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Do Migrants Remit Democracy? International Migration, Political Beliefs, and Behavior in Mexico

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Abstract

International migrants are agents of democratic diffusion. They spread attitudes and behaviors absorbed in democratic host countries to their less democratic home countries by way of three processes: (a) migrant returns, (b) cross-border communication between migrants still abroad and their friends and family back home, and (c) migrant information networks in high-volume migration-producing communities. Marshaling data from an original June 2006 national survey in Mexico, the authors show that through one or another of these processes, migration alters the political participation and behavior of Mexicans living in Mexico.

Keywords

Mexico; international migration; democratic diffusion; public opinion; political behavior

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A recent boom of research explores the many ways in which international migrants maintain contact with their sending locality after emigrating, and the effects in both migrant-producing and migrant-receiving localities, of this sustained cross-border engagement. Migrants and their communities of origin establish connections as a result of the transfer of family remittances; communication via phone, letters, and the Internet; migrants' returns to their homeland; migrants' leadership and organized initiatives; and state policies. These links give rise to changes in the political organization, rules and outcomes (Burgess, 2005; Fitzgerald, 2000; Goldring, 2002; Goodman & Hiskey, 2008; Marcelli & Cornelius, 2005; Rivera Salgado, 1999; M. P. Smith, 2003; R. Smith, 1995), and economies of sending communities (Nyberg-Sørensen, Van Hear, & Engberg-Pedersen, 2002; Orozco, 2006; Taylor, 1999). They also facilitate the cross-border diffusion of ideas, identities, beliefs, knowledge, and behavior (Levitt, 1998). Do migrants contribute to a broader process of international democratic diffusion by channeling novel political beliefs and practices from their host country to the country of origin?

We argue that international migrants are agents of democratic diffusion who help strengthen democracy in their countries of origin. Migration's consequences comprehend not only migrants but also people they know and their communities. Migrants absorb attributes of democracy in the host country and transfer them to people in their home countries by way of three processes: (a) they themselves import new political values and practices when they return home, (b) those who remain abroad transmit information to individuals in the home country, and (c) the information that migrants channel to high-volume migration communities has an aggregate-level effect that alters attitudes and beliefs of members of those communities. These processes affect three political attitudes (tolerance, satisfaction with democracy, and evaluations of government respect for rights) and three behaviors (individual political activity, participation in organizations, and protest). Drawing on the results of *Desencanto Ciudadano en México* [Citizen Disenchantment in Mexico], a nationwide public opinion poll conducted in June 2006 that interviewed 650 voting-age Mexican citizens currently residing in Mexico, we show that migration leads to higher rates of nonelectoral political participation, greater tolerance of political and social difference, and more critical evaluations of both democracy and observance of rights in Mexico.

Theories of democratic and policy diffusion offer compelling explanations for how forces outside of a country's borders influence its domestic politics. The former teaches us that democracy can spread from country to country. The second emphasizes the role of specific actors in disseminating policy innovations. Both focus on macro-level change: the countries' switch to

democratic government and the adoption of national (or subnational) policies, respectively. Our study focuses on micro-level change—that is, on individual attitudinal and behavioral modifications. We develop an account of how contact with more democratic countries changes migrants and how migrants in turn change people they know and their communities.

International diffusion involves the transfer of ideas, policies, and practices from one country to another. The presence of certain political institutions and habits in one country effectively influence the probability that another country will also adopt them (Strang, 1991). Studies of international democratic diffusion have focused on macro-level regime change—that is, entire countries' transitions from authoritarianism to democracy. Starr (1991) determines that democratic transitions occur closer together in time than mere chance would predict. Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, and Limongi (2000) find that democracies surrounded by other democracies are more likely to survive. Brinks and Coppedge (2006) show that the level of democracy of a country's neighbor contributes to determining the level of democracy in the country itself. The focus on systemic change has been motivated by and has confirmed the observation that democracies emerge, persist, and develop in spatial-temporal clusters.

Although studies on diffusion of democracy largely overlook the problem of agency—of who adopts ideas, from whom, and how—research on policy diffusion identifies agents of change explicitly. A significant portion of this research stresses the adoption by elite state actors of policies practiced outside of their own country (Dominguez, 1997; Most & Starr, 1990; Weyland, 2004). According to this top-down perspective, a limited number of individuals in key institutional positions hold the primary responsibility for importing policy innovations from other countries.

An alternative approach emphasizes the influence on the policy of political activists—mid-level nonstate actors, including grassroots activists; nongovernmental organizations; members of organized transnational epistemic communities, such as professional or alumni organizations composed of skilled migrants and former graduate students; and members of organized diasporas (Kapur & McHale, 2005; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Scheffer, 2003; Tarrow, 2005). This work claims that nonelites can leverage international resources (including social capital derived from organized international networks, externally obtained technical expertise, and political clout resulting from access to or support of a more powerful foreign government) to influence the national norms and policy choices of elite state actors in their country of origin. Nonetheless, the outcome of interest continues to be national-level change.

Scholars have largely ignored the possibility that diffusion may affect mass public opinion, even though international interactions and interdependence among ordinary people can also lead to the cross-border transfer and the adoption of democracy. One reason could be that externally driven changes in political beliefs and practices among mass publics do not necessarily alter national-level policies. That is, diffusion of ideas among mass publics is unlikely to explain the observed policy or regime type clusters that have inspired research on diffusion. Yet the spread of ideas among mass publics in different countries can certainly contribute to democratic transitions, and democratic diffusion at the mass level may enhance the quality of democracy in countries that have already become democratic.

We argue that migrants are vectors of this mass-level type of democratic diffusion. The diffusion of attitudes and behavior from more to less democratic countries via migrants has a single common root: Socialization and participation within a well-functioning democracy leads many migrants to learn and adopt the values, skills, and commitments of democratic citizenship (Diamond, 1994). Migrants, regardless of their legal status, observe how politics and society work in their more democratic host countries, operate under that country's institutions and economy, and interact with citizens of the host country as well as other more politically incorporated migrants. The economic well-being and efficiency of most migrants' host countries constitute a powerful incentive for migrants to emulate what they observe there. There is empirical evidence that even brief exposure to U.S. political institutions and life helps socialize Mexicans residing in the United States so that their views of democracy fall closer to those of other Americans in the United States than to those of other Mexicans residing in Mexico (Camp, 2003; de la Garza & Yetim, 2003).

