ISSN: 1852-9003 - eISSN: 2660-700X
DOI: https://doi.org/10.14201/rlop.25779

TRANSNATIONAL POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT AND THE CIVIC INCORPORATION OF MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES

La participación política trasnacional y la incorporación cívica de los inmigrantes mexicanos en los Estados Unidos

Engajamento Político Transnacional e a Incorporação Cívica de Imigrantes Mexicanos nos Estados Unidos

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Submission: 2021-02-16
Accepted: 2021-04-28
First View: 2021-05-31
Publication: 2021-05-31

Keywords:
Immigration;
Mexico;
Transnationalism;
Political Campaigns

Abstract

Many migrants to the U.S. are engaged in public affairs in their country of origin. Whether such engagement impedes or encourages engagement in American politics remains an open question. Drawing from a unique two-wave panel survey of Mexican immigrants conducted in 2006, with surveys waves fielded to correspond to national elections in Mexico and the United States, we examine the relationship between transnational

political engagement and attentiveness to American politics. The findings indicate that remote political engagement in Mexican politics is not a barrier to incorporation in the U.S. context. On the contrary, engagement in Mexican campaigns can stimulate interest and participation in U.S. elections.

Palabras clave:
inmigración; México; transnacionalismo; campañas políticas

Resumen
Muchos de los migrantes a los Estados Unidos se involucran en la vida cívica de su país de origen. Es pregunta abierta si tal participación impide o promueve la participación en la política norteamericana. Utilizando datos de una encuesta de inmigrantes mexicanos en dos olas llevadas a cabo en 2006, coordinadas con las elecciones nacionales en México y los Estados Unidos, investigamos la relación entre la participación política trasnacional y la atención a la política norteamericana. Los hallazgos señalan que la participación en la política mexicana no es obstáculo a la incorporación cívica en el contexto norteamericano. Al contrario, la atención a las campañas mexicanas puede estimular el interés y la participación en las elecciones estadunidenses.

Palavras-chave:
imigração; México; transnacionalismo; campanhas políticas

Resumo
Muitas pessoas que migram para os Estados Unidos continuam engajadas em assuntos públicos em seu país de origem, mas não está claro se esse engajamento impede ou incentiva o envolvimento na política americana. O presente estudo examina a relação entre o engajamento político transnacional e a atenção à política americana, com base em uma pesquisa de painel de duas ondas realizada com imigrantes mexicanos em 2006. As duas ondas da pesquisa correspondem às eleições nacionais no México e nos Estados Unidos. Os resultados indicam que o engajamento à distância na política mexicana não é uma barreira para a incorporação no contexto dos Estados Unidos. Pelo contrário, o engajamento em campanhas mexicanas pode estimular o interesse e a participação nas eleições americanas.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most remarkable features of immigrant populations in the United States today is the potential for simultaneous engagement in two different national political systems. Advances in communication and transportation technologies allow immigrants to lead real and virtual lives in two places at the same time (DeSipio, 2011). Changes in law increasingly allow immigrants to retain political, property, and other rights in the nation of origin. While much has been written about trends toward dual citizenship, dual nationality, and transnational communities – all terms that refer to the maintenance of political, legal, economic, and social ties and identities in different national contexts (see, e.g., International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2007; Lafleur, 2013) – less systematic research has been conducted on the extent, meaning, and practical implications of this emerging phenomenon.

This article contributes to our understanding of transnational politics by modeling the contours of binational political engagement among Mexican immigrants in the United States. It asks the following questions: Are migrants who are engaged in the politics of their home country less interested in American politics, and therefore less subject to meaningful civic incorporation in the United States? Or can patterns of engagement in two political systems be complementary, with interests and attachments abroad fostering a deeper commitment to U.S. public life? In other words, as Levitt (2000:460) asked, "Is dual membership a recipe for long-term social and political marginalization, or can participation in two polities result in a case of *two for the price of one*?"

The idea of transnationalism is well established in the scholarly literature on immigration, even if its practice is understudied. Bauböck (2006:703) defined transnationalism as "political activity across territorial borders" and the "changing and increasingly overlapping boundaries of membership in political communities." Viramontes (2008) proposed the term "civic binationality," building on ideas of dual engagement with both the United States and Mexico (Fox, 2005) and the concept of "simultaneity" (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004). Here we focus on both dynamics – the engagement of Mexican immigrants in Mexican politics but also in United States politics.

To explore these topics, we test hypotheses derived from the literatures on migration and political participation. The data for this study are drawn from a unique panel survey of Mexican migrants in the United States who were interviewed twice. The first time was in advance of the July 2, 2006 Mexican presidential election, and the second followed the United States midterm elections in November 2006.

We chose this population for several reasons. First, the presence of major elections in Mexico and the United States only five months apart provided an opportunity to create, to our knowledge, the first Latino immigrant panel study to analyze political engagement during national campaign periods, a survey design that has not since been replicated. Second, Mexicans represent by far the largest bloc of immigrants in the United States (Passel, 2007; Zong and Batalova, 2016) and are increasingly dispersed across the country (Suro and Singer, 2002). We were consequently able to find sufficient samples of Mexican immigrants in both new and old destination areas, thereby capturing the regional diversity of the contemporary Mexican immigrant experience. Third, debates about immigrants and immigration in the United States are in large part, albeit not exclusively, about Mexicans, Mexico, and the U.S.-Mexico border. A range of literature has examined the contemporary Mexican immigrant experience, from the scholarly (National Academies, 2015) to the polemical (Huntington, 2004). Such work has important theoretical as well as practical implications, and this paper therefore aims to contribute to the understanding of Mexican immigrant political integration as

well as the more general debate about the state of America as a nation of immigrants in the twenty-first century.

To preview, our survey data indicate that many Mexican immigrants actively follow campaigns and elections south of the border. Most expressed a candidate preference in Mexico's 2006 presidential election, and a substantial number would have voted in Mexico via absentee ballot if user-friendly procedures were put in place to facilitate such long-distance participation (see also Smith, 2007; McCann, Cornelius, and Leal, 2009; McCann, Escobar, and Arana, 2019).

What are the implications of this remote engagement for political involvement in the American context? Taking advantage of the panel format, we find that engagement in Mexican politics does not weaken involvement in American politics. On the contrary, the former is positively associated with the latter. In addition, many of the factors that influence interest in transnational politics also influence interest in American politics. Rather than a "zero-sum" relationship across the two domains, we see evidence of a "two for one" effect.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Political scientists generally recognize two fundamental components of engagement in politics: caring about public affairs and political knowledge (Converse, 1990; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995; Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Barry, 1996; Verba, Burns and Schlozman, 1997; Dalton, 2002; Abramowitz, 2010). Individuals who are politically engaged follow campaigns and current events, and they learn about the major actors in and around government. However, a central fact of political life in all democracies is that such engagement in public affairs is costly (Downs, 1957). In the United States, political institutions are by design far removed from most people's everyday activities, and it can be difficult to become informed about candidates running for office and policy issues (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996). Only a subset of the public expresses considerable interest in politics, and those with greater resources – the better educated, the more affluent, and those in higher status occupations – are the most likely to become engaged (Brady, Verba and Schlozman, 1995; Verba and Nie, 1972).

