

The Bounded Polity: The Limits to Mexican Emigrant Political Participation

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International migration yields pervasive cross-border social engagements, yet homeland political involvements are modest to minimal. This contrast reflects the ways in which the distinctive characteristics of expatriate political life impede participation in the polity that emigrants have left behind. As polities are bounded, moving to the territory of a different state yields political detachment: diminishing awareness of home country political matters and weakened ties to the home state's electoral institutions. To assess this argument, we use a representative survey of the Mexican-born population in the United States to analyze two critical conditions for participation in expatriate elections: emigrants' ability to demonstrate eligibility to vote and their knowledge about voting procedures. We find clear signs of detachment. Most Mexican emigrants are not in a position to participate in homeland politics. Social ties, while pervasive, are associated with more knowledge only for the very small segment of the most engaged.

International migration moves people from the territory of one state to the territory of another, but emigrant loyalties to the place left behind often remain strong. While most migrants stay attached to the significant others still living at home, only some remain engaged with homeland politics. Yet the phenomenon is paradoxical: Expatriate voting is widespread, with over 100 countries allowing emigrants to vote, but typically excites small circles of intensely involved migrant activists, *not* the rank and file.

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Scholarly interest in expatriate voting has been particularly spurred by developments in Mexico. In the late 1980s, Mexican immigrant activists in the United States provided a platform for candidates dissenting from the country's once dominant party, the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI). They later lobbied for greater, home country rights, acquiring the right of dual nationality in 1996, and then that of extraterritorial voting in 2005, with its first application to a presidential election occurring in 2006. Franchise extension, however, led to little participation, with fewer than 55,000 applications for an expatriate voting ballot, yielding 32,632 expatriate votes, much to the disappointment of the migrant activists who had lobbied so hard to gain the vote.

The Mexican experience is not exceptional. Few emigrants in the United States report having voted in a homeland election after migrating. While low participation may reflect the novelty of some expatriate voting systems in the Western Hemisphere, these patterns are hardly unique as participation rates are low even in long established systems. A case in point are French expatriates, whose rates of electoral participation have declined over the past 25 years, falling well below the levels recorded in the mainland, even though France has allowed expatriate voting ever since 1946, has built-up an extensive consular infrastructure, has intensified its efforts to maintain contact with emigrants and even allows for Internet voting (Cariot and Clave, 2009).

Beyond voting, other indicators also point to limited expatriate political engagement. For example, 34 percent of foreign-born respondents to the 2006 Latino National Survey reported paying *no* attention to home country politics, with another 23 percent saying that they pay only a little attention (Fraga et al. 2006). Only 4 percent of the persons queried by the 2008 National Asian American Survey reported involvement in activities dealing with their country of origin (Wong et al. 2011: 77). Ninety-four percent of Colombian, Dominican and Salvadoran immigrants surveyed randomly by the Comparative Immigrant Entrepreneurship Project said that they *never* participated in campaigns to support home country political candidates; 96 percent also reported that they *never* contributed to home country electoral campaigns.¹

By contrast, ongoing social connections to significant others left behind appear pervasive. A recent representative survey of Latin American immigrants in the United States found that two-thirds call home at least once a month, over half send remittances and almost 30 percent traveled home at least once in the prior 2 years (Soehl and Waldinger, 2010). Though only a minority of Latin American immigrants engages in the type of intense, ongoing connections, most maintain some degree of connectedness. Not surprisingly, the effects of these ongoing ties can be readily observed in sending societies, as exemplified by the rising worldwide flow of remittances.

We contend that this *contrast between pervasive cross-border social engagements and modest to minimal homeland political involvements* reflects the ways in which the distinctive characteristics of expatriate political life impede political participation. *As politics are bounded, moving to the territory of a different state yields political detachment, diminishing awareness of home country political matters and weakening the ties to home state electoral institutions needed for*

voting. We assess this argument through consideration of Mexican expatriates in the United States. *We analyze two critical preconditions for participation in expatriate elections, namely, the ability to demonstrate eligibility and knowledge about voting procedures.*

We proceed by analyzing a large-scale, nationally representative sample of Mexican immigrants in the United States. Conducted in January and February 2006, 5 months *before* the first Mexican presidential election allowing emigrant votes (Suro and Escobar 2006), this survey is one of the few sources of data on emigrants' knowledge of electoral procedures and their eligibility to participate. Consequently, it is well suited to this paper's central goal of assessing the factors affecting the capacity of Mexicans in the United States to participate in elections back home. By contrast, as the survey was conducted *prior* to the election, it could not provide information on whether or not respondents voted, *a question entirely different from the one that this paper addresses.*

The characteristics of sending states' political system and the type of election at hand certainly influence the level of expatriate interest; we note that Mexico extended voting rights to citizens abroad in such a way as to depress participation rates. Registration procedures were elaborate, and identification documents were not easily obtained. Yet the ability to identify oneself as an eligible voter and knowledge of election procedures are issues in all elections. We return to the issue of generalizability of the Mexican case in more detail in the concluding sections, but note here that by virtue of occurring outside the territory of the state, voting procedures will necessarily be more complex in the expatriate context. Thus, our analysis *highlights conditions inherent to expatriate participation in electoral activity that will apply to a variety of contexts.*

Emigrant Political Participation and Expatriate Voting

Mobilization and Knowledge

Reengaging with the homeland political system they left behind may appeal to *some* migrants but not *all*, in particular the labor migrants leaving Mexico, for whom exit is implicitly political. As noted by Mexican sociologist Arturo Santamaria Gómez, "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).

Other barriers may result from lack of political involvement *prior* to migration. Because migrants are typically young, many leave with little experience in formal politics. Political conditions at home also matter: opportunities for engagement with electoral politics may be scant in undemocratic and even democratizing societies. In the Latino National Survey, for example, only 47 percent of Mexican-born respondents voted before emigrating. Hence, many potential expatriate voters would be first-time voters, for whom barriers are high and whose socioeconomic resources greatly influence participation.

The mechanisms facilitating participation when “in country” lack force in the expatriate context. As political life has a fundamentally social core, social networks *could* foster expatriate political participation if they linked less politically attentive migrants to those more politically engaged. In the absence of a history of expatriate engagement, that group is often small. Moreover, settlement may lead to spiralling disengagement, with even areas of high ethnic density lacking the ethnic institutional completeness needed to stimulate engagement and political messages still weaker where lower ethnic densities prevail. Absent clear signals and the examples of others, motivations to participate may not suffice, as indicated by a study of immigrants in transit across the U.S.-Mexico border, who reported considerable interest in expatriate voting, but little inclination to invest effort or time in voting (Valle 2005).

In country, political leaders and organizations increase participation by mobilizing voters, a capacity often lacking in the expatriate situation. Campaigning on foreign soil is expensive, especially if the former is a relatively poor developing and the latter a relatively rich developed country; living abroad, migrants are missing from the electoral registers used to identify and activate likely voters. Emigration states also hesitate to promote cross-border campaigning, because visible manifestations of *emigrants’ home country* loyalties might impede *host society immigrant* acceptance (Ostergaard-Nielsen 2003). Indeed, even states disposed towards multiculturalism, such as Australia (Battiston and Mascitelli 2008) and Canada (Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, 2011), have looked askance at recent extensions of expatriate voting, as infringing on sovereignty and raising issues of dual loyalty.