Migrants also have opportunities to participate politically in their host countries. Those who are not citizens cannot vote, but they may participate in other ways that are not conditioned on legal status. This is especially true in liberal host countries such as the United States, which have traditionally permitted migrants, including the undocumented, to become active members of the political community. Noncitizens can organize social movements; engage political leaders; and protest public policies in marches, assemblies, or in print—as the massive 2005 and 2006 proimmigrant rallies in major U.S. cities show.

Immigrants also organize to help make life better for newcomers and their communities back home. For example, hometown associations (organized groups of migrants located in the host country who hail from the same

community) provide opportunities for their members to practice democratic skills such as electing leaders, collectively establishing bylaws, and planning and implementing charitable projects (Alarcón, 2000). Paradoxically, the difficulties that migrants face in the host country—including language barriers, finding employment and housing, and navigating social and legal institutions—serve as incentives for becoming politically active in ways unimaginable back home where they were full citizens.

How do migrants who adopt more democratic attitudes and habits subsequently diffuse what they have learned in their country of origin? We hypothesize that migrants transfer this information via three paths: (a) migrant returns, (b) cross-border communication between migrants abroad and their loved ones in the home country, and (c) migrant information networks within communities that produce high volumes of international migrants. For reasons we set forth next, we do not believe that any one of these paths will necessarily produce stronger effects than the others.

Returns. Migrants who return to their countries of origin import their new political ideas and beliefs and may also influence the conationals with whom they interact. A potential objection to this claim might be that if migrants change their political beliefs and practices in the new political surroundings of the host country, why don't they take up their old ways when they return to the surroundings of their country of origin? Do migrants internalize the beliefs and behaviors they learn abroad, or are their beliefs simply conditioned by the environment (culture, economy, and political institutions and practices) of the country in which they reside? We argue that although some of migrant's newly acquired democratic beliefs and habits may weaken after returning home, migrants will retain the beliefs and behaviors they consider normatively superior.

Migrants may adapt their behavior in response to the constraints and possibilities of the home country's political system (Glick Schiller, 2005.). However, they may not switch modes of political behavior and beliefs so easily if they find it difficult to make the transition from a normatively more desirable situation back to a less desirable one. Democratic liberties fulfill an essential longing for freedom, while political equality satisfies a need for recognition before one's peers (Fukuyama, 1992). Experiencing the political and psychological benefits of democratic engagement could make individuals reluctant to settle for anything less.[1] We show that, on average, the attitudes of return migrants are more democratic than those of their conationals without any type of migration experience—consistent with what we would expect if some migrants readapt to the home country while many hold onto beliefs acquired in the host country.

Cross-border communication. Migrants who remain in the destination country may transfer new attitudes and behavior to their family and friends who stay in the homeland when the migrants visit home or receive visitors abroad, and communicate through phone calls, letters, and the Internet. Levitt (1998) claims that transnational migrants—meaning migrants who maintain affective and strategic relations back home while engaging and adapting to their host country—transform politics in their country of origin via "social remittances," which are the "ideas of citizen rights and responsibilities and different histories of political practice" that migrants observe and practice in the host country and then share with loved ones back home (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004, p. 1026).

Migrants can communicate beliefs and practices with relative ease, because they channel information to family and friends with whom they have long-standing affective ties and a shared culture in the country of origin. Such familiarity is important, because "imitating similar individuals is one of the simplest and most effective cognitive heuristics in the calculation of utilities. Actors negotiating a complex set of political choices regard the actions of actors with perceived common interests as a useful guide to their own behavior" (Elkins & Simmons, 2005, p. 45). This contrasts with other potential agents of democratic diffusion, such as transnational corporations, church organizations, or other nongovernmental organizations, which are staffed by foreigners that locals often mistrust or misunderstand. We hypothesize that individuals who remain in the country of origin and know someone who resides abroad as a migrant will have more democratic beliefs and behavior than individuals without such ties.

Our approach to understanding how migrants influence nonmigrants differs from existing studies. Typically, researchers follow the activities of migrants whom they know to be highly engaged transnationally into their hometowns to observe their influence. Rather than staking our claims on exceptional actors, we query a national sample in Mexico about respondents' relationships to migrants living abroad. Examining the recipients rather than transmitters of cross-national flows of information allows us to filter out the claims of migrants themselves as agents of change and get a better perspective on the extent to which new ideas actually take hold back home. Conducting a survey on a random sample within migrants' country of origin helps us understand migration's effects throughout the sending country, as opposed to one or a few migrant-producing communities.

Social networks. The ideas that migrants adopt abroad also travel to the country of origin via migrant social networks. Migrants and nonmigrants develop social networks that serve as conduits for information about how to

migrate safely, where to arrive in the host country, and how to maximize the likelihood of success after arrival (Massey, Alarcón, Durand, & González, 1987; Massey & Espinosa, 1997). These networks' influence increases as migration flows to and from communities also increase. We believe that migrant social networks also disseminate information about democracy. The information transmitted through the social networks produces an aggregate effect on attitudes and behaviors in entire communities, which transcends those personally tied to migration. As the number of absent emigrants, return migrants, or individuals with friends or family members who are migrants grows, the total number of people receiving information from abroad reaches a critical mass, which in turn creates spillovers of information capable of reaching even individuals who have neither emigrated themselves nor know a migrant. We expect individuals residing in municipalities where aggregate migration levels are high to have stronger democratic attitudes and behaviors than individuals who reside in localities with scarce numbers of migrants. This effect is in addition to those observed in return migrants and in people with friends or family members who are migrants.

