

Puerto Rican Exceptionalism?
A Comparative Analysis of Puerto Rican, Mexican, Salvadoran and Dominican
Transnational Civic and Political Ties

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The fluidity of migration and the relative ease of access of citizenship rights of Puerto Ricans in the United States often necessitates an asterisk or a footnote in studies of Latino immigrant adaptation. Since 1917, Puerto Ricans born in Puerto Rico have enjoyed the unique status of being U.S. citizens at birth. Puerto Ricans can migrate to the United States without restriction and can exercise the rights of citizenship in the United States on arrival (their exercise of U.S. citizenship in Puerto Rico is somewhat more circumscribed).

Because of this ease of migration and quick access to the vote, scholars of immigration and immigrant adaptation have paid relatively little attention to the process of Puerto Rican adaptation to civic and political life in the United States. For many of the same reasons, as international migration scholars have increasingly focused their attentions on transnational engagement among immigrants, they have overlooked the potential for Puerto Ricans in the United States to maintain civic and political ties in Puerto Rico. In this paper, we analyze this aspect of the Puerto Rican migrant experience to assess whether Puerto Rican migrants engage the civic and political life of Puerto Rico in a manner demonstrably different than do other large Latino migrant populations in the politics of their nation's of origin.

The Rediscovery and Expansion of Immigrant Transnational Engagement

There has long been an assumption that over time immigrants begin severing ties with their countries of origin and develop closer ties and allegiances with the host country (Schlesinger 1998; Handlin 1973 [1951]; Gordon 1964). This perspective has been tempered by research noting the greater prevalence of transnational ties among contemporary immigrants than

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in previous eras (Portes 1999; Shain 1999; Basch et al., 1994; Glick Schiller 1999; Glick Schiller et al., 1995, 1992). The core idea advanced by these studies is that advances in technology facilitating communication and travel, an increase in economic and political ties between the U.S. and immigrant-sending countries, a greater tolerance in the U.S. for ethnic pluralism, and encouragement to develop and maintain home-country by the immigrant-sending countries have enabled immigrants to forge and sustain transnational links to a greater degree than immigrants from previous waves (Foner 2001; Guarnizo 2001). While the ability of immigrants to maintain a foothold in two countries is not a new phenomenon (Morawska 2001; Foner 2000), the scale, density, and duration of contemporary transnational ties surpass those of previous immigrations. The meaning and significance of these ties has become an emerging field, traversing many social science and humanities disciplines, with different scholars emphasizing different aspects of the transnational experience (Itzigsohn 2000; Vertovec 1999; Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Glick Schiller et al., 1995; Basch et al., 1994).

Although a burgeoning field, much of the present scholarship on transnational ties remains informed by qualitative or case study analyses (Vélez-Ibáñez and Sampaio 2002; Hamilton and Stoltz Chinchilla 2001; Levitt 2001; Jones-Correa 1998; Duany 1994; de la Garza and Hazan 2003). Despite the rich insights generated by these studies, their small samples and specific geographic focus prevent us from making firm generalizations about the migrant group studied or migrant groups generally. Few works examine transnational processes empirically or comparatively (Barreto and Muñoz 2003; DeSipio 2003; Jones-Correa 2001; Pachon et al., 2000). As importantly, few studies analyze how transnational engagements change over the life course of the migrant (DeSipio 2002*a*). This project partially fills these omissions by empirically analyzing two types of transnational activities as a tool to assess whether the Puerto

Rican experience can be understood as similar to or distinct from those of other Latino migrants. These are: involvement in home country associations/activities and participation in home country politics. More specifically, we seek to address the following questions: (1) Do transnational civic and political ties vary among Puerto Rican migrants? (2) Do these patterns differ between Puerto Rican migrants and immigrants from other Latin American nations that send large number of the émigrés to the United States?

We analyze these questions using survey data from a Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI) survey of transnational civic and political ties among Latino immigrants.² The survey, which is discussed in greater depth later, offers comparative data on four of the five largest Latino immigrant/migrant populations—Mexican, Dominican, and Salvadoran immigrants, in addition to Puerto Rican migrants. Because their opportunities for ongoing relations in Cuba’s civic and political life are restricted, TRPI did not include Cuban immigrants who would make up the final of the top five Latino immigrant/migrant populations.