Recruitment efforts can help individuals overcome the costs of participation, particularly for those lower on the socio-economic scale. In major U.S. elections, approximately half of the electorate will report encountering political activists in some fashion (e.g. Karp and Banducci, 2007). Nevertheless, paying attention to politics appears to be beyond what the "budget" of many Americans can afford. Following politics also involves opportunity costs; an hour spent watching national news broadcasts is an hour that cannot be used to work, spend time with family, or enjoy hobbies and other personal pursuits.

Researchers have examined whether immigrant political behavior in the United States is similar or different to that of the native born, finding both similarities and differences. In terms of the resource model, education and income effects appear to vary depending on the contextual and group-level variables studied, as well as the type of political participation under consideration and the size of the sample. For example, Leal, Lee, and McCann (2012) observed that income and education were associated with Mexican immigrant participation in transnational politics at the aggregate level. Individual-level survey studies of migrants to the United States from Jalisco and Yucatán found that as migrants ascend the socioeconomic ladder they tend to lose interest in home-country politics. However, higher incomes may predispose immigrants to be interested in the politics of both the United States and Mexico (Ruiz Alonso, et al. 2007; Serrano, et al. 2009). Leighley and Nagler (2016), using the 2012 ANES and LINES data, found that factors which typically predict white participation in the United States failed to do so for Latino immigrants, thereby suggesting potential limits to the resource model. Leal (2002) similarly found that Latino non-citizen participation in American nonelectoral politics was not shaped by income and education (see also McCann, et al. 2016). With this literature as a backdrop, we posit the first hypothesis, which roots national and transnational political engagement in the socioeconomic profile of an immigrant:

H_1. Resource Theory: Higher levels of socioeconomic status increase participation in both U.S. and transnational politics.

Mexican immigrants in the United States face many additional obstacles to engagement in their host country's politics. Not only do migrants often work in low wage jobs, but a lack of citizenship or legal status and unfamiliarity with English makes politics in the United States unapproachable for many (DeSipio, 1996). In addition, U.S.-based Mexican migrants wishing to follow campaigns and current events south of the border could have high opportunity costs for engaging in politics in the American context. Extending the point about time budgets, an hour spent on public affairs in Mexico is an hour that cannot be applied to learning about candidates, parties, and issues in the United States. Over the long run, it might be impractical, perhaps impossible, for immigrants to be involved in any sustained way in two distinct political systems.

Mexicans who were politically active prior to emigrating tend to remain involved after settling in the host country (Merelo, 2017).[1] What would be the at-

1. Such pre-migration experiences in politics may condition as well the orientations of Mexicans towards politics in the receiving country (Wals 2011, 2013; Wals and Rudolph 2019).

traction of continued involvement in Mexican politics for an immigrant living in the United States? Some could be drawn into home-country public affairs through frequent contact with family and friends in Mexico (Waldinger, 2007; McCann, Cornelius and Leal, 2009). It is also common for Mexican migrants to send funds to family in Mexico, and remittances have become a leading source of foreign exchange for the Mexican economy (de la Garza and Lowell, 2002; Estevez, 2016). Mexicans in the United States who invest their funds in this way may feel a greater stake in the home country and, as stakeholders, see a need to follow the course of politics there more closely (Smith and Bakker, 2008). Moreover, many may still aspire to resettle in their country of origin, even after many years of living in the United States (Jones-Correa, 1998, 2001; Serrano et al., 2009). These various forces – social, economic, and psychological – could all draw Mexicans into campaigns and electoral processes south of the border, if not as an actual participant then at least as an interested and informed observer. At the same time, these forces could delay or truncate political incorporation in the American context.

This conceptualization of binational political engagement, which could be labeled "zero sum", finds limited empirical support in some survey-based studies, though little research systematically assesses the relationship between political attentiveness in a transnational context and engagement in U.S. politics. Staton, Jackson, and Canache (2007) find that Latino immigrants who considered themselves dual nationals were less inclined than single nationals to believe that voting in American elections would be a good use of their time. These immigrant respondents were also less likely to report registering to vote and turning out. Along similar lines, Cain and Doherty (2006) report that Latino survey respondents who were dual nationals had a lower probability than single nationals of registering to vote and voting in the United States. Being a dual national was also linked to slightly lower rates of volunteer work in a campaign, attendance at demonstrations, and contributions to Latino political organizations (see also Marrow, 2005:786). In addition, Waldinger and Duquette-Rury (2016) show that achieving U.S. citizenship correlates with a declining attachment to the home country. These findings all suggest that immigrant attention to politics in one nation may reduce attention to politics in the other nation.

By contrast, Gershon and Pantoja (2014) find that Latino immigrants with ties to their home country were more likely to become naturalized U.S. citizens. Other scholars see no effects or contradictory dynamics. Ramakrishnan (2005) analyzed data from the U.S. Current Population Survey and found that dual nationality had no effect on turnout in American elections. Pantoja's (2005) study of Dominicans in New York City found that participation in home country politics reduced the likelihood of U.S. naturalization but increased non-electoral political engagement in the US.

While these inconsistent findings merit further research, the tendency in this literature to conceptualize transnational political engagement primarily in terms of dual nationality can be theoretically limiting. Knowing whether an immigrant has secured this status tells us little about the quality or intensity of cross-border political ties. There is no reason to expect, for example, that a Mexican migrant who originally became a dual national in order to purchase or inherit property in Mexico would necessarily be drawn into politics in that country.[2] An alternative way to capture immigrant interest in homeland politics is to monitor how closely immigrants follow Mexican politics from a distance, including whether they are aware of the major political actors south of the border. Survey researchers have used such measures for decades to gauge the competence of electorates around the world (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Zaller, 1992).

When assessing the impact of transnationalism on the political incorporation of immigrants in the U.S., it is also theoretically limiting to focus principally on how turnout in American elections might be affected. A variety of scholars have argued that research on immigrants and politics needs to expand beyond the vote due to the structural limitation that electoral systems place on immigrants (Pantoja, 2005; Bauböck, 2006; Hochschild et al., 2013; Jones-Correa, 2013; Morawska, 2013; Ramakrishnan, 2013).

To be sure, voting is an integral component of civic life in any democracy. A large portion of the current immigrant population, particularly migrants from Latin America, lacks citizenship and therefore voting rights in the United States (Passel, 2006). However, many nevertheless find ways to engage in non-electoral and unconventional politics. For example, in a 2007 survey study of U.S.-based migrants from Jalisco, 46 percent reported that they had participated in the marches in support of migrants that took place across the United States on May 1, 2006 (Serrano et al., 2009; see also Leal, 2002; Martinez, 2005; Levin, 2013). Restricting an analysis of binational civic engagement to only those Mexicans who have become naturalized American citizens could result in misleading inferences. For this reason, our conceptualization of political engagement in the United States is comparable to how we measure engagement in transnational Mexican politics: general interest in a nation's politics, attention to a specific election, and knowledge of a nation's political actors and processes. We therefore model this type of informal mobilization – in which all are eligible to participate – rather than voter turnout.[3]

2. In Mexico, foreigners were traditionally prohibited from owning property along the border and coasts. Dual nationals are not considered "foreigners" (Fitzgerald, 2005).