Political Incorporation

Beginning as aliens excluded from the polity, immigrants are nonetheless exposed to political messages broadcast to a wider audience. They are also affected by government policies, motivating them to attend to receiving society politics and to participate in various ways (Leal 2002) even if electoral participation is barred. For those eligible to acquire receiving society citizenship, naturalization enables more extensive political engagements, in turn possibly displacing an earlier, imported sense of home society membership.

Identification

Allowing electoral participation is a means of retaining emigrant loyalty for sending states seeking to connect with emigrants abroad. However, engaging *emigrants* encounters a variety of obstacles, in this case, that of identifying eligible expatriate voters. Documenting eligibility is a standard feature of all voting systems. However, in exiting the home state, emigrants also leave its documentary regime, making it difficult to provide proof of national identity and eligibility to vote. Indeed, identifying documents can cause migrants more harm than help. Because destination states need to discover a migrant’s nationality to determine the target state for deportation, undocumented immigrants may obliterate identity documents to obstruct deportation.

Sociological Factors

In addition to these distinctively *political* factors, changes in cross-border social structures may curb interest and involvement in home country politics. International migrations inherently yield ties from receiving to sending states, but those decline with time. As social relations shift from home to host societies, on-location costs grow, raising the burden of cross-border exchanges. The same motivation impelling migration—the search for a better life—also encourages the adoption of new competencies and practices, which yield rewards in the places where the migrants live (Alba and Nee 2003), but are likely to complicate interactions with home society contacts.

Countervailing Pressures

Of course, not *all* pressures work in the same direction.

Sending State Policies

Movement to another state frees migrants from obligations to the home state, but home states retain obligations to their emigrants. Embassies and consulates are outposts of extraterritorial sovereignty where states can interact with nationals abroad. Moreover, international law requires receiving states to allow sending states to fulfill their duties to citizens abroad.

Through consulates, governments provide myriad services to persons who live outside the territory, without renouncing citizenship. As argued by [González Gutiérrez](#), the architect of Mexico's effort to connect with its emigrants in the United States, these activities make the consular service “the fundamental glue of the efforts of rapprochement...the vector where the communities of migrants... and the offer of cooperation converge” (2006:23). As emigrants often need to verify identity in the places where they live and the provision of identity documents is a protected consular service, furnishing identity documents may provide a means of reconnection. The *matrícula consular*, a consular identification card issued by Mexico to millions of immigrants in the United States, provides an illustrative case.

Cross-Border Connections

Cross-border ties compose part of the migration experience itself: the things that flow across political frontiers—information, resources, support—help bind family members separated by space. While ties tend to erode with time, many migrants remain connected, sending back remittances, travelling home and communicating with home country relatives and friends. These contacts may provide the context in which political information can be transmitted, spurring an interest in home country politics.

Moreover, migration may trigger homeland responses, *directly* transmitting political signals. Recurrent return visits, as in the annual pilgrimages made by countless Mexican migrants for a 1-week celebration of their hometown's patron

saint (Massey et al. 1987:143-45), can facilitate contact with homeland political leaders, who make their presence known to otherwise absent sons and daughters (Fitzgerald 2009). While politics may generate little rank and file interest, resources mobilized by the minority of migrant activists may gain the attention of homeland political leaders—giving them additional reason to connect with migrants whenever possible. Last, the migratory circuit may fortify home community membership, as exemplified by the growing number of hometown associations. Though locally focused, oriented towards philanthropy and often-abjuring partisan politics altogether, these organizations can transform initially civic engagements into involvements of a distinctively political sort (Fox 2005).

Political Incorporation

Contrary to the view articulated above, acquiring receiving country citizenship may stimulate intensified home country engagement, as suggested by research that has shown naturalized citizens to be more, *not* less involved in cross-border engagements (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller 2003). Growing acceptance of dual nationality seems to allay suspicions of dual loyalty, removing an impediment to involvement in home country politics. As receiving country citizenship yields the right to cross borders at will, it also facilitates the face-to-face contacts most likely to sustain home country identities. Likewise, ethnic lobbying provides a socially approved means of maintaining dual home- *and* host-country ties while motivating sending states to connect with nationals.

These factors notwithstanding, we argue that the distinctively *political* nature of population movements across borders, and not just the social processes involved in settlement and the acquisition of host society cultural competence, impedes expatriate political participation. *International migration systematically weakens connections between emigrants and sending states: sending states lack organizational capacity in the place where migrants reside, and migration limits the political communications required for mobilizing and informing an electorate.* Examining the experience of Mexican immigrants, polled in the United States on the eve of the last Mexican presidential election, we show how these factors weakened emigrants' ties to Mexico's polity, impeding *potential* electoral participation.

Background: The Mexican Case

Expatriate voting emerged on Mexico's political agenda in the 1980s as democratization generated opportunities for migrant activists. These activists provided a platform for candidates dissenting from the country's once dominant party, the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, and later lobbied for home country rights. A 1996 overhaul of Mexico's electoral system formally "opened the possibility of exercising the external vote" (Calderon Chelius 2003:226); expatriate voting was finally approved in 2005.

The legislation (1) allowed Mexicans abroad to vote in Presidential elections only; it prohibited candidates and parties from campaigning abroad, (2) mandated postal voting, rather than at consulates, (3) limited participation to

migrants already possessing the electoral credential, available only in Mexico, as opposed to the *matrícula consular*, available in the United States, and (4) required eligible voters to send, via registered mail, three and a half months before the beginning of the most intensive period of campaigning, a written request to be included in a register of voters abroad. Much to the disappointment of vote activists, only 40,786 emigrants registered to vote, 80 percent of whom later cast a ballot (Navarro and Carillo 2007). A variety of factors may have restricted participation to such a small fraction of the emigrant population: the heavily undocumented nature of Mexican migration and the low socioeconomic background of the migrants; the fact that the right to vote from abroad had been granted shortly before the election, reducing the likelihood that information about voting procedures could have been fully disseminated; and most important, the very design of legislation, which, while allowing expatriates to vote "...made it practically difficult for them to do so" (McCann, Cornelius and Leal 2009:145).²

However, this article does not seek to explain why Mexico adopted the particular system it chose, nor why so few emigrants registered and eventually voted. Rather, we focus on the more general conditions affecting eligibility to vote and knowledge of voting procedures and requirements. Given the protracted, controversial debate over expatriate voting, the increasingly competitive nature of Mexico's elections, the size of the Mexican population living in the United States, the density of its settlements, the robust condition of the Spanish language media and the intensity of cross-border communications, the context confronted by Mexican immigrants in the United States was one likely to promote both interest in home country politics and awareness of expatriate voting and its requirements, the latter's complexities notwithstanding. Reinforcing those factors is the unusually large scale of Mexico's consular infrastructure in the United States (including 50 consular offices) and its aggressive efforts to provide emigrants with both protection and a broad array of services, thus reinserting the sending state into the emigrants' lives. Consequently, this is a case well suited for the theoretical issues at stake, involving impediments but also numerous ingredients likely to increase emigrants' capacity to connect with the home country polity.