Transnational Ties and Puerto Rican Exceptionalism

An ambiguous concept, transnationalism as applied to immigration is typically defined as “the process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Basch et al., 1994: 7). A plethora of individual, household, and structural factors are argued to influence transnational ties (Foner 2001; Guarnizo 2001; Basch et al., 1994). However, the intensity of contemporary trans-border ties is largely facilitated by three factors: advances in transportation and communication technology; the globalization of capital; and a greater tolerance in the U.S. for ethnic pluralism

² We would like to express our appreciation to the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute for making these data available for our analysis. The survey was designed by Louis DeSipio, Rodolfo O. de la Garza, Harry Pachon, and Jongho Lee. A more detailed discussion of the design of the survey and the findings related to the relationships between home-country political activities and U.S. political engagement among Latino immigrants appears in DeSipio et. al. 2003.

(Pessar 1995; Basch et al., 1994). This emerging scholarship challenges the traditional view of migration that treats it as a unidirectional process whereby “uprooted” migrants travel to a new country and begin a process of severing ties with the old country while developing closer ties with the new homeland (Handlin 1973 [1951]; Gordon 1964).

Transmigration research often situates the migration process into a world systems theoretical framework (Basch et al., 1994). The core idea is that the growing economic and political ties between industrialized nations and underdeveloped nations facilitate migration and transnational processes. It is argued that this asymmetric relationship greatly benefits elites in both the core and periphery countries, but comes at the expense of workers generally and in particular those in the periphery. In an effort to improve their economic and social fortunes, individuals in the periphery migrate to the core/industrialized countries in order to assist families and communities in the home countries by sending remittances. Should the émigrés’ fortunes flounder in the host country, returning to the home country remains an option for those who have maintained ties. Thus, migration and transnational ties are a reaction to present-day global realities and are a novel strategy for diversifying risk (Levitt 2001; Glick Schiller et al., 1995, 1992; Basch et al., 1994; Grasmuck and Pessar 1991).

Since transmigrants were viewed as seeking to diversify risk, much of the initial scholarship argued that ties between migrants and communities in the homeland were being initiated and sustained from “below” at the grass roots level (Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Smith 1994). The inability of nation states to regulate immigrant-initiated transnational activities (Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Kearney 1991) has caused concern among some who view these ties as a threat to national cohesion (Huntington 2004, 1997; Glazer and Moynihan 1975). Others view these ties as an impediment to the socio-economic and political incorporation of

immigrants in the U.S. through the development of a “transient mentality” or an “ideology of return” among them (Torres-Saillant 1989). Many more take an optimistic position by arguing that transnational processes are necessary for enhancing the social, economic, or political well-being of migrants, their households, and communities in the home and host countries (Levitt 2001; Shain 1999; Jones-Correa 1998; Pessar 1995; Glick Shiller et al., 1995).

This initial view of “transnationalism from below” was quickly challenged by studies observing that nation-states were increasingly co-opting and advancing these practices by offering dual citizenship, advocating on behalf of their émigrés, and sponsoring a variety of programs designed to forge ties with migrant communities abroad (Itzigsohn 2000). At the same time, immigrant-sending countries were encouraging émigrés to pursue U.S. citizenship and become active in American politics (Guarnizo 2001). These efforts were not driven by benevolence, but by a desire to secure, increase, and sustain remittance and tourist dollars from abroad, which has become the largest source of foreign revenue for many third world countries (Itzigsohn 2000). Among Latin American countries, involvement in facilitating ties with their diasporas has intensified in the last decade (Jones-Correa 2001; 1995; Guarnizo 2001; de la Garza and Pachon 2000). A critical indicator of this is the recognition of dual nationality, a status in which the immigrant-sending country extends many, but not all of the rights of citizenship to émigrés who naturalize abroad and, in some cases, to their émigré’s children abroad. Prior to 1991 only four Latin American countries recognized dual nationality. Since then an additional six have. Specifically for the Latinos in our study, El Salvador recognized dual nationality in 1983, the Dominican Republic in 1994, and Mexico in 1998.

Puerto Rico’s commonwealth status makes it unique among Latin American and Caribbean countries. Since 1917 Puerto Ricans, whether born in the U.S.-mainland or Puerto

Rico, have been U.S. citizens. As American citizens, Puerto Ricans have been more likely than other migrant groups to engage in revolving migration, a phenomenon long celebrated in Puerto Rican literature. Estimates on circular migration flows range from 10 to 45 percent of the total flow (Duany 2002). It is argued that citizenship enables Puerto Ricans to simultaneously participate in the politics of the U.S. and Puerto Rico to a degree unavailable to other Latin Americans (Duany 2002; Rodriguez 1993). Puerto Rican exceptionalism is also facilitated by another factor—the size of their total population in the U.S.-mainland.