3. If remote engagement in the politics of another country or a declaration of dual nationality causes immigrants to disengage from public affairs in the United States, standard regression models fit on choice-based samples of naturalized voters could underestimate this effect.

Although it is plausible that remote engagement in Mexican politics pulls immigrants away from public affairs in the United States because of attention costs, the opposite possibility is also worth considering. Binational political engagement might not be a "zero-sum" proposition. Rather, immigrants who are interested in Mexican politics from a distance may also be the most interested in following campaigns and elections in the United States. Delli Carpini and Keeter's (1996) work on political knowledge is instructive on this point. In an extensive analysis of the American mass public, they found that individuals who are informed about candidates and public officials also tend to know a great deal about U.S. governing institutions, party politics, key political events in history, and issues on the public agenda. There is a slight tendency for Americans to specialize in their knowledge of "national" versus "local" politics, but the correlations between survey items that tap into each domain of awareness tend to be very high (142-151). For many individuals, political engagement is not restricted to one particular subject area but is generalized across a wide array of objects and contexts (see also Cassel and Lo, 1997; Fiske, Lau, and Smith, 1990; Jennings, 1996; Popkin and Dimock, 1998).

These findings suggest that Mexicans who settle in the United States but are interested in current events south of the border will have higher levels of engagement in American politics. In addition, with the advent of the North American Free Trade Agreement and the rise of hemispheric-wide issues regarding natural resources, labor, and crime, public affairs in the United States and Mexico have become more tightly linked (Inglehart, Nevitte and Basañez, 1996; Selee, 2018).[4] For Mexican-born immigrants, following political developments in both Mexico and the United States might not require twice the effort and costs. Interest in one domain might instead be compatible with attention to the other.

Several survey-based studies suggest that cognitive engagement in the politics of both sending and receiving countries is mutually reinforcing. A study of Yucatecan migrants to the United States found that binational political interest rises with time spent in the United States. However, the researchers found the relationship to be curvilinear: binational political involvement fell among migrants with more than eleven years of U.S. residence (Ruiz Alonso et al., 2007). Another study, of U.S.-based migrants from Jalisco, found that longer U.S. residence is a significant predictor both of binational political involvement and of having a primary interest in U.S. politics. Each additional year spent in the United States increased the probability of being interested in both U.S. and Mexican politics by 4 percent, and the probability of having a primary interest in U.S. politics by

4. This convergence in policymaking agendas stands in marked contrast to earlier eras in United States-Mexico relations (Turner 1967).

5 percent (Serrano et al., 2009, p. 167). Concentrating specifically on binational civic activism, Portes and Rumbaut (2006, p. 138) argue that "many aspects of transnationalism end up *accelerating* the political integration of immigrants in the United States… skills learned in one context frequently 'travel' to others. Thus, experience gained in founding hometown committees or lobbying the home country government can be transferred, when the occasion requires, to campaigns to further migrant interests in the American context" (emphasis in original).

Such a process of transference is in keeping with more general models of mass political behavior that emphasize the 'habit-forming' nature of political involvement (Brody and Sniderman, 1977; Miller and Shanks, 1996; Green and Shachar, 2000; Gerber, Green and Shachar, 2003).[5] Elections and campaigns in Mexico offer Mexican immigrants in the United States fresh opportunities to follow politics and possibly to directly or indirectly communicate their preferences. Such politicization could in turn make American politics more relevant, interesting, and approachable.

The theory of transferability (sometimes termed translation) finds that immigrants can put to use in a new context the political knowledge learned and behavioral habits formed in the nation of origin. These studies have found that while interest in politics is most easily transferred to the new country, previous political activity can also be transferred regardless of how similar the political situations are (Black, 1987). Using a pooled sample of immigrants from the 1988, 1993, 1997, 2000 and 2004 Canadian Election Studies, White et al. (2008) found strong support for the idea that interest in politics transfers from the old country to the new. As they noted, "greater exposure to any political environment (new or old) makes it easier to engage in politics; individuals find ways to effectively draw on the political skills developed in different environments" (269).[6] This finding is echoed in Finifter and Finifter's (1989) study of American immigrants in Australia, which found that immigrants that were politicized at home were the most likely to become politicized in the new country. They also found evidence of destination country contextual and learning effects, thereby suggesting both pre- and post-migration effects.

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5. Prior (2010, 765) suggested that "voting itself may not be a habit, but the consequence of habitual (i.e., stable) interest in politics," which nevertheless emphasizes individual-level continuity in orientations toward politics.

6. One exception is that immigrants from non-democratic states are not more likely to vote (Ramakrishanan and Espenshde, 2001), with Cuba being a notable outlier (Yang, 1994; Bueker, 2005). In addition, Waldinger and Duquette-Rury (2016, 57) suggest that those who leave are "people who opted for exit rather than voice" and that, as such, they will typically be "disillusioned nationals in exiles [who] do not have much reasons to attend to home country politics ... By contrast those who exercised voice prior to migration are more interested in home country matters."

For Mexican immigrants, this process may be augmented by the institutional similarity of politics across borders. Not only might voting in Mexico prepare an immigrant for voting in the United States, but longstanding parties and ideologies exist in both the United States and Mexico, the federal system is very similar, and the major political institutions and offices are largely the same (president, senator, and governor).

In the analysis below, we probe more deeply into these relationships, hypothesizing that binational political engagements result in two civic actors "for the price of one" rather than "zero-sum" participatory trade-offs.

H_2. Transferability Theory: Political engagement in Mexico is associated with political engagement in the United States.

Before moving to the empirical findings, it is important to recognize how changes in migrant settlement destinations over the last twenty years might shape patterns of binational political incorporation. For much of the twentieth century, Mexicans who came to live in the United States settled primarily in states along the U.S.-Mexico border. In 1960, for example, over three-quarters of the Mexican immigrant population resided in California or Texas (Durand, Massey and Capoferro, 2005). Since the 1990s, a growing number of Mexicans immigrants now live in non-traditional sites far from the border, with the smaller cities and towns of the Midwest and Southeast showing the largest gains (Card and Lewis, 2007; Batalova, 2008).

Social scientists have only recently begun to explore how the conduits of immigrant inclusion may vary from one regional or institutional context to the next (see, e.g., Jones-Correa, 2005; Wong, 2006; Andersen, 2008; Pedraza, 2014). In the present case, the extent to which binational political engagement among Mexican immigrants is a "zero-sum" or "two for one" proposition could depend on local civic and cultural conditions. Within the states bordering Mexico, the lines dividing "American" and "Mexican" politics have traditionally been blurred (Herzog, 1990). Mexicans who settle in these states can expect to find a rich array of civic, religious, educational, recreational, economic, and bilingual media organizations catering to the needs and interests of Mexican-Americans and other Latino groups. In such an environment, ample sources of information about politics would be available, with news from Mexico and Latin America interwoven with reports on American government (Subervi-Vélez, 2008; Center for Spanish Language Media, 2011; Guskin and Anderson, 2014).