Although we examine both those who have had a direct experience with democracy and those who receive novel ideas and information about politics indirectly across borders, we do not believe that the former are likelier to change. A key reason is that returnees are least likely, among migrants, to interact with host country citizens and less equipped to participate meaningfully in the political life of the host country, because their personal attributes and the short duration of their trips weaken their opportunities and capabilities for learning democracy (see, e.g., Cuecuecha, 2006; Reyes, 1997, 2004). In contrast, migrants who remain abroad stay longer. Their socialization experiences within the host country are therefore deeper and more positive.

Nonmigrants with friends or family who have resided abroad as migrants for some time, or reside in a community that has produced migrants for many years, may thus receive relatively substantial and positive information about democracy in the United States or Canada, even though the information is filtered through their loved ones. As residents of their country of citizenship, nonmigrants may implement the political innovations they receive from abroad immediately, whereas returnees may have to wait until they return to exercise their political rights to the fullest possible extent. Finally, receivers of social remittances may be especially responsive to ideas relayed by family and friends abroad that are perceived as successful.

Our research concentrates on the critical case of migration from Mexico to the United States and Canada. If our hypotheses do not hold in Mexico, they are unlikely to hold elsewhere. The combination of huge migratory flows between

Mexico and its northern neighbors, on one hand, and the enormous cultural differences that exist between these countries, on the other hand, make North America an ideal place to examine migration-driven democratic diffusion.

Mexico produces the largest and most consistent and enduring flow of international migrants in the world. About 1 in 10 Mexican-born individuals currently resides in the United States. Nearly half a million Mexican-born nationals emigrate to the United States annually, while the percentage who return to Mexico after 3 years remained as high as 46.1% between 1997 and 2002 (Escobar Latapí & Martin, 2006). The relative ease with which Mexicans can cross the 2,000-mile border that separates it from the United States facilitates the maintenance of cross-border ties.

Substantial differences exist between democratic attitudes and behaviors in the United States and Canada, and Mexico, with the former two consistently ranking higher than Mexico on indices (including Freedom House and Polity IV) that assess the level of democracy in a country. This is important, because gaps between the level of democracy of one country and another are required for democratic diffusion to occur (Brinks & Coppedge, 2006).

Both Canadians and Americans have stronger traditions of civic engagement. Non-electoral political participation is more prevalent in those countries than in Mexico. Data from the 1999-2000 round of the World Values Survey reveal that 81% of U.S. citizens and 72% of Canadians had signed petitions, compared to 15% of Mexicans. Similarly, 21% in the U.S. and 19% in Canada, as opposed to 3% in Mexico, reported participating in lawful demonstrations.

Canadians and Americans also have firmer democratic attitudes. In the 1999-2000 World Values Survey, 81% of Canadians and 80% of U.S. citizens listed "tolerance and respect for other people" as an important value for children to learn, compared to 71% of Mexicans. All three countries share a very high level of religious belief, but World Values Survey data show that 24% of Mexicans would not want evangelical Protestants as neighbors and 17% would not want Muslims next door (compared to 11% and 7% in the United States and Canada, respectively). Discrimination and hate crimes against gays and lesbians occur in all three countries. However, that community has wider acceptance north of the Rio Grande. Nearly 45% of Mexicans would not want a homosexual living next door (compared to 23% of U.S. citizens and 17% of Canadians). When asked to locate themselves on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means homosexuality is *never justifiable* and 10 is *always justifiable*, Canadians average 5.4, U.S. citizens average 4.8, and Mexicans average 3.6 (differences are significant at the 95% confidence level).

Focusing on a single migrant source country is also methodologically advantageous, because it allows us to hold constant (relative to cross-national studies) several aggregate-level variables within the migrants' country of origin that also influence individual political beliefs and behavior, such as political institutions; national history, religion, and culture; and economic development. The fact that nearly all Mexicans migrate to the United States or Canada permits us to control for diversity among the political systems and practices of migrant host countries.

We believe that the migrant-driven democratic diffusion we observe in North America takes place elsewhere in the world. Regardless of the reasons people leave their home countries for foreign lands, migrants tend to emigrate from authoritarian countries or developing democracies to more established democracies. If individual democratic diffusion occurs at all, it is most likely in situations where significant differences exist between the political experiences of those transmitting ideas (migrants living abroad) and potential adopters of outside ideas (individuals living in the country of origin). Table 1 lists the principal destination countries of migrants from various typical migration countries around the world. Freedom House scores for political freedom and civil liberties are noted in parentheses next to each country. Well over 75% of the migrants from these typical emigrant source countries move from a less democratic to a more democratic country.

Table 1 also shows that even though only 3% of the world's population are migrants, they represent as much as 39% of the populations of some sending countries (in this case Jamaica). Countries with large portions of emigrants span the globe, including Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Northern Africa. Large numbers of migrants abroad signify large numbers of individuals back home with connections abroad and imply numerous opportunities for ideas to travel from host countries to countries of origin.

Most of the data for this study come from *Desencanto Ciudadano en México*, a survey designed by the authors that contains a number of questions about the international migration experiences of Mexican citizens living in Mexico. Berumen y Asociados, a well-established Mexican firm dedicated to market and public opinion research since 1991, conducted the survey face to face, between June 16 and June 28, 2006. Respondents comprised 650 voting-age Mexican citizens selected at random nationally. We also draw on publicly available data collected in 2000 by Mexico's National Institute of Geography, Statistics and Information, and the country's National Population Council.

