumented immigrants.

By contrast, naturalized citizens were no

more likely to rate the U.S. government favorably than their undocumented or green card counterparts were, though still rating the U.S. government well above that of their home country's (58 versus 48). With the exception of those whose most recent home country visit had taken place five years prior to the survey—and who rated the U.S. government more favorably—the opinions of more frequent visitors were no different from those who never visited at all. No other variable measuring cross-border connectedness proved statistically significant.

The same variables measuring cross-border connections are weakly and inconsistently related to the indicators of governmental effectiveness and responsiveness reported in tables 6 and 7. Naturalized citizens were more likely than their undocumented counterparts to think that home country governments were run by a few big interests ( $p < .1$ ) though more likely to think that people in government “don’t waste very much” ( $p < .05$ ). Persons with a prior history of some activism were slightly more likely to trust home country governments to do the right thing but also more likely to think that those governments were run by a few big interests rather than for the benefit of all. Persons who had voted before migrating were more inclined than nonvoters to think that home country governments would do the right thing ( $p < .01$ ), but the probability of responding in so positive a fashion was very low ( $p = .07$ ); those who were unsure about their return to their home country were more likely ( $p < .05$ ) than respondents planning to settle to think that the home country government could be trusted to do the right thing, but again levels of trust were low. Cross-border variables exercised even less influence on views toward the U.S. government. Levels of trust towards the U.S. government were no different among respondents with a history of migrating before migration as opposed to those with no such history. Persons not certain whether they would emigrate again were less likely than settlers to think that people in government “don’t waste very much,” but more likely to think that elections make government more responsive. Paradoxically, in comparison to respondents with no history of political party ac-

**Table 5.** OLS Regression on Warmth Toward Governments, Postelection Wave

Cross-Border Ties	Host Country	
	Warmth Toward Home	Warm Toward Host
<b>How often contact friends</b>		
Every couple months	-2.709 (6.259)	2.100 (4.555)
Monthly	.588 (5.979)	3.179 (4.368)
Weekly	-.826 (5.762)	6.743 (4.196)
<b>How often visits</b>		
More than five years ago	5.428 (3.968)	8.462 (3.085)**
Once in last five years	3.272 (5.045)	2.034 (3.971)
Once in last three years	7.785 (4.581)	2.608 (3.505)
Yearly or more	6.039 (3.865)	1.754 (3.169)
<b>How often sends money</b>		
Once a year	6.719 (3.861)	-1.166 (3.036)
Once a month	-4.789 (3.803)	-3.573 (2.861)
More than once a month	-.738 (3.557)	-4.212 (2.718)
<b>Premigration voting</b>		
	7.079 (2.706)**	-1.165 (2.347)
<b>Years lived in United States</b>		
	.142 (.392)	-.103 (.305)
<b>Years lived in United States (squared)</b>		
	.003 (.006)	-.002 (.005)
<b>Education</b>		
High school	-2.779 (3.211)	-3.310 (2.727)
Some college	-5.058 (3.747)	-.190 (2.949)
B.A. or B.S. or greater	-6.492 (5.403)	-6.954 (3.478)*
<b>Legal U.S. status</b>		
Legal permanent resident	-1.875 (4.054)	3.758 (2.937)
Naturalized	-7.141 (3.196)*	-3.213 (2.741)
Constant^	55.097 (9.852)***	61.182 (7.817)***
<b>Total observations</b>	641	614

Source: Author's calculations based on McCann and Jones-Correa 2012.

Note: Omitted categories: never (contact, visit, send money), primary education or less, no papers; R-squared for the regression feeling thermometer models for U.S. government is 0.08; ; R-squared for the regression feeling thermometer models for host government is 0.11. Standard Errors in parenthesis.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$



**Table 6.** Changes in Predicted Probabilities, Trust in U.S. Government, Preelection Wave

	Host Country				
	Government Run "for the Benefit of All"	People in Government "Don't Waste Very Much"	How Many in Government Are Corrupt: "a Few"	Trust Government to Do Right Thing "Just About Always"	Elections Make Government "a Good Deal" More Responsive
<b>Plan to return to home country</b>					
Plan to return	54	6	53	18	24
No plan to return	48	6	57	22	23
Don't know	41	4	52	16	41
<b>Premigration voting</b>					
Never voted	51	6	56	18	22
Voted	47	6	56	22	27
<b>Active in political party in home country</b>					
Not active	54	6	55	19	25
Somewhat active	39	6	59	25	24
Very active	39	5	55	22	21
<b>Level of education</b>					
Less than high school	43	5	56	20	27
High school grad	45	6	56	20	20
Some college	62	9	56	27	22
B.A. or B.S. or greater	68	3	52	9	27
<b>Legal status</b>					
Undocumented	47	6	55	23	27
Legal permanent resident	44	3	59	15	20
Naturalized citizen	54	6	56	19	22
<b>Years in United States</b>					
Ten	44	17	57	21	25
Twenty	47	11	58	22	23
Thirty	53	8	55	19	24

Source: Author's calculations based on McCann and Jones-Correa 2012.

Note: Predicted from the ordered logit results for most positive outcomes.