By contrast, in the newer settlement destinations of the Midwest, Southeast, and Pacific Northwest, Mexican-American communities are generally less well established. With fewer organizations to facilitate incorporation into local civic life, and in "red" states where some elements of the native-born population are hostile

to newcomers, immigrants in these areas may be less able to become acquainted with public affairs in the United States (Hernández-León and Zúñiga, 2005; Shutika, 2005; de Graauw, 2016; Tran, 2017). Moreover, from the vantage point of Oregon, Iowa, Indiana, Georgia, or the Carolinas, following the politics of Mexico might require a greater personal investment of time and attention. If such transnational engagement impedes political incorporation in the United States due to the added burden of paying attention to public affairs in two nations rather than one, as the "zero-sum" hypothesis posits, this effect should be more pronounced for Mexicans in newer settlement sites. On the other hand, if attentiveness to campaigns and elections in Mexico overlaps with engagement in the American context even for immigrants in these areas, this would constitute strong evidence for a "two for one" perspective on binational involvement.

H_3. Regional Settlement Theory: Immigrants in new destination areas engage in politics less than do immigrants in traditional destination áreas.

In addition, other factors might shape why immigrants choose to become engaged in American and transnational politics. In particular, ties to Mexico might draw the attention of immigrants back to Mexican politics and away from American politics. An immigrant who sends remittances to Mexico, remains in close contact with friends and family in Mexico, and wishes to return to Mexico one day might be more focused on Mexican politics. A study of migrants from Jalisco and Zacatecas found that those who sent remittances regularly to their relatives in Mexico were more likely to vote in the 2006 Mexican elections (Chiu and Gutiérrez, 2007:158). Bueker (2006) found that the "myth of return" was associated with naturalization rates, and ease of return may lead immigrants to invest less in a new country (Yang, 1994; Bueker, 2006; for an alternative view see Pantoja, 2005).

H_4. Sending Nation Connections Theory: Immigrants with deeper personal ties to Mexico are more likely to engage in Mexican politics and less likely to engage in American politics.

Lastly, theories of socialization and exposure suggest that immigrant connections to the home country might atrophy over time. In addition, as immigrants spend more time in the United States, they will gain political knowledge and skills (Cho, 1999; Bueker, 2005; White et al., 2008; Street, 2015; Tran, 2017) as well as set down roots that are more sensitive to changes in American politics and policy. For example, a study of U.S.-based migrants from Yucatán found that knowledge of the George W. Bush administration's immigration reform proposals was a significant predictor of interest in becoming a U.S. citizen (Ruiz Alonso, et al.,

2007:245). As immigrants acculturate to the United States, particularly by learning English, they will be better able to learn about American politics and to engage in more aspects of it. In a similar vein, immigrants who have become naturalized US citizens or are otherwise authorized to reside in the country may be more readily socialized into the norms of American democracy. Those without citizenship rights or papers – and the formal civic standing that such a status brings – could remain more oriented towards home-country politics.

H_5. Socialization Theory: Immigrants who have spent more time in the United States and are more acculturated are more likely to engage in American politics and less likely to engage in Mexican politics.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND FINDINGS

The data for this study are drawn from surveys of Mexican immigrants residing in San Diego, Dallas, and north-central Indiana (including Indianapolis) that were conducted in 2006. These three sampling areas were selected to maximize variation in settlement contexts. Dallas and San Diego are traditional destinations for migrants, with a combined Mexican-born population at the time of the interviews of over one million (Batalova, 2008). North-central Indiana is typical of 'new' settlement destinations for immigrants (Suro and Singer, 2002). Between 2000 and 2004, the number of Indiana-based Mexicans rose by approximately 60,000. Out of all metropolitan areas in the United States, Indianapolis had the fifth-highest rate of Latino population growth during this period (Sagamore Institute for Policy Research, 2006). Although the size of the Mexican population in Indiana is much smaller than in Texas or California, the rapid expansion of immigrant communities within the state was remarkable.

In total, 753 interviews (350 in Dallas, 126 in San Diego, and 277 in Indiana) were conducted in June of 2006. All surveys were administered by telephone, with respondents recruited randomly through records obtained from a well-established marketing research firm specializing in the Latino community.[7] The

7. Funding for these surveys was provided by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Public Policy Institute at the University of Texas, the College of Liberal Arts at Purdue, and the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies at the University of California-San Diego. We alone are responsible for the findings and interpretations presented here Iasmin Goes provided valuable research assistance. Since no ready-to-use listings of immigrants are available in the three regional sites, we obtained random samples of "Mexican heritage" households from Geoscape International (Miami, FL). Because the telephone records contained both U.S.-born Mexican-Americans and immigrants in unknown proportions, and many lines were out of service, there is no straightforward way to calculate a rate of response. If "non-responses" are calculated to include disconnected telephone lines, calls that were

fielding of the study was timed to coincide with the presidential campaigns that year in Mexico; the election itself was held on July 2, 2006. This was an ideal time in which to study remote political engagement among Mexican immigrants due to the intense mobilization occurring within Mexico. Competition for the presidency was especially fierce that year, with the winning candidate, Felipe Calderón of the National Action Party (PAN), edging out his main rival, Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), by the slimmest of margins. Emigrants who were residing in the United States but wished to engage in the Mexican campaigns in some fashion could follow political events from the other side of the border, learn about the contestants, speak with friends and family about the elections, and, in rare cases, actually vote, since this was the first year that Mexicans living abroad could participate via absentee ballot.[8]

Several months later, immediately after the deeply contested November midterm elections in the U.S., another round of interviews was conducted using the same sample. Our goal was to track the potential connection between remote engagement in the Mexican context and the migrants' involvement in U.S. campaign politics.[9] To our knowledge, this was the first panel survey in political science of immigrants in the United States, and we are not aware of any other surveys since 2006 that have also tracked immigrants across two distinctive campaign periods, an election cycle in their country of origin and a major American election. This

never answered, busy signals, and individuals who asked to be contacted again before interviewers could determine whether they fit the study profile (per the RR1 calculation in American Association for Public Opinion Research 2006, 32), the estimated response rate is a rather low 11 percent. However, if the response rate is defined as the ratio of completed interviews / attempted interviews of subjects known to fit the study protocol (i.e., RR5 in the AAPOR guide), this figure is dramatically higher at 89 percent. Additional information on sampling procedures will be provided upon request.

8. However, ballots had to be solicited over six months in advance of the July 2 election, and voters were responsible for submitting them via international registered mai, a costly task. Consequently, only a small percentage of the eligible expatriate electorate turned out (Fitzgerald 2009, 164-167; McCann, Cornelius, and Leal, 2009).

9. Near the end of these 753 interviews conducted in June, respondents were asked if they would be willing to take part in another survey during the fall; 655 (or approximately 87 percent) agreed, left their first name or nickname, and provided up to two telephone numbers where they could be called. In November, we were able to reach and interview 264 Mexicans for the second round. This represents a successful contact rate of 40 percent, using a baseline of 668 potential interviewees, or a rate of 35 percent if the baseline is the original 753 who were queried about participating in a follow-up survey wave. The most common reason for a respondent to be dropped from the panel was a telephone line that was no longer in service. In cases where the line was still active and the respondent could be reached (with up to fifteen attempts) nearly all (97 percent) participated in the survey.