Data, Variables and Analysis

This article analyzes the 2006 Pew Hispanic Center "Survey of Mexicans Living in the U.S. on Absentee Voting in Mexican Elections," involving Spanish and English telephone interviews with a representative sample of 987 Mexican-born adults, aged 18 years and older, living in the United States. Interviews were conducted from January 16, 2006 (one day after registration closed), through February 6, 2006.

Dependent Variables

Credencial electoral

Mexico's democratization led to the formation of a new electoral system, autonomous from the government and designed to maximize transparency and reduce

fraud. A new electoral management body issued a tamper-proof, voter registration card, the *credencial para votar con fotografía*, or electoral credential and established an electoral registry, which reproduced the photograph appearing on each credential (Becerra, Salazar and Woldenberg 1997).

Whether in Mexico or abroad, possession of the credential is required to vote; however, that document could only be obtained in Mexico. Moreover, as the credential was not issued until the early 1990s, long-term migrants could not have brought it with them. An expert commission, assembled by the *Instituto Federal Electoral*, estimated that at most 1.5 million of the then roughly 10 million migrants living in the United States possessed a credential (Instituto Federal Electoral 1998 [2004]:36). Later estimates suggested that 2.4 to 4 million migrants might possess the credential (Santibañez Romellon 1998:411) a projection consistent with responses to this survey.

Knowledge of election procedures

We analyzed six questions regarding respondents' knowledge of the election and election procedures: whether respondents knew (1) the year of the election, (2) its month, (3) that immigrants had the right to vote, (4) that there was a deadline for registration, (5) the deadline's date, and (6) whether they had some knowledge of specific registration procedures.³ We grouped the questions into two dimensions. The first, involving items one to three, relates to basic knowledge, requirements common to expatriate voting systems regardless of specifics, making very modest informational or attentive demands. As national elections in Mexico are held in July every 3 years, presidential elections are held in July every 6 years, the presidential term itself is referred to as "el sexenio," and a nationally representative survey show that almost 89 percent of Mexicans surveyed (in Mexico) knew the correct length of the presidential term, these items pick up matters that almost any emigrant modestly interested in Mexican politics should know.⁴ Also the build-up to the new electoral law entailed a long, much publicized controversy. Thus knowing that emigrants now possessed the right to vote similarly entailed modest demands on political information. The second dimension measures the specific knowledge needed to participate in this particular election, thus indexing the greater knowledge requirements imposed on potential emigrant voters by Mexican electoral law.

Independent Variables

We model variation in these measures of knowledge and the probability of possessing the credential electoral with the following independent variables.

- *Settlement*: We expect that home country attachments weaken with settlement, indexing settlement with a variable measuring respondents' years of U.S. residence. To allow for diminishing or accelerating effects, we include a quadratic.
- *Acculturation*. We use language to index acculturation, hypothesizing that shifts from mother to dominant tongue weaken interest in home country matters. We capture English-language proficiency using a question asked of persons interviewed in Spanish, querying their ability to "carry on a conversation in

English, both understanding and speaking,” with a four-category response option of “very well, pretty well, just a little, or not at all.” We classify all persons interviewed in English ($N = 37$) as speaking English very well.

- *Legal status*: The Pew survey first asked respondents whether they were naturalized citizens; it then asked the noncitizens whether they were legal immigrants with permission to stay permanently, next asking all others whether they were legal temporary visitors and, last, asking remaining respondents whether they were undocumented. We anticipate that acquisition of U.S. citizenship will yield negative effects on possession of any Mexican identity document as well as knowledge of election procedures. We include a set of dummy variables where naturalized U.S. citizens comprise the omitted category.
- *Social and economic resources*: Higher socioeconomic status is generally associated with higher levels of knowledge of and participation in politics. We enter education as a set of dummy variables: primary (omitted), some high school, high school degree and any post high school. We also include household income before taxes, differentiating \$30,000 (omitted), \$30,000 to \$50,000 and more than \$50,000.
- *Cross-state connections*: We use information about phone calls, remittance behavior and travel home to assess how routine cross-border activity affects expatriate voting. We divide respondents into those making phone calls to Mexico at least once a week, at least once a month and less frequently (reference category). We construct a four-category variable distinguishing between nontravelers (reference group), one time, two times and three or more times travelers. We distinguished among persons remitting once in the prior year, several times, once a month and not at all.
- *Participation in Mexican civic organizations*. The survey asked if respondents belonged to a civic organization, sports team, or Mexican emigrant social club. We hypothesize that those responding yes will be more likely to possess identifying documents and be more knowledgeable of electoral procedures.
- *Location of a Mexican consulate*: We expect respondents living in cities with permanent consulates to be more likely to possess the credential and to be more knowledgeable about election procedures.
- *Possession of a matrícula consular*: Consulates provide identity documents, a service fostering reconnection between the home state and its emigrants. Though Mexico has been providing consular identity cards to nationals residing in the United States since the late 19th century, efforts to issue a consular card greatly intensified after September 11, 2001. Shortly thereafter, Mexico introduced the *matrícula consular de alta seguridad*. Between 2000 and 2008, Mexico issued roughly 7 million *matrículas* (*Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores* 2008:239), reflecting the card’s widespread acceptance by U.S. financial institutions, states and localities. We expect respondents possessing the *matrícula* to be more likely to possess the credential and to be more knowledgeable about procedures.
- *Ethnic density*: As information about politics circulates through contacts and ethnic densities are conducive to political organizations that could engage in mobilization, we expect a positive relationship between concentration of recent

co-ethnic immigrants and our outcome variables. We include information from the Census 2000 STF 3 file on the share of the population in each zip code that is Mexican born, arrived after 1990 and lacks U.S. citizenship.

- *Interest in and views toward home country politics*: Possession of documents and knowledge of election procedures are likely to be affected, by both knowledge of Mexican politics and views towards the Mexican political system and its parties. We use a question about following politics in Mexico to measure interest in home country politics: closely, somewhat closely and not closely (reference group). Indicators of views of the Mexican political system come from questions about “the way in which Mexican political institutions function” (very good, good, fair, bad, very bad). For simplicity, we collapse “very good and good” and “bad and very bad.” We hypothesize that persons with more favorable views will be more likely to possess an election credential and to be knowledgeable about electoral issues.
- *Gender and age*: Hypothesizing that men will be more likely than women to have a credential and to be more knowledgeable about election procedures, we include a dummy variable for sex. Following the literature on political science, showing a strong relationship between age and political participation, we expect age—measured as a continuous variable—to yield positive effects on possession of the credential as well as knowledge of election procedures.

Analysis

As possession of a document is a dichotomous variable, we use logistic regression to estimate the odds of possessing the *credential electoral*.