This study examines migration's effects on political attitudes and behavior. Our conception of attitudes encompasses judgments, meaning opinions

Table 1. Freedom House Scores of Major Migrant Producing Countries and their Top Destination Countries

Country of Origin and 2007 Freedom House Scores	Stock of Emigrants as a Percentage of Population (2005)	Top Destination Countries in 2005 and 2007 Freedom House Scores
Albania (3/3)	28%	Greece (1/2), Italy (1/1), Macedonia (3/3), United States (1/1), Germany (1/1), Canada (1/1), France (1/1), United Kingdom (1/1)
Macedonia (3/3)	18%	Germany (1/1), Switzerland (1/1), Australia (1/1), Italy (1/1), Turkey (3/3), United States (1/1), Austria (1/1), Slovenia (1/1), Croatia (2/2), France (1/1)
Serbia and Montenegro (3/2)[a]	22%	Germany (1/1), Austria (1/1), Switzerland (1/1), United States (1/1), Turkey (3/3), Croatia (2/2), Sweden (1/1), Italy (1/1), Canada (1/1), Australia (1/1)
Morocco (5/4)	9%	France (1/1), Spain (1/1), Italy (1/1), Israel (1/2), Netherlands (1/1), Germany (1/1), Belgium (1/1), United States (1/1), Canada (1/1), Saudi Arabia (7/6)
Turkey (3/3)	6%	Germany (1/1), France (1/1), Netherlands (1/1), Austria (1/1), United States (1/1), Bulgaria (1/2), Greece (1/2), Switzerland, United Kingdom
Jamaica (2/3)	39%	United States (1/1), United Kingdom (1/1), Canada (1/1), Germany (1/1)
El Salvador (2/3)	16%	United States (1/1), Canada (1/1), Guatemala (3/4), Costa Rica (1/1), Australia (1/1), Belize (1/2), Mexico (2/2), Spain (1/1), Panama (1/2)
Nicaragua (3/3)	13%	Costa Rica (1/1), United States (1/1), Canada (1/1), Panama (1/2), Guatemala (3/4), Spain (1/1), Mexico (2/3), El Salvador (2/3)
Mexico (2/3)	11%	United States (1/1), Canada (1/1), Spain (1/1)

a. We report 2005 Freedom House Scores for Serbia and Montenegro.
Source: Freedom House, 2007; Ratha & Xu, 2008.

of approval and disapproval, and values, meaning the ethical criteria that guide individuals' thoughts and actions. We consider three attitudes: tolerance (a value), satisfaction with democracy, and evaluations of government respect for rights (judgments). Behavior encompasses individual and collective political participation that attempts to influence public decision

making. We examine three behaviors: individual, nonelectoral political activity; participation in civic organizations; and protest.

Tolerance is a fundamental democratic value. Democracies allow and protect political differences and other disagreements among citizens (Dahl, 1971; Huntington, 1984). A healthy practice of tolerance among citizens themselves abets official tolerance. Conversely, when intolerant citizens translate their prejudices into law or seize power themselves, the result is often violent suppression of dissent. Our measure of tolerance comprises three facets: politics, religion, and sexual orientation. Respondents were asked to agree or disagree on a 5-point scale with the statements that "a democracy guarantees the right for all social groups to protest peacefully," "government policy should reflect the religious beliefs of the majority" (tolerant citizens disagreed with this statement), and "gays and lesbians have the right to organize public marches." The overall tolerance score was the average of the answers to these three items.[2] We expect return migrants, people living in Mexico who know migrants, and residents of municipalities that produce large migration flows to be more tolerant than people without such experiences.

Citizen satisfaction with democracy and evaluations of government respect for rights are political judgments—one general and the other more specific. Although high citizen satisfaction with democracy is the happiest state of affairs, dissatisfaction does not spell doom for democratic government. In fact, the development of a healthy skepticism regarding public officials and their doings may be critical to holding them accountable. Established democracies routinely feature such critical citizens who condemn policies and politicians vociferously but never waver in their support of democratic principles (Norris, 1999). Assessments of how well a government protects the political and social rights of its citizens are one important component of satisfaction with democracy.

For the first attitude, satisfaction with democracy, we adopt an item commonly used in cross-national public opinion work: "How satisfied are you with democracy in [Mexico]?" The five response categories range from *not at all* to *very*, with a neutral midpoint. This item is a summary indicator of overall satisfaction that comprehends a wide range democracy's constituent elements, including incumbents, policy outputs, political and economic performance, and democratic institutions and principles (Clarke, Dutt, & Kornberg, 1993). For assessments of government adherence to political and human rights standards, we include two survey items that asked respondents to agree or disagree, also on a 5-point scale, with the statements that the federal government and state governments "respect people's rights." These items correlated at .77, so we took their average as an indicator of respondents'

general assessment of how rights are faring under Mexican democracy. We believe that on both of these scores, Mexico will suffer by comparison to the United States and Canada—that is, migration (through the three paths we describe) will make Mexicans more critical of their government's observance of rights and of Mexican democracy in general.

Behaviors. Classical democratic theory holds that democracy thrives when citizens are well informed about issues of the day, interested in politics, and participate actively in the political process (Almond & Verba, 1989; Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1993). Democracy can endure even in the absence of this ideal citizenry, but a minimum core of "attentive citizens" (Dahl, 1989) is a requisite for democracy to flourish. Intense political participation increases the quality of democracy by strengthening representative linkages between citizens and policy makers and holding the latter accountable for their decisions. Each of the three behaviors considered here has a well-established place in the repertoire of democratic political participation.[3]

Individuals have several means at their disposal to seek the resolution of private problems, communicate their preferences to policy makers, and influence fellow citizens. Our indicator for individual, nonelectoral political activity is a dummy variable scored as 1 if a citizen engaged in at least one of these activities in the 3 years prior to the survey did the following: signed a complaint, wrote a letter to the editor, called in to a political radio or TV program, wrote the president or another elected authority, handed out political flyers, or put up a campaign sign at his or her house.

Citizens also organize groups to advance interests they hold in common. Some are explicitly political and others are not, but even participation in nonpolitical groups gives citizens self-confidence and organizational skills that may be readily transferred to the political arena. Respondents received a value of 1 on our organizational participation dummy variable if, at the time of the survey, they participated in parties or other political associations; human rights groups; civic organizations; unions; cooperatives; or peasant, religious, professional, neighborhood, women's, or environmental organizations at least occasionally.