Panel attrition is not significantly related to most of the socioeconomic and demographic variables (level of affluence, gender, level of education, language use, religious practice, or time spent in the United States). There is a small but statistically significant correlation between age and being included in the second survey wave. As in the first wave, nearly all interviews in November were conducted in Spanish, with each lasting approximately sixteen minutes on average.

research design thus offers a unique opportunity to investigate the hypotheses detailed above.

In the first wave of the survey, how attentive were Mexican immigrants to politics, both in the United States and Mexico? Several items address this question: general interest in politics (a four-point scale ranging from none to a great deal of interest); attention to the campaigns (also coded on a four-point scale, with separate items for the Mexican presidential and the U.S. congressional campaigns); whether the respondent had a preference among the Mexican presidential candidates; and three markers of knowledge about politics -- whether respondents could identify which Mexican presidential candidate was associated with a particular campaign slogan, whether they knew the month when the U.S. congressional elections were scheduled, and whether they could name the party controlling the U.S. House of Representatives. The breakdown of responses, separated by sampling sites, is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Engagement in U.S. and Mexican Politics among Mexican Immigrants, Mid-2006

	Dallas	San Diego	Indiana
U.S. Context			
In general, how interested are you in American politics?			
Very (4)	21 %	20 %	18 %
Somewhat (3)	27	20	27
Only a little (2)	29	29	36
Not at all (1)	21	32	19
Mean	2.5	2.3	2.4
Standard Deviation	1.1	1.1	1
How closely are you following the congressional campaigns?			
Very closely (4)	7 %	6 %	6 %
Somewhat closely (3)	22	20	22
Only a little (2)	35	37	34
Not at all (1)	36	37	39

	Dallas	San Diego	Indiana
Mean	2	1.9	1.9
Standard Deviation	0.9	0.9	0.9
Could you tell me the month of the congressional elections? Do you know which party controls the House of Representatives in Washington?			
Two correct responses	6 %	6 %	4 %
One correct response	19	18	17
No correct responses	75	76	79
Mean	0.31	0.29	0.25
Standard Deviation	0.58	0.57	0.52
Mexican Context			
In general, how interested are you in Mexican politics?			
Very (4)	11 %	16 %	13 %
Somewhat (3)	22	12	19
Only a little (2)	31	37	34
Not at all (1)	35	35	35
Mean	2.1	2.1	2.1
Standard Deviation	1	1.1	1
How closely are you following the presidential campaign in Mexico?			
Very (4)	7 %	12 %	9 %
Somewhat (3)	22	10	22
Only a little (2)	35	38	35
Not at all (1)	36	39	37
Mean	1.9	2	1.9
Standard Deviation	0.9	1	1

	Dallas	San Diego	Indiana
Which presidential candidate has adopted the following phrases for his campaign? "Para que las cosas se hagan" [Madrazo], "Primero los pobres" [López Obrador]			
Two correct responses	3 %	2 %	2 %
One correct response	16	21	18
No correct responses	80	76	80
Mean	0.23	0.26	0.23
Standard Deviation	0.5	0.49	0.47
Stated a preference for president in the Mexican election	60 %	64 %	62 %

Source: Authors' surveys of Mexican immigrants, June 2006. Note: Lowest N = 341 (Dallas), 123 (San Diego), and 272 (Indiana).

The survey responses in this table point to several noteworthy patterns. The first is that in both country domains, levels of political engagement tend to be low. In the United States context, only about one out of five were "very much" interested in politics, and an extremely low proportion (6-7 percent) reported following the congressional campaigns very closely. Far more respondents stated that they were following the campaigns only a little (34-37 percent) or not at all (36-39 percent). These levels of political interest are significantly below what would be found among the general U.S. public (Dalton, 2002). They are also lower than what has long been measured for Mexican-Americans in Latino political surveys, using samples that include both immigrants and non-immigrants (e.g., de la Garza et al., 1992, Chapter 5).

Levels of political knowledge in the American context are also low. Within the entire sample, fewer than ten percent were aware that Republicans had control of the House of Representatives in mid-2006 or that the congressional elections were to be held in November. Again, this percentage is lower than what would be expected within the general U.S. electorate or among Mexican-Americans in that general time period (de la Garza et al., 1992; Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996).

However, the level of information about partisan control of the House of Representatives and the timing of the elections is not uniquely low in the Indiana sample, in spite of the general lack of Latino media outlets in many parts of that state and the less developed network of Mexican-American civic organizations. This also holds for general interest in American politics and the congressional campaigns. Indiana-based Mexican immigrants are as attentive on average to government and campaigns in the United States as are Mexicans in Texas and California.

Turning to political engagement in the Mexican domain, the level of attention to Mexican politics and the presidential campaign in particular is not high, either. More respondents expressed little or no interest than a great deal of interest. A sizeable number, however, clearly maintained an interest in cross-border politics. Eleven to sixteen percent of the respondents reported being very interested in Mexican politics, and nearly as many followed the presidential campaigns south of the border very closely. These figures, while low, match the number of highly engaged Mexicans living within Mexico proper. As measured in the second wave of the national-level *Mexico 2006 Panel Survey*, which was administered approximately three to four weeks before the first wave of our survey, eleven percent of the Mexican electorate was very interested in politics, and an equal proportion reported being very attentive to the 2006 presidential election (Lawson et al., 2007).

With respect to presidential preferences, 60 percent or more of the immigrants across the three samples backed one of the contenders in the Mexican presidential contest – an impressive portion considering that under Mexican law, no formal political campaigning could take place north of the border. But the immigrants lacked basic information about the major candidates' messages. The vast majority could not correctly link the campaign theme of *"Para que las cosas se hagan"* ("So that things get done"), to the campaign of Institutional Revolutionary Party candidate Roberto Madrazo, or *"Primero los pobres"* ("First the poor") to the Party of the Democratic Revolution's Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

A region-by-region comparison of engagement levels reveals hardly any variation, a striking non-finding. Local institutions and subcultures are commonly found to shape civic involvement among U.S. racial and ethnic minorities (Leighley, 2005). Yet when basic interest in politics and levels of political knowledge among our interviewees is examined, it appears that a uniform potential for political inclusion exists in all parts of the United States. This is true with respect to engagement in both American and Mexican politics.

Is attentiveness to the politics of one country associated with withdrawal from the other? The findings in Table 1 could imply that remote engagement in Mexican public affairs lowers interest in U.S. political life. We begin to explore this claim by calculating correlation coefficients for the items in Table 1. The "zero-sum" view of binational civic incorporation would lead us to expect negative correlations. Before making these calculations, however, it is useful to pool the several survey indicators into two factors: one that stands for political engagement in the United States and the other for engagement in Mexican politics. By factor-analyzing the data in this way, the measurement constructs are validated. The immigrant's level of psychological involvement in politics should frame his or her responses to the multiple items on political interest, knowledge, and (in the Mexican case) presidential preferences. Confirmatory (SEM) factor analysis is

used to fit the two latent engagement factors to the concrete survey indicators. These results are given in Table 2.