To assess effects of our independent variables on basic knowledge about the election and on specific knowledge about the registration procedure, we use a structural equation model with two latent variables. Corresponding to a particular type of knowledge, the latent variables are identified by responses to questions relating to the relevant construct, and then regressed on observed independent variables. Structural equation modeling allows us to specify the relationship between observed dependent variables and the two types of knowledge and simultaneously estimate the factor loadings the correlation between the two types of knowledge and the regression equations. Our model also takes measurement error into account by treating answers to questions about election and registration procedures as imperfect indicators of the underlying unobserved knowledge variable. These models are also known as MIMIC (Multiple Indicators Multiple Causes) models. Figure 1 presents a schema of the model. The variables relating to settlement and transnational activity (left side) are seen as influencing the two types of knowledge (circles in center), which in turn are identified by a set of questions.

The equations for the model can be written as follows:

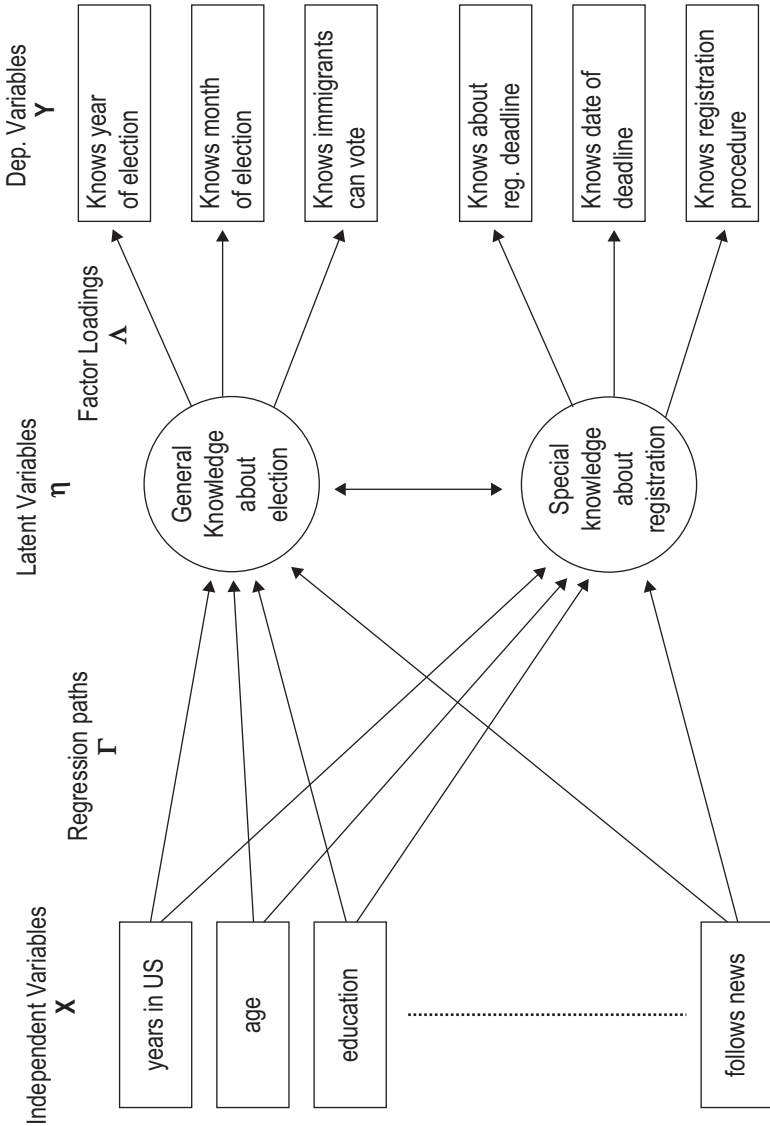
$$Y = \Lambda\eta + \varepsilon$$

for the measurement model, where Y represents a vector of indicators of the latent variables, Λ is a matrix of factor loadings of the latent knowledge variables η . In our case the indicators of the latent variable are binary responses. The structural part of the model is

$$\eta = \Gamma X + \zeta$$

where Γ are the regression coefficients of the latent variables on X , the observed covariates and ζ is the residual variance (error term) of the latent variable not

Figure 1. Representation of Latent Variable (MIMIC) Model for Knowledge About Election and Registration Procedures.



Note: For clarity the error terms for the observed and latent variables are omitted from the diagram.

accounted by the regressors. The residual variance ζ and the unique factors ε are assumed to be uncorrelated. Because the observed dependent variables are binary, we use a weighted least squares estimator to obtain parameter estimates.

Missing Data

While missingness on most variables is very limited, questions about income and legal status produced higher refusals, with just over 25 percent declining to state income and about 7.5 percent legal status. For 19 percent, we are missing information on the ethnic density of their neighborhood. We use multiple imputation, allowing us to retain the full sample size and avoiding bias resulting from listwise deletion.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents means and frequency distributions of all variable: 31 percent possessed the *credencial electoral*, 78 percent knew about the right of Mexican emigrants to vote and 55 percent knew that Mexican authorities set a deadline to register. Less than half knew the year of the election, 25 percent knew something about registration procedures and still fewer correctly answered the more demanding questions about the month when the election was held (19%) and the deadline for registration (15%).

Most respondents came from low socioeconomic backgrounds: 61 percent did not complete high school and 74 percent lived in households with annual incomes below \$30,000. Most were recent arrivals, with 50 percent residing in the United States for 12 years or less and 25 percent for 6 years or less. Only a fifth reported speaking English fluently; 30 percent possessed no English language proficiency at all. The respondents maintained regular connections to Mexico, but limited face-to-face contact: almost 70 percent reported *no* travel to Mexico in the previous year. Phone calls to Mexico occurred frequently: 46 percent called weekly; 33 percent called monthly. Many remitted frequently: almost 60 percent sent money at least once in the last year and 20 percent remitted monthly.

Other variables pointed to connections to the Mexican state and exposure to Mexican immigrant civil society. One third lived in cities with a Mexican consulate; 46 percent possessed a *matricula*—substantially more than have a credential. Although the share of recent immigrants from Mexico in our respondents' zip codes averaged only 7 percent, concentrations of recent arrivals were as high as 33 percent. Only 10 percent belong to a Mexican civic organization.

Stated interest in Mexican politics is high but opinion of it is generally low. The great majority (75%) claimed to follow Mexican news closely or somewhat closely. Nonetheless, only 13 percent expressed a favorable opinion of Mexican political institutions.