Frequently, citizens perceive that channeling demands through traditional representative institutions fails to get results, and they turn to more contentious forms of making claims on the political system. Our study contemplates five: participating in marches or sit-ins, occupying public buildings, invading vacant land parcels, and blocking public roads. A respondent who undertook any of these actions in the 3 years before the survey received a score of 1 on our protest indicator. For all three behavioral dependent variables, our hypotheses are that migration-driven diffusion will increase political participation.

Each of our hypotheses counters the claim that international migration is an escape valve for those who would be most likely to seek and be most capable of affecting domestic political change if they were to stay (Dominguez, 1994; Hirschman, 1986; Kurtz, 2004). Emigrants are widely believed to show more initiative than individuals who stay behind, and the latter have been conventionally thought of as apathetic. This may contribute to political stability and regime survival in some states; however, emigrants generally leave open a door through which they diffuse political information and ideas back into the sending country. The safety valve thesis ignores the ongoing links between those who exit and those who stay behind, and, as a result, overlooks the possibility that emigrants may instead help strengthen political participation and democratic beliefs among those who stay behind.

The *Desencanto Ciudadano* survey provides measures for the two individual migration experiences of interest: (a) a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent ever lived in the United States or Canada and (b) a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent has friends or family who reside outside of Mexico. Of our respondents, 6.6% reported having lived outside of Mexico for at least 1 year, and nearly half of our sample has friends or family outside of Mexico. The third independent variable, the Migration Intensity Index, gauges the extent to which the entire municipality (in which a respondent resides) is affected by international migration. Mexico's National Population Council developed this index with data from the 1995-2000 Mexican census (Consejo Nacional de Población, 2002a). In our sample, the index ranges from –.87 to 2.58, with a median of –.40.

We are confident that our measures of individual migration experiences are valid. Migration takes many forms, including low-skilled and high-skilled labor and forced, temporary, and permanent migration. If asked, high-skilled individuals who resided in the United States for a 4-year period of employment or education may not claim to have migrated; yet they fall into the theoretical purview of our study as migrants. By asking whether respondents lived outside of Mexico instead of whether they migrated to another country, we are better able to account for the entire population in which we have an interest. It is significant that all respondents who indicated that they had resided in the United States or Canada had done so for no less than 1 year, a lapse of time that can hardly be confused with, say, an extended vacation.

The question about whether respondents had friends or family who live outside of Mexico might also be subject to varying interpretations. Because of the extended nature of kinship ties and an expansive concept of friendship in Mexico that might also include casual acquaintances, respondents who answered the question affirmatively may have been thinking merely of

"someone they know," which would capture relationships more distant than those we believe influence individuals' beliefs. This could skew our estimates of the effect of family and friendship bonds on attitudes toward democracy. Indeed, nearly everyone in a Mexican lecture hall will claim to know someone who has emigrated. Nonetheless, because only 47.5% of our sample reported having friends or family in the United States, we conclude that respondents understood the question in the more restrictive sense we intended for close family members and friends.

The Migration Intensity Index is a factor score that projects four key municipal-level indicators of international migration onto a single, continuous index: (a) percentage of households that receive remittances, (b) percentage of households with one or more members residing outside of Mexico, (c) percentage of households with one or more members who have returned within the past 5 years after migrating internationally within the past 5 years, and (d) percentage of households with one or more members who have returned within the past 5 years after migrating internationally more than 5 years ago. This indicator is better than many used by scholars examining whether migrant social networks cause migration. Scholars typically invoke measures of cumulative migration—usually the proportion of people who have already migrated from a given community—as proxies for social networks. They generally do not actually evaluate participation in a network of relationships with migrants or former migrants; however, as Curran, Garip, Chung, and Tangchonlatip (2005) state, "there is plenty of ethnographic evidence to suggest that on the whole a vast majority of migrants do participate in these networks" (p. 228). Because the Migration Intensity Index measures migration (and migration-driven) flows to and from the country, it is a more complete approximation of the extent to which migrant social networks exist in a given municipality.

The independent variables included in our model are not mutually exclusive. Respondents may have lived in the United States and have family or friends in the United States, for example. However, by including each of them in our regression model, we are able to isolate the effects of each type of migration experience.

There are other determinants of attitudes and behavior, including migration-related factors. To ensure that the effects of the processes we evaluate are not confounded with those of other possible causes, our model includes a number of control variables, including a migration-driven factor, other international forces that may compete with migration as sources of democratic diffusion, and various personal attributes and municipal-level characteristics known to influence political attitudes and behavior.

First, we control for a migration-driven phenomenon that has drawn the attention of policy makers and academics: remittances, or money sent from migrants abroad to family members back home. Remittances may affect the political behavior and attitudes of their beneficiaries, but they do not effect change by way of international diffusion. Rather, they represent a material resource that strengthens individuals vis-à-vis powerful state actors, encouraging them to vote for opposition parties (Kurtz, 2004; Merino, 2005) or hold local leaders accountable (Burgess, 2005). Remittances can also influence the political behavior of those who receive them via endogenous democratization if they reproduce the effects of modernization on a small scale by increasing receiving households' purchasing power, expenditures on education and health, and general standard of living (Boix & Stokes, 2003). Given the possibility that remittances might affect the outcomes of interests through processes other than diffusion, our model includes a control variable for those who receive money from migrants abroad. We estimate the yearly amount (in thousand-peso units) by multiplying the frequency with which respondents reported receiving remittances times the average amount received per transfer.

Our model includes two variables (aggregate level and individual level, respectively) representing international forces besides migration that may give rise to changes in attitudes and behavior: (a) border residence, a dummy variable coded 1 if the municipality in which a respondent lives lies on the U.S.-Mexican border; and (b) media access, a factor score summarizing how often respondents watch TV, listen to the radio, and read newspapers. Living on the border (de la Garza & Yetim, 2003) and consuming news and entertainment (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 1999) both expose Mexicans—including those with no migration experience—to value systems of other countries.