As shown here, responses to the questions covering U.S. and Mexican politics load in a reasonable manner, with the overall fit diagnostics (noted at the bottom) indicating an acceptable specification (Kline, 1998). The factor loadings are all highly significant for each latent engagement dimension, though the coefficients for political knowledge are somewhat smaller than the paths for general interest in politics and attention to the campaigns. This difference is likely due to a measurement artifact. Summary knowledge indices such as those used here can be confounded by a respondent's tendency to guess at the correct answer, a trait that should not be taken as genuine engagement in U.S. or Mexican politics (Mondak, 2001).

The most important result in Table 2 is the covariance between political engagement in each national context: .30 (Dallas), .35 (San Diego), and .24 (Indiana). Relative to the standard errors for these estimates, the differences in covariances and correlations across the three regions are clearly insignificant. On the face of it, attention to Mexican campaigns and elections does not reduce the migrants' commitment to American politics, providing support for Hypothesis 2. Engagement in both domains appears to be quite complementary. This holds not only in border states but also in Indianapolis and surrounding towns.

These results suggest that a common set of forces shapes political engagement in both national contexts, and the local regional environment in the United States does little to moderate these forces. The next step is testing a regression model that includes a variety of demographic, organizational, and transnational factors. Hypothesis 1 predicts that variables related to socioeconomic status, resources, and skills are liable to be the most significant forces, with level of formal education perhaps exerting the strongest influence (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry, 1996). Other SES and demographic variables relevant to this population include language use (Spanish or English-dominant), affluence, gender, age, length of time spent in the U.S., and residency status (whether or not an immigrant is a naturalized citizen or has residency authorization).[10] Such factors are the common starting point for models of immigrant incorporation in the U.S., and it is likely that they condition transnational engagement.

10. Relatively few respondents (7 percent) were naturalized citizens, and 26 percent indicated that they were noncitizens with working papers for the United States.

Table 2: Confirmatory Factor Structures for Binational Civic Engagement

Measurement Model: Coefficients, Standard Errors, and Standardized Scores												
	Dallas			San Diego			Indiana			Total		
U.S. Context:												
General Interest	1.00		.74	1.00		.62	1.00		.62	1.00		.67
Follow Elections	.76	(.12)	.65	1.06	(.20)	.82	1.02	(.18)	.69	.91	(.09)	.70
Knowledge of Congress	.29	(.05)	.30	.38	(.09)	.47	.29	(.07)	.34	.27	(.04)	.34
Mexican Context:												
General Interest	1.00		.73	1.00		.73	1.00		.73	1.00		.71
Follow Campaign	.98	(.11)	.79	1.13	(.18)	.88	1.15	(.16)	.88	1.07	(.08)	.81
Knowledge of Slogans	.26	(.04)	.30	.19	(.06)	.30	.16	(.05)	.30	.27	(.04)	.32
State Preference	.24	(.04)	.37	.13	(.06)	.21	.26	(.05)	.21	.23	(.03)	.34
Factor Variances and Covariances: Coefficients and Standard Errors												
Variances												
U.S. Context	.62	(.12)		.48	(.15)		.39	(.09)		.49	(.07)	
Mexican Context	.55	(.09)		.59	(.14)		.46	(.09)		.52	(.06)	
Covariance	.30	(.05)		.35	(.09)		.24	(.05)		.29	(.04)	
Correlation	.52			.65			.58			.57		

Source: Authors' surveys of Mexican immigrants, June 2006. Note: Estimates calculated via structural equation modeling using AMOS 16.0 software, with all cases retained. To identify the factors, the measurement parameters for general interest in U.S. / Mexican politics were fixed to 1.0. All coefficient estimates are highly significant (*p* < .001). When the parameter estimates are free to vary across sampling regions, χ^2_{39} = 83.5; χ^2 / DF = 2.1; CFI = .95; RMSEA = .04. For the constrained (pooled) model, $\chi^2$83 = 119.3; χ^2 / DF = 1.4; CFI = .96; RMSEA = .02.

As noted above, organizations important to Mexican immigrant life could foster binational civic engagement. Two groups in particular are social clubs established by and for Mexicans (e.g., hometown associations, sports teams) and churches (Smith and Bakker, 2008; Fitzgerald, 2009; Keyes et al., 2010). In our samples, nearly half of the immigrants reported attending church once a week or more frequently. Approximately one in six mentioned participating in clubs and

social groups specifically for Mexicans. Additional factors include the previously mentioned personal connections and identifications that could pull immigrants towards political engagement south of the border: remaining in close touch with family and friends in Mexico, sending remittances abroad regularly, and wishing to return "home" to Mexico at some point in the future. Ties of this sort might well direct immigrants' attention towards Mexican campaigns and elections (Fitzgerald, 2009; McCann, Cornelius and Leal, 2009). We will test whether they also stimulate interest in U.S. politics.

The effects of these many background characteristics are explored through regression analysis (see Table 3).[11] Hypothesis 4, the sending nation connection theory, predicts that deeper ties with Mexico will lead to an increase in political engagement in that nation but a decrease in engagement in the United States. To test this theory, respondents were asked how often they sent remittances across the border, or communicated with friends and family in Mexico on a five-point scale ranging from never (1) to once a week or more frequently (5). Hometown association membership was coded as a binary variable, with respondents coded as being members or nonmembers. Finally, in order to test attachment to the sending country, respondents were asked if they planned to return to Mexico, stay in the United States, or were still unsure of their future plans. We also tested a variable for church attendance, as religious institutions often function as centers of civic and community life for Latino immigrants (Jones-Correa and Leal, 2001; Levitt, 2002; Espinosa, Elizondo and Miranda, 2005; Mora, 2013).

The simple bivariate effects of each predictor on the two engagement factors are presented first, followed by partial effects in a multivariate model where all independent variables are included. Separate models for the three sampling sites are not given because none of these predictors was found to vary significantly across the regions.[12] This is another noteworthy non-finding. It had been anticipated that in a "newer" settlement area such as north-central Indiana, engagement in politics would depend more on the migrants' social status and resources compared to "older" immigrant destination sites. Moreover, we thought it likely that the less-developed Mexican-American social networks in a state like Indiana would not be as effective compared to those in Dallas or San Diego in fostering and sustaining awareness of Mexican or American politics. However, the data show no support for such hypotheses.

11. See the Appendix for question wordings and distributions for these items.
12. Allowing the parameters to vary from region to region improves fit diagnostics only modestly and insignificantly. Constraining the parameters to take on the same values in San Diego and Dallas, the two "old" immigrant destination sites, but allowing those in the Indiana sample to vary also produces no significant improvement in fit. When assessing these results, the measurement structures for the engagement factors were specified per the model in Table 2, and did not vary across the three regions.