Table 1. Means and Frequency Distributions of Variables

	Original Dataset	Imputed Data (M = 20)
Dependent Variables		
Has voting credential	.31	.31
Missing	.00	
Knows year of election	.45	.45
Month of election	.19	.19
Immigrants can vote	.78	.78
Mexican authorities have set a deadline	.55	.55
Correct deadline	.15	.15
Something about registration procedures	.25	.25
Independent Variables		
<i>Settlement</i>		
Mean years in United States	15.0	15.0
Status: U.S. citizen	.25	.26
Permanent legal resident	.42	.46
Temporary legal resident	.11	.12
Undocumented	.15	.16
Missing	.07	
<i>Acculturation</i>		
Speaks English: Very well	.09	.09
Pretty well	.11	.11
Just a little	.49	.50
Not at all	.30	.30
Missing	.01	
<i>Socioeconomic Status</i>		
Education: Primary	.36	.37
Some high school	.23	.24
High school	.24	.25
Post-high school	.14	.14
Missing	.03	
Income: < \$30,000	.54	.74
\$30,000 to \$50,000	.14	.19
> 50,000	.05	.07
Missing	.27	
<i>Connection to Mexico</i>		
Travel to Mexico, previous year: No	.67	.67

(Continued)

Table 1. continued

	Original Dataset	Imputed Data (M = 20)
Once	.19	.19
Twice	.06	.06
Three times or more	.08	.08
Missing	.00	
Calls to Mexico: less than monthly	.20	.21
Monthly	.33	.33
Weekly +	.46	.46
Missing	.01	
Remitted in last year: No	.42	.42
Once	.04	.04
Several times	.34	.34
Monthly	.19	.20
Missing	.01	
Member of Mexican civic organization	.10	.10
Missing	.02	
<i>Presence of home country influences</i>		
Lives in city with Mexican consulate	.33	.33
Has Matrícula Consular	.46	.46
Missing	.01	
Pct. Mexican born noncitizens arrived after 1990 in zipcode	.06	.07
Median	.10	.09
Missing	.19	
<i>Interest and views towards Home Country Politics</i>		
Opinion about Mexican political institutions: Good	.13	.13
Fair	.42	.43
Bad	.32	.33
No opinion	.11	.11
Missing	.01	
Follows Mexican news: Closely	.30	.30
Somewhat closely	.44	.45
Not closely	.25	.25
Missing	.02	

Note: N = 987, survey design weights used for calculations of means and frequency distributions.

Multivariate Analysis

Electoral credential

Possessing the credential is almost entirely a function of socioeconomic status, settlement and age with legal and citizenship status, and acculturation largely falling out (Table 2). With other variables held at their mean value, almost one third of better educated respondents (31% for college and 29% of high school graduates) but less than a fifth of their primary school counterparts hold the credential. As that document can be brought from Mexico, but *not* obtained in the United States, settlement yields opposite effects: the probability of possessing the credential quickly and steadily declines as U.S. residence increases. With other variables held constant, the credential is held by 62 percent of new arrivals, but only 11 percent of those with 25 years of residence and only 6 percent of those with 35 years of residence. Results for the connectivity indicators are generally positive; however, only the coefficient for those few respondents traveling to Mexico three times or more in the previous year comes close to conventional levels of statistical significance ($p = .101$). Age positively affects possessing the credential: those 10 years older than the mean respondent were five percentage points more likely to hold the credential.

Of the variables indicating the presence of home country influences, only the possession of the *matrícula* is associated with the likelihood of possessing the voting credential. *Ceteris paribus*, those with the *matrícula*, are about 13 percentage points more likely to possess the credential. Neither the presence of a consulate nor contact with Mexican civil society, as indicated by concentration of recently migrated compatriots or membership in Mexican civic organizations, affects possession of the *matrícula*.

We note an alternative explanation: because earlier migrants would not have obtained the electoral credential prior to migration, as it was not introduced until the 1990s, the association between years in the United States and possession of the credential could reflect a cohort, as well as a settlement effect. Unfortunately, our data do not allow us to conclusively adjudicate between the two. When introducing a dummy variable into our regression, distinguishing those who came before 1990 from migrants who moved later, we find that the post-1990 respondents are more likely to have a voting credential. As the coefficient is not statistically significant (t value 1.08) and introduction of the period dummy also leaves the coefficient on years in the United States unaffected, we conclude that both cohort and settlement factors are likely to be at work.

Knowledge of Mexican election procedures

The second set of columns in Table 2 summarizes the MIMIC model for knowledge of electoral issues. To facilitate comparison we standardized the variance of the latent variables to 1. Three items—knows the year of the election, the month of the election, whether immigrants can vote—identify the first latent variable of basic knowledge. Three other variables—knowing whether a registration deadline exists, knowing the date of the deadline, having some knowledge of the registration procedures—identify the second latent variable, special knowledge

Table 2. Models for Having Voting Credential and Knowledge about the 2006 Presidential Election

	Has Voting Credential		Knowledge about the Election			
			Basic Facts		Registration	
	Coef.	T	Coef.	T	Coef.	T
<i>Settlement:</i>						
Years in United States	-.14	-4.67 **	-.01	-.88	.03	1.75 *
Squared	.00	2.10 **	.00	.03	.00	-1.41
<i>Legal Status: (a)</i>						
Permanent legal resident	.00	.00	.26	1.43	.27	1.49
Temporary legal resident	.28	.64	.34	1.25	.49	1.82*
Undocumented	-.42	-.91	.47	1.88*	.35	1.30
<i>Acculturation (b)</i>						
Speaks English very well	-.33	-.63	.02	.07	.10	.37
Pretty well	-.11	-.25	.12	.51	.07	.29
Just a little	.21	.75	.23	1.47	.20	1.33
<i>Socioeconomic Status (c)</i>						
Education: Some high school	.29	.92	.59	3.37***	.51	3.00***
High school	.58	1.86*	.21	1.17	-.10	-.57
Post-high school	.85	2.33**	.79	3.55***	.47	2.14**
Income: 30k to 50k	.20	.59	.34	1.61	.49	2.15**
> 50k	-.57	-.91	.08	.33	.11	.42
<i>Cross State Connections (d)</i>						
Travel, previous year: once	.21	.71	-.05	-.35	-.18	-1.16
Twice	.02	.03	.03	.11	.13	.45
3 times +	.78	1.62	1.06	4.02***	.64	2.75***
Calls to Mexico: monthly	.54	1.34	.30	1.45	.06	.28
Weekly +	.50	1.27	.34	1.72*	.07	.37
Remits: once	.27	.79	.11	.53	.23	1.23
Several times	-.16	-.56	.44	2.74***	.45	2.87***
Monthly	.47	.97	-.26	-0.93	.19	.63
<i>Presence of home country influences</i>						
Blgs to Mexican civic organization	.26	.80	-.36	-1.59	-.18	-.94
Consulate in city	-.28	-1.16	.03	.25	.12	.92
Has Matricula Consular	.78	3.39***	.04	.35	.01	.10

(Continued)

Table 2. *continued*

	Has Voting Credential		Knowledge about the Election			
			Basic Facts		Registration	
	Coef.	T	Coef.	T	Coef.	T
Interest and views towards Mexican politics (e)						
Op. of Mexican politics: fair	.46	1.33	.26	1.31	.59	3.07***
Bad	.55	1.52	.27	1.27	.58	2.95***
None	.08	.16	.00	.01	.41	1.67*
Follow news: somewhat closely	.39	1.22	.57	3.07***	.97	4.99***
Closely	.42	1.37	.33	2.11**	.55	3.41***
<i>Demographic Variables</i>						
Male	-.03	-.15	.43	3.24***	-.03	-.23
Age	.02	2.03**	.03	4.15***	.01	1.46
Intercept	-2.31	-2.82***				
<i>Measurement Model for Knowledge Variables</i>			Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
Knows year			.86	.05***		
Knows month			.79	.06***		
Knows immigrants can vote			.63	.06***		
Knows of deadline					.89	.06***
Knows date of deadline					.70	.07***
Knows registration procedures					.61	.05***
Correlation between factors			.69	.06		
Model fit (mean over imputations):						
RMSEA			.02			
CFI			.91			
Pseudo R square				.18		

* $p < 0.1$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$

Note: SE = standard error; RMSEA= root mean square error of approximation; CFI= comparative fit index.