Furthermore, we include four personal attributes shown by existing research to influence political culture (gender, age, education, and income) and two aggregate-level variables that may shape the outcomes we examine (the population of the municipality in which respondents reside and a municipal-level index of economic marginalization; Consejo Nacional de Población, 2002b). Individual resources, including income and education, influence both political attitudes and behaviors. As a material resource, income may shape an individual's ability to influence public decisions, and people with higher incomes may have more time to participate politically. Higher income earners may be more satisfied with democracy simply because they are relatively more satisfied with their lives. Education gives citizens both the cognitive skills and knowledge that enable them to participate meaningfully

in politics. Age and gender influence attitudes and behavior, too. In Mexico, older survey respondents are more participative and tend to be less critical of their country's democracy because they remember the prior political regime. Gender shapes attitudes and behaviors to the extent that it conditions access to politics, including information and discussions about politics and decision making in the political system.

Two municipal-level independent variables—population and marginalization—might also exert effects on political attitudes and behavior. Urban populations are typically more informed and politically active and are likelier to participate in civic organizations and protests. Because they are characterized by poor roads, inadequate communications and limited, if any, secondary schools, marginalized municipalities offer residents fewer resources and skills to participate politically.

Ideally, determining whether migrants adopt and transmit political beliefs and practices would involve a dual-sited panel survey of migrants taken before they leave the country of origin, during their stay in the host country, and after their return. A careful study of diffusion via social networks might involve network analysis, including direct observation within a high-volume migrant-producing community and its cross-border counterpart. The first of these is nearly impossible to implement in practice, because migration decisions are highly unpredictable. Respondents might never engage in some or any of these international movements, or each decision might take years to undertake. The fact that most migration from Mexico to the United States is clandestine makes it difficult to follow migrants as they move across borders. The second method precludes obtaining a national random sample of individual respondents and produces an entirely distinct type of comparative analysis. We believe that we can observe the changing nature of political beliefs and behavior by asking individuals who have migrated and returned about the international aspects of their lives in a single setting—the country of origin (Levitt, & Glick Schiller, 2004). We thus measure change cross-sectionally, at a fixed point in time, by comparing groups with distinct migration experiences.

We evaluate our hypotheses using multilevel linear and logistic regressions, estimating a separate model for each of the six attitudes and behaviors that migration influences. Multilevel models are used when data are structured into two or more levels or units of analysis. In this case individual-level variables (migrant returns and people with loved ones living abroad as migrants) are nested in aggregate-level variables (municipal-level migration flows).[4]

We have also considered the possibility that Mexicans may emigrate, because the contrast between their democratic aspirations on one hand and evaluations of Mexican democracy on the other hand drove them to live

elsewhere. There is no evidence that Mexicans emigrate for strictly political reasons. They principally leave their country for economic reasons or as a result of their social and familial context (Cornelius, 1992; Marcelli & Cornelius, 2001; Massey et al., 1993; Massey & Espinosa, 1997). In fact, the majority of migrants move from being citizens in their home country to being noncitizens in their host country, curtailing some of their political rights and opportunities.

Nevertheless, to test for the possibility of endogeneity, we ran dummy endogenous variable regressions for each of the dependent variables considered in our multilevel regressions (Heckman, 1978). This class of models comprises a two-equation system in which a binary dependent variable in the selection model (in this case, the decision to migrate) is an independent variable in the outcome model, which explains the substantive variable of interest (here, the political attitude and participation variables). If there is endogeneity, the errors from these two equations will be correlated and the parameter and standard error estimates from the outcome equation inconsistent. Estimating the system either simultaneously or in a two-stage procedure provides correct parameters and standard errors. Here, we include political evaluations in our model of the decision to migrate to account for the possibility that negative views of democracy made Mexican migration to other North American countries more likely.

We found no evidence of endogeneity. Assessments of Mexican democracy had no effect on the decision to migrate, and the corrected parameter estimates from the outcome equations did not substantively alter our results. Although causation appears to be unidirectional, flowing from migration experiences to political attitudes and behavior, we do not consider this result conclusive. Whereas respondents' political attitudes date from 2006 when the survey was carried out, the decision to migrate may have been made much earlier. The greater the time elapsed between migration and the time of the survey, the less plausible it is that attitudes in 2006 can be taken as a proxy for attitudes at the time of migration.

The results for each model, which appear in Table 2, indicate substantial support for the proposition that migrants impel the diffusion of democratic attitudes and behaviors across international borders by way of the three diffusion paths we examine—migrant returns, cross-border communication, and community-wide migrant social networks. In the case of return migrants, absorption and retention of U.S. and Canadian culture affected attitudes: They are more tolerant and more critical of the Mexican government's record on rights than their counterparts who have never lived in another country. For their part, friends and relatives of migrants still in the United

Table 2. Multi-Level Logistic and Linear Regressions of Political and Behavior Indicators on Migration Variables

	Participant									Attitudes								
	Participation in Organized Protest			Individual Nonelectoral Participation			Participation in Organizations			Tolerance			Satisfaction With Democracy			Evaluation of Government Respect for Rights		
	Parameter	*SE*	*p* Value	Parameter	*SE*	*p* Value	Parameter	*SE*	*p* Value	Parameter	*SE*	*p* Value	Parameter	*SE*	*p* Value	Parameter	*SE*	*p* Value
Lived in the United States or Canada	.255	.615	.678	−.665	.667	.318	−.522	.422	.216	.237	.103	.017	−.094	.214	.659	−.518	.184	.005
Has migrant friends or family	1.27	.439	.004	.773	.306	.012	.441	.206	.032	.045	.051	.380	−.274	.104	.008	−.027	.089	.764
Municipal Migration Intensity Index	.342	.277	.216	.269	.262	.304	.471	.223	.034	.058	.057	.312	.066	.092	.470	−.006	.205	.938
Total annual remittances received (in thousands of pesos)	.005	.022	.823	.009	.012	.444	−.018	.015	.224	.002	.003	.354	−.000	.005	.894	−.006	.005	.200
Media Access	1.30	.451	.004	.949	.324	.003	.671	.198	.001	.100	.047	.032	.202	.095	.034	−.045	.082	−0.582
Sex (Male = 1)	.808	.379	.033	.067	.296	.822	−.269	.204	.188	−.061	.050	.226	.200	.103	.051	.052	.087	.560