Table 3: Demographic, Social, and Transnational Determinants of Political Engagement in Both National Contexts

	United States Context				Mexican Context			
	Bivariate		Multivariate		Bivariate		Multivariate	
Education Level	.066	(.017)**	.065	(.017)**	.090	(.016)**	.106	(.017)**
Spanish Language Dominant	-.173	(.070)*	-.070	(.070)	.021	(.066)	.040	(.067)
Level of Affluence	.173	(.041)**	.097	(.042)*	.045	(.039)	-.030	(.040)
Gender (Female)	-.084	(.064)	-.059	(.065)	.015	(.061)	.008	(.063)
Age	.006	(.003)*	.007	(.004)*	.006	(.003)*	.012	(.003)**
Years in the U.S.	.012	(.004)**	.009	(.005)	.002	(.004)	-.003	(.005)
Church Attendance	.071	(.028)**	.037	(.028)	.062	(.026)*	.058	(.028)*
Clubs for Mexicans	.224	(.094)*	.191	(.094)*	.136	(.089)	.172	(.091)
Remittances	.029	(.024)	.024	(.026)	.019	(.023)	-.012	(.025)
Friends / Family in Mexico	.077	(.038)*	.092	(.041)*	.132	(.037)**	.118	(.040)**
Return to Mexico	-.218	(.038)**	-.196	(.037)**	.021	(.036)	.018	(.035)
Residency Status	.116	(.068)	-.061	(.075)	.088	(.065)	.057	(.072)

Note: * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$. See the Appendix for wordings and distributions for the independent variables. Political engagement in the two national contexts was measured through the factor structure in Table 2. The estimates were calculated through structural equation modeling via AMOS 16.0. In the multivariate model, $\chi^2_{72} = 147$; $\chi 2 / DF = 2.02$; CFI = .96; RMSEA = .04. These effects were constrained to be the same across the three sampling sites. Relaxing this constraint for any of the predictors in either the bivariate or multivariate specification does not significantly improve the fit.

In line with expectations, level of formal education has a large and statistically significant effect in both national contexts. Age also shapes engagement in U.S. and Mexican politics to approximately the same degree. Immigrants who spoke primarily Spanish at home were understandably less attentive to politics in the United States. At the same time, however, this variable did not lead to significantly greater interest in politics south of the border. In fact, in no case did a predictor pull immigrants significantly towards incorporation in one national context but away from the other, contrary to Hypothesis 4.

Some factors, however, are positively associated with engagement in both nations. These include church attendance and involvement in Mexican social clubs. In addition, the positive impact of cross-border familial and friendship ties on civic engagement is nearly the same in the American and Mexican contexts. This unexpected finding implies that immigrants with greater personal contacts in Mexico are more readily incorporated into U.S. civic life.

The regression estimates in this table illustrate why, contrary to the "zero-sum" hypothesis, remote engagement in Mexican public affairs can be compatible with attention to U.S. politics. Many of the factors that promote civic awareness in one domain are relevant in the other. Of course, the correlation between the two engagement factors in Table 2 is far from perfect; while the two dimensions overlap, they are clearly distinctive. For Mexican immigrants, following public affairs in Mexico is not tantamount to engagement in American politics, even for those living very close to the border.[13]

This raises the possibility that in a multivariate model of involvement in American elections, the impact of attentiveness to politics in Mexico may be very different from that for engagement in American politics. In the weeks following the Mexican presidential election on July 2, electoral campaigning across the United States became quite intense, with the newly resurgent Democratic Party capitalizing on widespread dissatisfaction with the economy, the war in Iraq, and the Bush Administration. Latinos and Latino-oriented issues also figured prominently in some campaigns, as did the subject of immigration policy reform (Leal et al., 2008). Interest in and knowledge of American politics surely prompted Mexican immigrants to participate in some fashion in these elections. Can the same be said for remote engagement in politics south of the border? Were immigrants who followed the Mexican presidential contest that summer more inclined to take part in U.S. electoral politics – or less?

The second wave of the panel survey, which was fielded immediately after the November elections, allows us to examine the behavioral implications of binational political engagement. Given that more than three-quarters of the survey respondents were not U.S. citizens and were therefore ineligible to vote, an analysis of turnout would shed little light on political participation and interest. However, the incidence of informal participation in midterm campaigns was fairly high. Nearly four out of ten reported encouraging family and friends who could vote to turn out in the election, discussing one or more of the candidates with others, talking about the elections with campaign activists, and/or displaying campaign signs, buttons, or bumper stickers. Twenty-six percent of the respondents

13. A single-factor specification, where all of the survey indicators from Table 1 are linked to a common underlying engagement dimension, results in a much worse and clearly unacceptable fit.

were active in one kind of activity, and 13 percent reported two or more forms of involvement.

To assess whether transnationalism encourages or discourages such mobilization, this three-point measure (no activities, one activity, two or more activities) is regressed initially on a remote engagement factor score calculated from the measurement structure in Table 2. U.S.-centered engagement and the frequency of discussions about American politics, which was also measured in the first wave in June, are then controlled. This latter item is akin to a lagged dependent variable; including it permits stronger inferences regarding the impact of transnational political engagement (Finkel, 1995; Wooldridge, 2002:66). Finally, whether the effect of remote engagement in Mexican politics varies across "old" and "new" immigrant settlement sites is considered. The results from these regressions, which were estimated via ordered logit, are given in Table 4.[14]

In the first column, the simple bivariate effect of following Mexican politics is positive and strongly significant. This was expected in light of the high correlation between engagement in the Mexican and American contexts. More revealing are the findings in the second model. As would be expected, the U.S. engagement factor and the measure of frequency of discussions about American politics are both statistically significant (p = .02), with signs in the expected direction.[15] The effect of the Mexican engagement factor is substantially reduced in this model, but it nevertheless remains significant. Holding the two control variables at their means, the coefficient of .299 implies that immigrants who scored at the low end of the "remote engagement" scale would have less than an eight percent chance of being involved in two or more campaign activities. Those at the high end have an estimated probability of 24 percent.[16] In both substantive and statistical terms, this tripling of probabilities is considerable, offering support for Hypothesis 2.

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14. Even though there was a relatively high level of panel attrition, the correlations between remaining in the panel and the different facets of political engagement are not high. Nevertheless, we replicated the analyses in Table 4 after imputing missing values through chained equations (Royston and White 2011), with 100 completed datasets being created. The results in this case are nearly identical to those presented here.

15. The difference in χ^2 statistics for the first two models is 7.66 (p = .02 with 2 DF). The individual t-statistics for the coefficients are insignificant because of the high collinearity between engagement in U.S. politics and the frequency of discussions about politics in the Unites States.

16. The first differences for the other values of the dependent variable are: -.30 with a standard error of .13 for the "no activity" category, and .14 with a standard error of .06 for "one activity." These effects were calculated using *Clarify* software (King, Tomz and Wittenberg 2000).