According to Shain (1999) the presence of significant numbers of populations outside their territorially defined nation-states will cause the homeland to take an interest in their diasporas which in turn creates transnational networks. Large numbers of fellow ‘countrymen’ abroad may not only provide significant amount of remittances but also have the ability to act as a potential ethnic lobby shaping economic and political ties between the U.S. and homeland (DeConde 1992). This was evident during the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) debates when Mexico actively courted Mexican American appointed and elected officials to promote this agreement (Shain 1999; de la Garza and Pachon 2000). Although each of the four homelands has significant numbers of émigrés in the U.S., all pale in comparison to Puerto Rico in terms of share of the “national” population. While Mexicans in the U.S. make up 60 percent of the U.S. Latino population, they only constitute 20 percent of Mexico’s population. Puerto Ricans in the mainland on the other hand, at 3.2 million, constitute 45 percent of Puerto Rico’s population (see Table One). Perhaps this is one of the reasons why since 1948 Puerto Rico has created government institutions concerned with the well being of the Puerto Rican diaspora, while most other Latin American countries have yet to develop these institutions. Mexico, for example, only began to develop such institutions in 1990. According to Duany, Puerto Rico’s

efforts “constitute one of the earliest examples of a transnational migrant policy by any state, whether colonial or sovereign” (2002: 183).

[Table One Approximately Here]

This discussion should not belie the fact that some transnational links have been initiated from the diaspora. Among our cases, the extension of dual nationality and the right to vote in elections in the Dominican Republic was largely the result of “bottom-up” pressure from Dominicans in New York City (Jones-Correa 2001). Since the 1980s, Salvadorans in the U.S. have played prominent roles in supporting progressive groups in the homeland, many of which remain active today (Hamilton and Stoltz-Chinchilla 2001). Yet, the Puerto Rican diaspora has a longer and perhaps more intense pattern of initiating transnational political ties with the homeland. For example, while Chicano activists in the 1960s strongly identified with many third world national liberation struggles, only mainland leftist Boricua organizations organized in Puerto Rico on behalf of independence (Melendez 2003; Torres 1998). Such organizing in both the mainland and Island extends back to the 1880s and continues to the present. Since 1978 grassroots activism on the part of the Puerto Rican diaspora has been stimulated by events in Vieques. Among those arrested in recent protests in Puerto Rico and the mainland were the three Puerto Rican representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives, Luis Gutierrez (D-IL), Nydia Velasquez (D-NY) and Jose Serrano (D-NY).

We then have reason to believe that Puerto Rico’s commonwealth status affords Puerto Ricans a unique opportunity to establish and maintain transnational ties to a greater degree than other Latino migrants. Is this in fact the case? To answer this, we turn to examine the results of the TRPI’s 2002 immigrant survey.

Comparing Latino Civic and Political Transnational Ties

The 2002 TRPI Immigrant Participation Survey included a variety of questions measuring transnational ties among Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Salvadorans, and Dominicans in the United States. TRPI conducted this survey in July and August 2002. The sample includes at least 400 respondents from each of these immigrant nationality groups with a total respondent pool of 1,602. Respondents were randomly selected from within households. All interviewers were fully bilingual and approximately 94 percent of respondents answered the questionnaire in Spanish (for a detailed description of the survey and sample demographics see DeSipio et al. 2003).

A quick review of questions measuring some of the most common forms of transnational ties offers little evidence that Puerto Ricans in the United States have a different relationship to Puerto Rico than do Latino immigrants to their home countries. Differences, where they exist, are relatively slight (see Table Two). Puerto Ricans, for example, were somewhat less likely than Salvadorans and considerably more likely than Dominicans to plan to make a permanent home of the United States. Slightly more than 60 percent of Puerto Ricans (and roughly the same share of Mexican immigrants) took this position. The majority of Puerto Rican migrants had not visited Puerto Rico in the two years prior to the survey. This share of non-home nation visitors was approximately 10 percent higher than the rate of non-visitors among Mexican and Salvadoran immigrants and 10 percent lower than the share of non-visitors among Dominicans. Among those Puerto Ricans who did visit Puerto Rico over that two-year period averaged 2.24 visits. This number of visits was the lowest of the four countries under study, but not by a wide margin. Finally, Puerto Ricans were somewhat less interested in the politics of Puerto than are Latino immigrants in the politics of their home nations. This gap, however, was more than

compensated for by the fact that Puerto Rican migrant respondents were the most likely to report that they were interested in the politics of both the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