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

	Participant									Attitudes								
	Participation in Organized Protest			Individual Nonelectoral Participation			Participation in Organizations			Tolerance			Satisfaction With Democracy			Evaluation of Government Respect for Rights		
	Parameter	*SE*	*p* Value	Parameter	*SE*	*p* Value	Parameter	*SE*	*p* Value	Parameter	*SE*	*p* Value	Parameter	*SE*	*p* Value	Parameter	*SE*	*p* Value
Age	.030	.014	.027	.010	.011	.323	.024	.007	.001	–.001	.002	.446	–.005	.003	.186	.002	.003	.529
Education (in years of schooling)	.079	.055	.155	.007	.044	.879	.007	.029	.819	.023	.007	.001	–.005	.015	.716	–.012	.013	.345
Income (in thousands of pesos)	.028	.051	.579	.065	.036	.070	.044	.028	.120	.004	.007	.543	.031	–.014	.029	–.016	–012	.177
Population of municipality (in 10,000 inhabitants)	–.002	.004	.726	.007	.003	.029	.002	.003	.496	.000	.001	.694	–.001	.001	.536	–.002	.000	.026
Municipal marginalization index	.342	.277	.216	.265	.227	.242	.162	.171	.343	–.049	.044	.262	–.090	.071	.208	–.083	.058	.152
Municipality borders the United States (dummy)	.426	.733	.560	.445	.582	.445	.782	.539	.146	–.008	.138	.955	.192	.214	.367	.135	.172	.432
Constant	–5.77	1.06	.000	–3.65	.756	.000	–1.26	.504	.012	3.37	.122	.000	3.24	.240	.000	2.87	.205	.000

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

	Participant									Attitudes								
	Participation in Organized Protest			Individual Nonelectoral Participation			Participation in Organizations			Tolerance			Satisfaction With Democracy			Evaluation of Government Respect for Rights		
	Parameter	*SE*	*p* Value	Parameter	*SE*	*p* Value	Parameter	*SE*	*p* Value	Parameter	*SE*	*p* Value	Parameter	*SE*	*p* Value	Parameter	*SE*	*p* Value
N	588			590			587			593			593			593		
R^2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.111			.037			.041		
Log likelihood	−112.80			−182.41			−363.41	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wald(12)	28.56			29.41			37.07			56.64			23.91			24.24		
Pr(X2)	.005			.003			.000			.000			.021			.019		
Rho	.025			.083			.143			.112			.029			.014		

States or Canada are much more politically engaged than those who do not know anyone living outside the country; they are more involved in individual political activity as well as civic organizations and protest more. They are also less satisfied with democracy. Finally, members of high-volume migrant-producing communities participated in organizations at a greater rate than those who lived in low-migration communities. We offer more precise interpretations of these effects.

Migration's effects on attitudes. Having lived abroad and returned made respondents more tolerant of different religions, political views, and sexual orientations, which resulted in an average difference of .237 on the 5-point tolerance scale, equivalent to 6% of the dependent variable's range. Holding all other variables at their means, those who lived abroad had a mean tolerance score of 3.83 (the midpoint is 3), compared to 3.57 for those who had not. Similarly, returnees were generally less sanguine about Mexican federal and state governments' observance of rights, averaging .518 less on the Rights Scale (13% of the scale's range) than their counterparts who have never lived outside Mexico. Although both groups evaluated government performance on rights negatively, the return migrants' average score was 2.25, compared to 2.79 for those who never left.

Knowing someone who has migrated also changes political attitudes. Those with family or friends abroad are, on the whole, less satisfied with Mexican democracy than those who do not know anyone living outside the country. On average, the former group scored .274 less on the 5-point Satisfaction Scale (nearly 7% of the scale's range) than the latter. The mean scores for the two groups, holding all other variables constant at their means, were 2.74 (below the midpoint of 3) and 3.06 (slightly above the midpoint), respectively.

Migration's effects on political participation. Having relatives or friends who have migrated north greatly raises one's proclivity toward democratic participation in all three areas of political behavior that we examined. The odds of engaging in some form of individual, nonelectoral political participation are over twice as high (2.16) for this group than for those who do not know anyone abroad. If all other variables are held at their means, the friends and relatives of migrants have a .108 probability of participating nonelectorally, compared to .053.

The odds that respondents with family and friends abroad participate in at least one civic organization are one and a half times higher (1.55) than those for respondents without family and friends abroad. The former group has a

.449 chance of participating and the latter, a .344 probability. In addition, the odds of participating in an organized protest are 3.5 times higher for respondents who have a friend or family member living abroad than for respondents who do not know anyone abroad. Alternatively, about 5.6% of those with friends and family living in the United States or Canada have protested (holding all other variables constant at their means), whereas only 1.6% of those without friends or family outside Mexico report having done so.

Living in a high-migration municipality enormously increased involvement in citizen associations. The odds that a resident of a municipality, at the maximum value of the Migration Intensity Index observed in the sample (2.58), participates in a civic organization are over four times higher (4.08) than those for someone living in a municipality at the median of the index (–40). Put another way, the probability of someone living in a maximum migration intensity municipality (holding all variables at their means) is .714, compared to .379 for someone living in a median-intensity municipality.

Each of the three migration processes we study contributes to disseminating democratic attitudes and behavior in one way or another. Taken as a whole, our research makes a strong case that migrants are agents of democratic diffusion. Nonetheless, our results have an uneven quality to them: Return migrants' experiences abroad affected their attitudes but not their behaviors, and friends and family members of migrants still abroad registered strong behavioral—though not attitudinal—modifications. The following discussion explains why one migration path is not an intrinsically stronger force of diffusion than another and explores some possible reasons for the apparently uneven outcomes.