Table 4: Effect of Political Engagement on Informal Participation in the 2006 American Midterm Campaigns: Ordered Logistic Regression Estimates, with Standard Errors in Parentheses

Remote Engagement in Mexican Politics, June	.464	(.129)**	.299	(.142)*	.299	(.144)*	-.622	(.313)
Engagement in U.S. Politics, June			.196	(.160)	.160	(.213)	.202	(.162)
Frequency of Discussions of U.S. Politics, June			.220	(.138)	.220	(.139)	.239	(.140)
Region								
Dallas					.072	(.373)	-.063	(.379)
Indiana					.161	(.370)	-.024	(.382)
Sampling Regional Interactions								
Dallas * Remote Engagement							.340	(.360)
Indiana * Remote Engagement							.555	(.369)
Pseudo-R^2	.028		.044		.045		.050	
χ^2	13.121		20.783		22.05		23.37	

Note: * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$. N = 258 in each model. The dependent variable is coded 2 for respondents who reported two or more types of campaign activity in the November wave (encouraging a friend or family member to vote, discussing the candidates running for election, wearing a campaign button, putting a bumper sticker on their car or in a window, and/or talking about the campaigns with party activists); 1 for those reporting one activity; and 0 otherwise. Twelve percent of the sample was involved in two or more ways, 26 percent reported a single kind of participation, and approximately four out of ten did not participate in any of these ways. Remote engagement in Mexican politics is measured through a factor score based on the four survey items in Table 1; engagement in U.S. politics is measured through a factor score based on the three items presented in Table 1; and frequency of discussions about U.S. politics is measured through a five-point scale ranging from never to daily.

These results provide further support for the notion that transnational civic ties do not impede incorporation into U.S. politics, but can actually accelerate it. The third and fourth models in Table 4 indicate that this effect is not limited to a particular region but can be generalized, indicating that Hypothesis 3 is not supported by the data. The dummy coefficients for Dallas and Indiana do not

improve model fit; nor are the two “region by remote engagement” interaction terms significant.[17]

CONCLUSION

Political incorporation among immigrants is a multifaceted concept that touches on naturalization laws and processes, the internalization of certain values and identifications, and civic practice. This analysis concentrates on personal engagement in public affairs – caring about politics and knowing about leaders and institutions – an essential ingredient in all forms of incorporation into American politics. We have focused on immigrants from Mexico, mapping the contours of binational political engagement through multiple-indicator factor models. Based on a unique immigrant panel survey, three kinds of evidence have been presented to address the “zero-sum” hypothesis of transnational incorporation. In each case, the hypothesis is discarded for lack of support. First, the correlation between engagement in the public affairs of Mexico and of the United States is positive and highly significant. Second, many of the forces that pull Mexicans back to “homeland politics” also spark an interest in American government and elections. And third, engagement from a distance in the 2006 Mexican presidential election did not reduce involvement in the November 2006 campaigns in the United States -- just the opposite.

As noted at the outset, the “zero-sum” hypothesis has attained the status of conventional wisdom for many news commentators, activists, and candidates seeking office, although the scholarly literature is more divided. This paper is the first to assess the hypothesis systematically through longitudinal surveys spanning two distinct national campaign periods. The findings clearly run contrary to the conventional wisdom and are at odds with what some scholars would have anticipated (Cain and Doherty, 2006; Huntington, 2004; Staton, Jackson and Canache, 2007), but they support the findings of Citrin et al. (2007) and Portes and Rumbaut (2006). While the results pertain to Mexicans in the United States, we see no reason to limit our inferences to this particular immigrant bloc or to the year 2006, though additional comparative research is much needed.

If a similar panel survey of Mexican immigrants were fielded today, we might observe more robust engagement in both U.S. and Mexican politics. This expectation stems from demographic shifts that have occurred since the mid-2000s.

17. It is worth noting that the effect of remote engagement on campaign involvement remains strong and significant (b=.315 with a standard error of .162, *p*=.05) when the two regional interaction terms are removed and all the independent variables from Table 3 are included as additional controls. Moreover, little is changed if missing data values are imputed and the models are re-estimated.

In comparison to 2006, Mexican immigrants are now somewhat more affluent, better educated, older, and with more life experience in the United States (Noe-Bustamante, 2020; Noe-Bustamante, Flores and Shah, 2019). As shown in Table 3, affluence, education, age, and time spent in the United States. all have positive effects on engagement in one or both national contexts. Such a rise in engagement might lead to even stronger positive correlations between remote attentiveness to Mexican politics and interest in American politics.

Further research should also investigate the duration of transnational campaign effects. The two panel waves in our study are separated by five months, a substantial period of time. The fact that remote engagement in the Mexican campaigns in June of 2006 had a positive effect on mobilization into the American midterms that year suggests that transnational involvement can have a fairly long-lasting impact on political incorporation in the receiving country.

Nations across the world are certain to continue reaching out to expatriates in the United States, using whatever social, economic, and political means they have at their disposal. In the case of Mexico, procedures may be enacted in future elections to encourage and facilitate a higher rate of expatriate participation. Absentee voting through the Internet or in *casillas especiales* (ad hoc voting centers) set up in Mexican consulates and neighborhoods across the United States are not out of the question, though electoral reforms like these would require a great deal of planning and investment as well as multi-party political will. Regardless of how transnational civic engagement by immigrants is manifested in the future, our findings should be reassuring to those in the United States who are concerned that the persistence of transnational ties among migrants may diminish the vitality of American democracy. To the contrary, we find that such ties strengthen it.

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APPENDIX

Table A1. Question Wordings and Distributions for the Demographic Variables in Table 3

	Dallas	San Diego	Indiana
How much formal schooling have you had?			
No education	3	3	3
Incomplete primary	18	18	12
Complete primary	18	28	18
Secondary / technical incomplete	13	8	15
Secondary / technical complete	25	20	32
Preparatory / equiv. incomplete	7	7	4
University incomplete	10	10	10
University complete	4	2	3
At home, do you generally speak Spanish, English, or both?			
English	--	--	1
Both	28	30	29
Spanish	72	70	71

	Dallas	San Diego	Indiana
Level of affluence: In the place where you are living, is there a TV, washing machine, oven with stove, computer, your own car or truck? [Note all that apply]			
Mean (SD) for summary scale	2.9 (.8)	2.8 (.9)	3.1 (.7)
Gender			
Female	54	50	40
Male	46	50	60
Age			
Mean (SD)	33 (11)	35 (13)	33 (11)
Years in the United States			
Mean (SD)	10 (8)	13 (13)	9 (9)
How often do you attend religious services?			
Never	9	13	11
Only on special occasions	22	31	23
About once a month	25	19	26
Once a week	36	23	34
More than once a week	8	14	7
Here in the U.S., do you take part in any social or sports clubs for Mexicans?			
No	88	91	84
Yes	12	10	16
Do you send money to Mexico? If so, how frequently?			
Do not send funds	30	29	22
Only on special occasions	7	10	9
Once in a while	23	30	21

	Dallas	San Diego	Indiana
Few times a month	31	26	38
Each week or more often	10	4	11
How frequently do you communicate with close friends and family in Mexico by telephone or email?			
Never	2	3	2
Less than a few times a month	12	17	7
Few times a month	25	33	29
Few times a week	55	44	59
Daily	7	2	3
Do you want to return to Mexico permanently to live one day, or are you planning to remain in the United States?			
Stay in U.S.	32	30	20
Not sure yet	17	23	16
Return to Mexico	51	47	65
Residency Status			
Naturalized citizen / has “working papers”	30	45	34
Noncitizen without “working papers”	70	55	66

Source: Authors' surveys. Item wordings in Spanish are available upon request.