**Table 7.** Changes in Predicted Probabilities, Trust in Home Country Government, Preelection

	Home Country				Elections Make Government "a Good Deal" More Responsive
	Government Run "for the Benefit of All"	People in Government "Don't Waste Very Much"	How Many in Government Are Corrupt: "a Few"	Trust Government to Do Right Thing "Just About Always"	
Plan to return to home country					
Plan to return	86	7	11	5	62
No plan to return	81	7	12	6	52
Don't know	80	9	13	8	53
Premigration voting					
Never voted	81	6	10	4	57
Voted	83	8	13	7	52
Active in political party in home country					
Not active	85	7	10	5	56
Somewhat active	74	7	15	7	50
Very active	85	8	15	7	52
Education					
Less than high school	80	9	14	7	49
High school graduate	84	6	10	5	58
Some college	86	6	9	5	64
B.A. or B.S. or greater	89	4	10	5	53
Legal status					
Undocumented	80	5	10	6	54
Legal permanent resident	78	7	14	8	51
Naturalized citizen	88	9	13	4	56
Years in United States					
Ten	6	7	12	6	51
Twenty	6	7	11	5	56
Thirty	5	7	11	5	58

Source: Author's calculations based on McCann and Jones-Correa 2012.

Note: Predicted from the ordered logit results for most positive outcomes.

tivism before migration were less likely than the premigration activists to think that the host country government was run “by a few big interests.”

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Moving from one country to another inevitably proves a transformative experience because the simple requirements of survival force migrants to adapt to the new environment. Starting out small, subtle, and relatively costless, those changes generate rewards, which is why they are often cumulative, distancing immigrants from the people and places left behind.

Nonetheless, migrants’ ties to those people and places are widespread and, though attenuating with settlement, have the power to resist time’s erosive effects, largely because these cross-border connections advance the ends of both migrants and stay-at-homes. In this sample, as in others that we have examined, cross-border connections are both prevalent and persistent: not quite 2 percent of the sample has abandoned all ties to relatives and friends back home. Thus reasons are sound to suspect that these cross-border ties might serve to anchor migrants in the host country polity, just as they maintain connections to the migrant’s egocentric network still at home.

However, that possibility finds little support in the analysis discussed. Although a third of the sample visit the home country at least once a year, those face-to-face contacts do very little political work. Remitting and maintaining regular contact matter somewhat more, but inconsistently, because relationships are never linear, and show irregular effects across the different outcomes of interest. Moreover, because our sample from the LINES dataset are current immigrants residing in the United States, we are unable to account for individuals who have returned to their home country. This limitation is noteworthy because it is possible that the rationale for returning to the country of origin is related to persistent feelings of warmth and allegiance to the home country or continued disenfranchisement and marginality in the United States.

Given the cross-sectional nature of the sample, we have limited traction on the question of why cross-border ties yield so little influ-

ence. That these cross border ties are not of a piece may be one source of constraint: the great majority of respondents maintain at least some connection extending across borders, but few (6 percent) keep up regular contact, visiting, and remitting. As resource-absorbing activities, remitting and visiting tend to be mutually exclusive, as indicated by their low correlation with one another. Although more compatible with regular contact, which is virtually free, respondents calling home weekly are just as likely to have never visited home since moving to the United States as they are likely to have taken a visit within the prior year. Hence, the connections linking migrants and stay at home persist but lack the coherence and consistency needed for the transmission of home country political signals, which naturally take a more erratic and episodic form.

Moreover, these respondents clearly seem to be people who opted for exit rather than voice. Based on the responses to the feeling thermometers and the questions regarding trust, it seems appropriate to say that the home country government is viewed with disdain, respondents placing it on a par with their rating of the presidential candidate who endorsed a migration policy involving self-deportation. Because most (56 percent) also think that home country governments do not pay much attention to elections, these disillusioned nationals in exile do not have much reason to attend to home country politics, especially given that the home country can do so little to resolve problems associated with immigration. By contrast, those who exercised voice prior to migration are more interested in home country matters and more approving of home country governments.

Although migrants seem detached from home country politics and disillusioned with home country governments, they are nonetheless loyal nationals, not a surprising finding because the latter is more a matter of the heart than the brain, a feeling implanted so early and so deeply that it is only extirpated with difficulty. Although powerful, those feelings bear little relationship to the prevalence and frequency of home country ties.

Moreover, immigrant national loyalties are up for grabs, as indicated by their responses to

the questions regarding feelings for the United States and the U.S. flag, as well as their positive rating of the U.S. government. Acquisition of U.S. citizenship does not entirely corrode interest in home country politics or affection for the country left behind. But naturalization is associated with more positive feelings for the United States and a more negative assessment of the home country government, though we note that the causal direction here could go either way.

At the end of the day, these respondents find themselves in a liminal political situation, in the country of reception but not of it, while simultaneously of the country of origin but not in it. Still loving the country where they were born, they think little of its government and, though the matter is not raised in this survey, almost surely understand that home country governments can do little to solve the problems encountered in the place where they actually live. Although they appreciate the place of residence and even the government so busily deporting Latino immigrants, they remain excluded from its polity, as close to half are undocumented. Moreover, that barrier is unlikely to be crossed soon, because the price for comprehensive immigration reform—should it ever happen—will be paid by making the beneficiaries of legalization tread a long and arduous road to citizenship. Thus, the twinned decisions of home and host governments—the first deciding not to take care of its nationals, the second deciding not to welcome the people who are nonetheless wanted and needed—have created a natural experiment, in which millions of people spend long stretches of time with no option for formal political participation. Although highly undesirable, that condition offers ample research potential, as we have yet to understand the long-term consequences, both political and otherwise, of persistent alien status.

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