N = 987, estimates pooled from multiple imputations (20 datasets); omitted categories: (a) U.S. Citizens, (b) Speaks no English, (c) primary education, income < \$30k, (d) did not travel back, calls less than once a month, never remitted, (e) good opinion, does not follow news.

about the registration.⁵ As indicated by commonly used model fit indices, this model is appropriate for our data. Although the two types of knowledge are substantially correlated (.69), the small standard error of the estimate (.06) indicates that the correlation is significantly different from 1. Thus, this first step in the structural equation analysis supports our hypothesis that the questions related to such basic features of the electoral system as the year and month of the presidential election tap into knowledge significantly different from those related to the complicated voting procedures that Mexico imposed.⁶

The regression of the latent variables on our independent variables shows that settlement does *not* yield significant effects on basic knowledge. Although years of U.S. residence and knowledge of registration procedures are positively related ($p < 0.1$), the quadratic coefficient is negative, indicating no significant effect. Net of other factors, however, naturalized citizens appear to score lower on basic knowledge than undocumented respondents and lower ($p < 0.1$) than temporary residents on know-how about registration procedures.

Connectivity indicators influence knowledge of procedures, though only for the most connected. The most frequent travelers to Mexico scored higher on both areas of knowledge than did respondents who had not traveled in the previous year; those remitting several times yearly also had higher levels of knowledge in both areas.

Socioeconomic status yields predictable effects on both knowledge dimensions. Compared with respondents possessing primary school educations, those with some high school education and those with postsecondary education were both more likely to have higher knowledge about expatriate voting. Though income did not influence knowledge of basic aspects of the election, it did affect knowledge of electoral procedures: those reporting household incomes between \$30,000 and \$50,000 were more likely to be knowledgeable than those from lower income households.

Furthermore, the presence of home country influences on U.S. soil does *not* shape knowledge. Those possessing a *matricula consular*, living in a city with a consulate and belonging to a Mexican civic association were not more likely to know about election procedures.

Variables indexing opinions towards Mexican political parties and attention paid to Mexican news also show significant effects. Persons following Mexican news “somewhat” or “very” closely scored higher on both areas of knowledge than those who didn’t follow closely. Respondents viewing Mexican political institutions negatively knew more about registration procedures than those with positive views. The regressions on basic knowledge yield a similar pattern, but with lower point estimates that fail to reach statistical significance. Findings for political interest variables are analogous: those paying greater attention to Mexican news have higher levels of knowledge; however, point estimates of the association are larger for knowledge about registration. Finally, older migrants and men score higher on basic knowledge, but not on specific knowledge.

Discussion

Pathbreaking work by anthropologists launched the “transnational perspective,” underscoring the ways in which international migration recurrently produces a

spillover of ideas, goods and civil and political engagements across national boundaries. Cross-state attachments linking migrants to significant others back home are indeed prevalent, comprising an integral part of the migrant reality. A smaller proportion maintains a continuing engagement with home-country politics, whether following political events or engaging in more active, resource-taxing activities. Residing in a richer land and enjoying greater freedoms, migrants often leverage resources that compel homeland political leaders to attend to the preferences of citizens living abroad, as evidenced by the growth of expatriate voting systems. Although the core migrant activists can thus pull politics across borders, the views and behavior of rank and file immigrants need attention before deciding whether the homeland polity can be expanded to include nationals living abroad or instead remains mainly confined to the territory of the home state.

Extraterritoriality and Identification

States increasingly follow “their” emigrants onto receiving soil territory. Although policies of “diaspora engagement” (Gamlen 2008) take many forms, the development of expatriate voting systems is an increasingly common element.

The ability to establish eligibility is a *precondition* of electoral participation. This is generally done by furnishing state-issued documents, a requirement hard to fulfill from the territory of another state. As we show, only a third of the respondents possessed the voting credential needed to cast a ballot. Net of other factors, possession was higher among the small, selective group of more educated respondents. Though widely shared, homeland ties had no systematic relationship to possession of the credential. Only the small group of especially frequent travelers may be more likely to possess the electoral credential than those who never traveled during the prior year. Reflecting the fact that the credential has no use in the United States as an identity document, possession falls sharply as years in the United States rise. Thus, sociological processes associated with settlement weakened these emigrants’ institutional connection to their home polity, reducing their likelihood of possessing the identification provided by the home state, thereby making them ineligible to vote.

Knowledge

Documentary forms of identification provide states with means of both caging *and* embracing their members (Torpey 2000). In leaving the territorial “cage,” migrants also diminish sending states’ ability to embrace those of their people living abroad.

Although one cannot cast a vote without proving eligibility, eligible voters are unlikely to cast a ballot without knowledge of election fundamentals—at the minimum, when, where and how to vote. When “in country” political parties and electoral authorities work hard to diffuse that information, but that resource is unlikely to spill over into the territory of another state where neither parties nor electoral authorities are active.

Mexico's expatriate voting law significantly increased knowledge requirements, requiring potential voters to know details of a complicated process. Hence, finding that only a quarter knew "something" about registration procedures and even fewer knew the deadline for registration provides no surprise. However, one might expect the emigrants to be familiar with well-established characteristics of Mexico's electoral system, knowledge that they might have brought with them or could have obtained via attention to Spanish-language homeland news stories on television or in newspapers. Instead, respondents were relatively unfamiliar with even one of the most basic aspects of Mexico's electoral system, namely, *when* elections took place. While presidential elections occur every 6 years, a fact known by almost 90 percent of Mexicans *in Mexico*, barely half of this sample of Mexicans *in the United States* knew that 2006 was an election year. Those elections are *consistently* held in July, as are the legislative elections that take place every 3 years. Yet when asked in January 2006, more than 80 percent of respondents did not know that elections would be held in July of that year.

Furthermore, few mechanisms effectively transmitted Mexican political information across borders. Most respondents remained closely connected to relatives at home and differences in the intensity of home country ties had little effect on levels of knowledge, except for the small minority maintaining especially intense cross-border activities. The few (8% of our sample) traveling to Mexico three or more times *in the prior year* knew more about electoral procedures than those who did not travel back home at all; however, the latter—the majority of the sample—knew as much about election procedures as those who had traveled back once or twice (25% of the sample).

Similarly, those calling home regularly seemed to know more about basic electoral procedures ($p > .10$), but were no more likely than others to have the detailed knowledge about registration procedures required to cast a vote abroad. Remitting also yielded inconsistent results: respondents remitting several times yearly had more knowledge than those remitting occasionally or not at all; however, the latter were no less knowledgeable than those remitting with the greatest frequency. Contrary to claims that acquiring host country citizenship facilitates engagement with the home country polity, *basic knowledge* of electoral procedures was *lowest* among emigrants who had acquired U.S. citizenship. By contrast, respondents living in areas of high ethnic density were no more knowledgeable than those living where fewer co-ethnics are found. More important than connectivity were the socioeconomic resources enjoyed by the selective group of respondents with more education and higher earnings than the modal respondent and were the most knowledgeable.