There is no clear a priori reason to expect returnees to be more likely to import democracy than their conationals who have never migrated. Direct experience as a migrant abroad is not an inherently stronger channel for democratic diffusion, unless the migrant's experience of the host country's democratic culture is substantial and positive. Return migrants' contact with U.S. democracy may in some cases be more superficial and negative than that of migrants still in the host country.

Migrants who return to their home country have distinct opportunities to adopt host country attitudes and behaviors via socialization and political participation than their counterparts who stay. One reason is that returnees are not a randomly selected subgroup of migrants; instead, they are negatively selected (Cuecuecha, 2006; Herzog & Schlottmann, 1983), meaning that on average, their probability of succeeding in the host country is below that of other migrants. They are least likely, among migrants, to interact with host country citizens. Their tendency to fail to find employment in the host country—or work as undocumented migrants in temporary low-wage jobs or

in agriculture (Reyes, 1997)—limits opportunities for economic integration. Compared to migrants who stay, returnees are less educated and therefore less capable of integrating and participating politically. Finally, their average stay lasts only about 16 months (Reyes, 2004; Reyes, Johnson, & Van Swearingen, 2002). Each of these aspects bears negatively on the likelihood that returnees will learn, adopt, and import new political attitudes and beliefs. In contrast, migrants who remain abroad stay longer in large measure because they succeed. Their socialization experiences within the host country's democracy are therefore deeper and more positive. The messages they convey to family and friends back home may thus be quite substantive and influential.

Returnees' political participation back home might be restricted, because they tend to be stigmatized as individuals who failed abroad. This may explain why even though return migrants have both minimal exposure to democratic culture abroad and full political rights as citizens of their own country, their rate of political participation is indistinguishable from that of other Mexicans. Migrants who return with significant savings may not suffer this stigmatization so acutely. However, their political participation may not increase, because they use these funds as "social insurance" (Wong, Palloni, & Soldo, 2007). Their financial independence implies that they do not make more demands on government than other Mexicans do.

The fact that migrating and returning influences political attitudes, but not behaviors, is consistent with the limited opportunities for socialization and political participation that return migrants faced in the host country. We find that even a short and relatively superficial experience in the host country is sufficient to alter the attitudes of returnees. Return migrants appear to criticize their government from the democratic perspective of citizens whose vision of democracy is shaped in part by their experience outside Mexico. Their impression of the host country's political life is sufficiently positive to lead them to evaluate their federal and state governments, as well as Mexico's democracy as a whole, more harshly than their nonmigrant peers do. At a minimum, host country governments appear to make Mexico's government look worse by comparison.

The strongest migration-driven diffusion effects obtain among people who receive information directly from migrant friends and family who remain abroad. It is not unusual that the diffusion effects of cross-border communication and migrant social networks are sometimes stronger than those of migrant returns, because these types of migrants who impel these two diffusion processes stay longer, are more successful, and likelier to integrate into the host country's society. Their nonmigrant friends and family may, in turn, receive stronger, more positive impressions of democracy north of the border. Nonmigrants combine their interpretations of the social remittances

they receive with the real resources available to them as citizens of their own country. They are more critical than other Mexicans of Mexico's democracy and government, and they are likelier to participate politically, because they do not face the challenge of readjusting to the home country environment as returnees do. Residence in a municipality that produced large numbers of migrants strongly increases the probability of participating in organizations, consistent with our proposition that migrant social networks disseminate information beyond individuals directly tied to the migration process.

Another finding that bears comment is monetary remittances' null effect on political attitudes and behaviors. Table 2 shows that the effects of remittances are negligible across the board. Although remittances affect household economies and community development, they do not affect individual evaluations of and participation in politics.

Remittances were a control variable in our study. Nonetheless, in light of claims made by Levitt (1998) that receiving remittances reinforces the diffusion of ideas, we explored our nonfinding more thoroughly. We conducted difference of means tests on all dependent variables, comparing respondents who receive remittance to those who do not; reran the original regressions with interaction terms combining whether the respondent has friends or family abroad and the total amount of annual remittances they receive; and also reran each regression omitting the variable "friends and family," then "migration intensity," to see if either of these variables was absorbing the possible effects of remittances. In none of the tests did remittances produce significant effects. Contrary to Levitt, money transfers do not also influence political ideas.

Our research offers a first cut at understanding international migration as a force of democratic diffusion at the individual level, among ordinary people. We demonstrate that migrants do contribute to channeling political beliefs and behavior from more to less democratic countries. As a critical case study, our research offers compelling evidence that migrants may be agents spreading foreign political beliefs and behaviors into other migrant-producing countries.

Our study challenges arguments that migration prevents democratization by serving as an escape valve for those most likely to seek to transform the political system. This argument divides Mexicans into two mutually exclusive groups—migrants and nonmigrants—but fails to consider the nuanced experiences that nonmigrants may have with migration. We have shown that nonmigrants with some type of tie to migration, including having once migrated, knowing a migrant, or living in a high-migration community, constitute theoretically and empirically distinct groups. Not only do return migrants themselves evolve, but stay-behinds' access to migration-generated resources also changes their attitudes and practices.

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Notes

1. This may be true of individuals, even if it is not true of countries; countries that backslide to authoritarianism mostly do so because interest-based elite interaction undermines weak institutional foundations for democracy, not because individual citizens sour on democracy (Przeworski, 1992).
2. To avoid possible item nonresponse bias, we imputed missing values for the tolerance variable as well as for income, satisfaction with democracy, and self-reported probability of voting, using regression predictions (as implemented in Stata's impute routine).
3. There is no theoretical reason to think that Mexicans who live in the United States (or know someone who does) would be more likely to vote. The low voter turnout rates in the United States make it a terrible place to learn voting behavior. Moreover, migrants—even those in the United States legally—are prohibited from voting until they become U.S. citizens.
4. Appendix A, available online at https://webspace.utexas.edu/crowdb/www/appendix.htm, provides details about our data structure and model specifications.

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