[Table Two Approximately Here]

These measures may not offer much insight into the transnational civic and political engagement of Latino migrants/immigrants. In order to gauge transnational civic and political engagement with greater precision, we next consider the questions designed to measure involvement in home country associations/activities and participation in home country politics. Four questions in the TRPI survey measured involvement in home country associations/activities:

- “Over the last year, have you gone to a meeting to discuss the politics of [Home Country]?”
- “Over the last year have you attended a cultural or educational event related to [HC]?”
- “Over the last year have you been a member of an organization that seeks to promote cultural ties between the United States and [HC]?”
- “Over the last year have you been a member of an organization of people from your hometown or state in [HC]?”

Participation in home country politics is measured by three questions:

- “Some migrants continue to participate in the politics of their home nations while others do not. Have you voted in an election in [HC] since you migrated to the United States?”
- “Have you contributed money to a candidate running for office or political party in [HC] since you migrated to the United States?”
- “Have you gone to a rally in the United States in which a candidate for office in [HC] or a representative of a political party in [HC] spoke?”

A review of bivariate data on respondents’ answers to these questions indicates somewhat more variation than in terms of transnational civic and political engagement (See Table Three). Puerto Rican and Dominican migrants generally show higher levels of involvement in home nation associations and activities and home nation politics than Mexican and Salvadoran migrants. The activity most engaged in was attending a cultural or educational event related to

the home country. Fully 43 percent of Puerto Rican migrants and 44 percent of Dominican migrants, for example, had attended a cultural or educational event related to Puerto Rico or the Dominican Republic in the past year. The comparable figures for Mexico and El Salvador were 27 percent and 23 percent, respectively. The transnational activity least engaged in was contributing money to home country candidates and parties. Here again, Puerto Rican and Dominican migrants displayed a higher level of involvement vis-à-vis Mexican and Salvadoran migrants. Yet, for the following three activities (1) Gone to a meeting to discuss the politics of the home country; (2) become a member of an organization of people from your hometown or state in the home country; and (3) gone to a rally in the U.S. for a home country candidate, Dominican migrants display much higher levels of involvement than the other groups. Overall, the results show that migrants, regardless of nation of origin, were more likely to report having been involved in home country associations or activities within the than they were to report involvement in home country politics. This difference may be the result of greater costs associated with involvement home country politics or simply that these types of activities are tied to home country election cycles, thus occurring with less frequency.

[Table Three Approximately Here]

Modeling Puerto Rican and other Latino Transnational Engagement

These bivariate results, of course, could obscure significant differences in the composition, experiences, and attitudes of these Latino national-origin groups. Puerto Rican and Mexican migrants, for example, have on average resided in the United States for somewhat longer. Salvadoran migrants are the youngest Latino immigrant population and have the lowest incomes. Although not directly relevant to this study (because we are somewhat limited in the immigrant characteristics that we can examine to compare the non-Puerto Rican and Puerto

Rican migrants in the study), Mexican immigrants are the most likely to be in the United States in an undocumented status.

In order to evaluate what predicts Puerto Rican engagement in transnational politics and to compare that experience to those of the other three Latin American émigré populations in the study, we employ logistic regression analyses to predict both forms of transnational civic and political engagement: (1) involvement in home country associations/activities and (2) involvement in home country politics.³ The model includes three components that previous scholarship in this area suggests would predict political engagement and transnational engagement: individual demographic characteristics, immigrant characteristics, and measures of incorporation and efficacy. We have no expectations that these variables will have a differential impact across the two types of transnational activities studied here. Thus, our description of the variables and their theoretical impacts apply to both activities.

We include three demographic characteristics: age⁴, education, and income. The impact of each of these characteristics is widely understood for U.S. political engagement, though their effect on immigrant adaptation and transnational politics is less clear (DeSipio 1996, 2002a; DeSipio et al. 2003). Older immigrants are more likely to have been socialized in the home country and have stronger familial and social ties to the home country. As a result we expect older migrants will be more engaged in transnational politics. We disagree about the expected impact of high levels of education. On the one hand, higher levels of education could give migrants the resources to acculturate and engage U.S. politics. On the other hand, higher levels

³ The dependent variable is dichotomous (1=transnational political engagement; 0 no transnational political engagement). Since most respondents were not engaged in transnational activities, respondents who engaged in at least one activity were coded 1 and all others were coded 0.