Lack of information does not imply complete disengagement. Most respondents follow Mexican news; these respondents were more knowledgeable than the less attentive, especially regarding more detailed aspects. On the other hand, those claiming to follow news closely were relatively unfamiliar with the basics of *when* the election would take place: only 57 percent of respondents who said they followed Mexican news closely knew that 2006 was a presidential election year; still fewer—27 percent—also knew that the election would be held in July

and that expatriates had the right to vote. In addition, cynicism toward politics did not yield the negative effect hypothesized earlier. Rather, this survey suggests that respondents with a more negative assessment of Mexican institutions were more knowledgeable than those more positively inclined.

Conclusion

Given the spread of expatriate voting systems, the contentious political debates over their organization and the growing scholarly literature devoted to this topic, the study of emigrants' *capacity* to participate in homeland electoral politics sheds light on the political dimensions of "immigrant transnationalism." Responding to pressure from abroad (Itzigsohn 2000), expatriate voting provides an ideal case of "transnationalism from below" (Smith and Guarnizo 1998). As an instance of "transnational citizenship" (Fox 2005), it also exemplifies the claim that migrants "may continue to participate in the daily life of the society from which they emigrated but which they did not abandon" (Glick-Schiller 1999:94). Because expatriate voting entails an extra-territorial activity, organized by the home state, but unfolding on destination state territory, it offers a fruitful opportunity for transforming the issue of "the relative importance of nationally restricted and transnational social fields," whose centrality is highlighted by Levitt and Glick-Schiller, into a question of "empirical analysis," just as these authors suggest (2004:1009).

Although Mexico to United States migration has been the foundation on which much social science theorizing about migration has been built (Massey et al. 1998), generalizations from this experience need to be sensitive to particularities of the case, a consideration that also holds to the study of expatriate voting. To begin with, this is a case of migration to a developed, democratic state, where foreigners can gain access to citizenship; any generalizations from this case are best applied to expatriates relocated to states of this type.

Characteristics of the migrant stream surely matter as well. For example, the generally low levels of education of Mexican migrants depress interest in and readiness to vote. As we find in our analysis, educational achievement is associated with more knowledge and higher likelihood of possession of voting documents. Preparedness to participate in expatriate politics may be greater among migrant streams that are positively selected on these criteria, such as Indians in the United States. The Mexican activists who vigorously and strategically advocated for the vote had exactly these traits, as they were an unrepresentative cross-section of longtime U.S. residents, hometown association and (Mexican) state federation leaders and entrepreneurs, professionals, journalists and academics (Escamilla-Hamm 2009), the leaders of whom possessed the legal status and financial resources needed to repeatedly return to Mexico for face-to-face lobbying of state officials. On the other hand, the increasingly contested nature of Mexican elections, the intensity of Mexico's effort to connect with its emigrants, as well as the density of the emigration and its ethnic infrastructure likely had the opposite effect of disseminating information about electoral and voting procedures. Also, because presidential

elections generate greater interest than legislative contests, they should also have made respondents more attentive.

Expatriate voting presents both sending states *and* emigrants with *generic* problems, inherent in the extraterritorial nature of the activity itself, which in turn impede participation, weakening both needed institutional ties and the mechanisms disseminating political information. First, expatriate voting systems confront a series of challenges: how to guarantee universal, equal and secret suffrage, how to regulate party competition and how to prevent offences against electoral law. Sending states can respond in a variety of ways, but each entails tradeoffs. Postal voting and, even more so, Internet voting reduce costs, yield the greatest coverage and appear to be expatriates' preferred option, but both involve security risks. Voting in consulates enhances security, but at higher cost and to the detriment of voters in areas of lower immigrant density. Contracting electoral services to local electoral districts in the host society lowers costs but lets the receiving state control electoral management, raising issues of national autonomy and sovereignty.

Though one might hypothesize that the novelty of the 2006 election, results from the presidential election of 2012 suggest otherwise: despite significant efforts by Mexico's electoral authority at building electoral awareness, votes cast from the United States barely moved, rising by just over 1,000 ([Instituto Federal Electoral, 2012](#)). Likewise, while Mexico's electoral laws certainly impede expatriate voting, participation rates are generally depressed. As noted in *Voting from Abroad* ([Ellis et al. 2007:31](#)), "rates of registration and turnout among external voters are almost always lower than they are in-country," a generalization that holds true in long-established systems with well-known rules of the game, such as France's or Sweden's, or newer systems, such as those sprouting elsewhere in Latin America. The pattern holds even when the expatriate electoral system is relatively friendly, as demonstrated in the 2004 election for President of the Dominican Republic, when migrants cast less than 1 percent of votes ([Itzigsohn and Villacres 2008:672](#)). As suggested by Table 3 the Dominican experience is well within the norm, as expatriate participation among a variety of countries fluctuates somewhere between .5 percent and 5 percent, well below levels recorded in-country.

Moreover, the two exceptions—expatriate voting in the 2006 Italian Presidential election and the 2011 Peruvian Presidential election—prove the rule. Only in Latin America, where the grandchildren of earlier immigrants had recently acquired Italian citizenship to enter the European Union and the influence of local ethnic elites remained extraordinarily strong, did Italian expatriate voters turn out in significant numbers ([Tintori 2011](#)). In the Peruvian case, expatriate voting had been obligatory until shortly before 2011, which might explain why 40 percent of Peruvians living abroad cast a ballot. Even in this case, however, participation fell far below the 85 percent level registered in-country, with a much higher prevalence of blank or null votes among expatriates (23% vs. 12%) suggesting a higher level of alienation.⁷

Consequently, the extraterritorial nature of expatriate voting consistently entails real, nontrivial costs. According to the *Handbook on Voting from*

Table 3. Expatriate Turnout in Select Recent Elections

	Estimate of Voting age population (VAP)	Expatriate Votes Cast	Turnout Estimate
Mexico – 2006:			
Overall		32,632	
United States	10,700,000	28,335	.26%
Mexico – 2012			
United States	10,700,000	29,348	.27%
Botswana			
1999 election	25,000	333	1.3%
2004 election	25,000	1,214	4.9%
Philippines 2004			
Conservative VAP estimate	3,800,000	233,092	6.1%
Generous VAP estimate	7,000,000	233,092	3.3%
Cape Verde 2001	250,000	7,558	3.0%
Peru 2011 (first round)	1,000,000	402,000	40%
Poland			
United States	7,061	452,053	1.6%
Germany	2,872	297,000	1.0%
Canada	1,641	177,535	.9%
France	1,406	103,829	1.4%
Czech Republic	410	24,000	1.7%
Sum/Average	13,390	1,054,417	1.3%
Italy			
2006 – official eligibles	2,699,000	975,414	36.1%
1987 Europe			9.7%
1987 Non-Europe			1.7%
1972 Europe			22.3%
1972 Non-Europe			2.3%
Czech Republic			
Slovakia	374	6,927	5.4%
France	260	3,370	7.7%
Italy	200	6,678	3.0%
Germany	196	34,386	0.6%
Poland	70	5,979	1.2%
Sum/Average	1,100	57,340	1.9%
Honduras 2001	4,541	546,000	0.83%

Note: Data on the eligible voting age population are hard to find and should be considered rough estimates in most cases. Thus turnout rates should be considered rough estimates that give a sense of the magnitude of participation. We tried to be conservative (tending towards overestimating turnout) in all the estimates we present. Sources and detailed comments about the assumptions and calculations can be found in the appendix.