⁴ A large share of the missing data are the result of respondents not providing their age. Approximately 15 percent of respondents did not provide their age. Year of migration was also problematic for many respondents; approximately 13 percent of respondents did not answer this question (many who didn't answer one didn't answer the other). Clearly, these are very important variables for our analysis, so we tolerate higher rates of missing data than we would otherwise like.

of education would give migrants greater resources to participate in home-nation politics. We have no expectations for the expected impact of income, though some find that individuals with greater socio-economic resources have an easier time traveling back to the home country and/or engage in transnational entrepreneurial activities (Levitt 2001; Guarnizo 1997). The degree to which income promotes participation in home country associations and politics is an open question.

We also look at three immigration characteristics: plans for long term residence, location of family, and ratio of life spent in the United States. We see the *plans* for long-term residence as a measure not necessarily of where the respondent will actually live in the future, but instead of where the respondent sees himself/herself in the long-term. We anticipate that immigrants who see themselves returning to their home nations as being more likely to be engaged in transnational political activities (DeSipio 1996). Since return has fewer consequences for Puerto Ricans, we would expect this variable to have particularly strong predictive value for Puerto Rican respondents. Second, we include the location of most of the respondent's family. We would anticipate that those who reported having transnational families would be more likely to be engaged in home-nation focused civic and political life (DeSipio 2002a). Finally, we look at ratio of life spent in the United States (calculated as length of residence in the United States divided by age). We expect that respondents with higher U.S.-residence ratios will have lower engagement in their home-nation politics.

Our immigration predictors are somewhat atypical. By including Puerto Ricans, however, we are somewhat limited in what we can include while maintaining comparability (this is the asterisk that we refer to in the first paragraph of the paper). We cannot include either citizenship status or visa status which would be routinely include in analysis of political

attitudes, values, or behaviors of immigrant-ethnic populations. We expect that the U.S.-residence ratio variable captures some of these other immigrant-related characteristics for the non-Puerto Rican respondents. Those with lower ratios will probably include a higher share who are not in legal resident statuses and those with a higher U.S. share will include a higher share of naturalized U.S. citizens.

Finally, we include three measures of incorporation and efficacy. We include: level of attention paid to co-ethnics in the United States, the experience of discrimination in the United States, and migrant perception of their influence on the politics of their home nation. The degree to which migrants follow events pertaining to their fellow nationals can be taken as a measure of ethnic cohesion. Since political events in the home country are likely to affect the émigré population as a whole, we believe that higher levels of attention to co-ethnics are associated with higher levels of interest and engagement in the politics and civic life of home nation. The experience of discrimination variable assesses perception of discrimination of by one or more of following: the police, at the workplace, when buying or renting a home, or by school officials. Perception of discrimination has been shown to be a positive predictor of political engagement in domestic politics (DeSipio 2002*b*; Pantoja and Segura 2003; Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura 2001), and it is argued to foster attachment to the home country (Basch et al. 1994). We anticipate that discrimination will be associated with higher levels of transnational politics and civic engagement. Finally, we include an efficacy measure, though not the traditional one. In this case, it is a measure of how much influence individuals believe they have on home country politics. We expect that increased political efficacy toward the home country would lead to greater transnational engagement.

Results

Puerto Rican migrants who are engaged with associations and activities concerned with Puerto Rico are migrants who have spent a lower share of their lives in the United States, who pay relatively more attention to other Puerto Ricans, and who believe that they have influence on Puerto Rican politics (see Table Four). Demographic characteristics of Puerto Rican migrants play no statistically significant role in these activities.

[Table Four Approximately Here]

For other Latino immigrants, on the other hand, increasingly high levels of education predict transnational associational membership and transnational activities as does the experience of discrimination in the United States. Latin American migrants with long-term plans to reside in the United States are less likely to be transnationally engaged. As with Puerto Rican migrants, spending a higher share of one's life in the United States reduces the likelihood of transnational engagement.⁵

Turning to the predictors of transnational electoral engagement among Puerto Rican migrants and other Latino immigrants, the results show a somewhat similar pattern (see Table Five). Increasing age predicts home nation electoral engagement for both respondent groups. Higher levels of efficacy in the sending nation also positively predict the likelihood of electoral participation for both groups, though the effect is more consistent and stronger for Puerto Ricans.