Abroad, “External voting processes involve logistical arrangements that often cost more per voter than elections organized in the home country” (Ellis et al. 2007:262). Mexico’s initial experiment in expatriate voting cost \$27.7 million (266), amounting to just under \$1,200 per expatriate vote cast. Although start-up operations are always expensive, other experiences point to significant financial demands: thus, the costs entailed in each Canadian expatriate vote are four times those disbursed for in-country votes (Lesage 1998:105), expenditures that are particularly striking as surveys indicate that Canadians abroad lack a strong desire to vote (Zhang 2007). Whereas Canada or France are rich countries whose emigrants live abroad under conditions comparable to those at home, the same does not hold for the emigration countries of the developing world. Mexico and similar home governments *could* invest in infrastructures that encourage expatriate voting, but doing so would reallocate resources from more deprived stay-at-homes to more prosperous migrants living in more secure societies with more abundant public goods.

Similarly, all prospective voters, whether in-country or abroad, have to prove eligibility, but emigrants are less likely to possess the relevant documents, especially if they serve no function in the state where they reside. The Mexican government could have done for the *credencial* what it did for the *matrícula*: facilitate, even encourage, its acquisition in the United States. But the *matrícula* is wanted because it assists *immigrants* to resolve their identity problems in the host society, *not* because it helps *emigrants* reengage with Mexico. Furthermore, the controversies provoked by the *matrícula*—described by the restrictionist Center for Immigration Studies as “advanc[ing] Mexico’s immigration agenda” (Dinerstein 2003)—suggest that *some* Americans would strongly object to higher profile efforts at reconnecting Mexican immigrants with their home country political system. Indeed, this type of reaction was precisely the scenario feared by Mexico’s foreign ministry (Santamaria Gomez 2007), which worried that U.S.-based efforts to disseminate the electoral credential might raise questions about the *matrícula consular*, in whose credibility an enormous investment had been made.

As for the migrants, their decisive vote is likely to be the one that they previously made with their feet. While that vote neither severs ties to significant others at home nor ends homeland loyalties, it yields distance from the home state. Moreover, the challenges of life in a new land tend to reorient concerns, diminishing interest in homeland matters, which also receive reduced attention in the new, foreign environment. As for expatriate voting, it may have a feel-good quality, but is unlikely to do much for the migrants in the here and now. Although the homeland state can help with some of those practicalities by providing identity documents, these are useful only insofar as the host society permits. In the end, the political disruption produced by international migration is too much to sustain an extraterritorial electorate, which is why immigrants find themselves caged—connected to kin and friends still in their home country but detached from the polity they left behind.

Notes

1. Based on tabulations from the Comparative Immigrant Entrepreneurship Project, downloaded from <http://cmd.princeton.edu/data%20CIEP.shtml>; results weighted; tabulations for random portion of sample only.
2. For further details, see [Calderon Chelius \(2003\)](#), [Santamaría Gomez \(1994, 2007\)](#), and [Smith \(2008\)](#).
3. Specifically, we use the question: “Please tell me, do you know something about the procedure for registering to vote abroad?”
4. Source: The Americas Barometer, www.LapopSurveys.org.
5. We also performed the analysis using questions asking specifics (e.g., can you register by phone? at a consulate?). Results were substantively unchanged.
6. A test of a one-factor measurement model where all six items load on one latent knowledge variable against the two-factor model reveals a better fit ($p < .001$) for the two-factor model.
7. Electoral data from Oficina Nacional de Procesos Electoral: Resultados Elecciones 2011 (<http://www.web.onpe.gob.pe/modElecciones/elecciones/elecciones2011/1ravuelta/> accessed 2/18/2013).

Appendix: Explanation of Estimates and Sources for Table 3

Mexico:

Votes overall: [Ellis et al. 2007](#) (192)

Votes from the United States: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/world/interactives/mexico06/>

Voting Age Population (VAP): The 2006 to 2009 American Community Survey lists about 11.8 million Mexican born individuals. Of these 1.1 million (9%) are younger than 18 years of age, which leaves about 10.7 million who would be eligible to register. To calculate VAP from total emigrant populations we apply this distribution to other cases unless numbers are available.

Botswana:

Votes: [Ellis et al. 2007](#) (38)

VAP: *Ibid.*

Philippines:

Votes: [Ellis et al. 2007](#) (196)

VAP (conservative): Counting only temporary overseas Filipinos, who most certainly would be eligible to vote, gives an estimate of about 3.8 million according to the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA): <http://www.poea.gov.ph/stats/2006Stats.pdf>

VAP (generous): According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) the general estimate of overseas Filipinos is about 7 Million ([Ellis et al. 2007:194](#)).

Cape Verde:

Votes: Ellis et al. 2007 (202)

VAP: Ellis et al. 2007 (202) lists an estimated diaspora of about 500,000 of which 250,000 would be eligible to register to vote.

Peru:

Votes: Peruvian Board of Elections (see note 7).

VAP: The Migration and Remittances Factbook of the World Bank (2011) lists about 1.1 million expatriates. Subtracting 9 percent for those younger than 18 years of age leaves us with about 1 million of voting age.

Poland:

Votes: Fidrmuc and Doyle (2004 :6). This paper lists the total number of expatriates votes as well as breakdown for select countries. We use the sum of the votes for all those countries where we could find reliable information on eligible expatriates.

VAP: For the United States, Canada, France and the Czech Republic, we relied on the “Database on Immigrants in OECD countries (DIOC)” assembled by the OECD in 2000. For Germany we use data from the most recent Microcensus published in Fachserie 1 Reihe 2.2 by Statistisches Bundesamt in 2010 available at <http://www.destatis.de>. Table 2 lists 332,000 foreigners with Polish citizenship in Germany, 35,000 of those (about 10%) were younger than 20 years of age, which gives us a conservative estimate of the eligible voting age population of 297,000.

Italy:

Battiston and Mascitelli (2008). Italy sends ballots are *automatically* to Italian citizens abroad if they are listed in two databases maintained by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior. However these two lists reflect only those citizens who maintain regular contact with their consulate or former municipality in Italy. (272) There are likely many more Italian citizens that fall through the cracks because they no longer maintain contact to the Italian state. (276)

Czech Republic:

Votes: Fidrmuc and Doyle (2004)

VAP: OECD Database (DIOC)

Honduras:

Votes: Ellis et al. 2007 (134)

VAP: Ellis et al. (2007:133) list an estimated 600,000 citizens living abroad; if we assume that as in the case of Mexico 9 percent are younger than 18 years of

age and thus not eligible, then this would leave us with a conservative estimate of 546,000.

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