[Table Five Approximately Here]

As was the case with the model predicting participation in transnational associations and activities, more characteristics proved significant in predicting electoral behaviors among the

⁵ Our goal here is to distinguish Puerto Rican from other Latino migrants, but it would be disingenuous to homogenize the other Latino immigrant populations. We ran a separate specification of the model that included country of origin. Dominican migrants were approximately 2.3 times as likely to engage in the transnational associational activities than were Mexican immigrants controlling for other variables in the model. Salvadoran migrants were not statistically different from Mexican migrants.

non-Puerto Rican Latino immigrants. Post high school education (relative to respondents with grade school education or less) and the experience of discrimination in the United States increase the likelihood of involvement in home country electoral activity. Plans for long-term residence in the United States decrease this likelihood.⁶

Conclusions

Overall the evidence is mixed on the questions we ask in this research. Contrary to expectations that Puerto Rican migrants would display higher levels of transnational civic and political ties than the other Latino migrant groups, we find little evidence in support of Puerto Rican exceptionalism on this account. Although Puerto Ricans did appear to have stronger home country ties than Mexican or Salvadoran migrants, they rarely surpassed those established by Dominicans. In some cases Dominican transnational ties far exceeded that those created by the other Latino groups. Yet, in terms of the reasons why different Latino migrants engage in transnational civic and political participation, Puerto Ricans do appear to become engaged for different reasons. For Puerto Ricans, the immigration/incorporation variables (and ratio of life spent in the United States) prove to be the major predictors of transnational engagement. Among the immigration incorporation variables, the two that proved significant were home country-focused ones: ethnic cohesion and efficacy. For the other Latino immigrants, demographic and immigration variables (again, along with ratio of life spent in the United States) proved dispositive.

Home country electoral activity, on the other hand, saw less difference between Puerto Rican and non-Puerto Rican migrants. The model for the non-Puerto Rican migrants did see

⁶ We again tested this the non-Puerto Rican model with national origin added. Again, Dominican immigrants were considerably more likely than Mexican immigrants to report having been involved in home country electoral activities controlling for other factors in the model. Salvadoran immigrants were not statistically different from Mexican immigrants.

some additional variables prove to be significant, however. Again, the immigration variables—particularly the long-term residential intentions—play a more important role for non-Puerto Rican-Latin American immigrants. Interestingly, perception of discrimination in the United States also proves to be a statistically significant positive predictor of home country electoral activity for the non-Puerto Rican-Latin American immigrants. Discrimination was unimportant as a predictor for Puerto Ricans.

Although small sample sizes should offer some caution in interpreting these results, they suggest one important difference in the experience of Puerto Rican migrants and Latin American immigrants. Specifically, expect for share of life spent in the United States, immigration characteristics do not drive Puerto Rican connections with Puerto Rico. These immigration characteristics do play a role for Latin American immigrants. In their place for Puerto Rican migrants are attitudes, both toward their co-ethnics and toward their sense of influence/efficacy on the government of Puerto Rico.

This explanation for these differences cannot be determined from the survey data reported here. In part, the different experience of the Puerto Rican migrants must derive from the long-term efforts of the Puerto Rican government to serve as a resource for and sometimes to organize Puerto Ricans in the United States. These efforts date back to the late 1940s with the creation of the Migration Division, and have been a continuing objective of the Puerto Rican government, now under the auspices of the Puerto Rico Federal Affairs Administration. To the extent that the difference, however, is a function of the long-term nature of the Puerto Rican commitment to organizing its émigrés, the gap with (some) other Latin American émigré populations will decrease. Of the three countries under study here, both the Dominican and Mexican governments have begun these outreach efforts over the last decade and seem to be

committed to continuing these efforts. El Salvador has been less involved, in part as a result of the divisions that are a legacy of the Civil War, but it has begun to initiate some targeted outreach from some of its consulates in the United States.

It is quite likely, however, that not all of the differences between Puerto Rican and other Latin American immigrant populations are the result of the legacy of Puerto Rican government outreach to Puerto Ricans in the United States. The relative unimportance of the immigration characteristics in the experience of transnationalism among Puerto Rican migrants indicates that the unique relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico has created an opportunity for Puerto Rican transnationalism to emerge that is different from that of other Latin American émigré populations. This suggests that the failure of previous immigration scholarship to theorize about and analyze Puerto Rican migrant adaptation represents a substantial gap in our understanding of the dynamics of immigrant transnational engagement in general. More importantly, it misses a natural experiment in the study of transnationalism in which the immigration experience—controlled more by the receiving country than the sending country—is removed from the picture. To the extent that transnational politics becomes a more central element in the study of ethnic politics in the United States, the experience of the Puerto Rican migration needs to be moved to a more central position (and the asterisk needs to be removed from much of our analysis).

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Table One. Ratio of Mexican-, Puerto Rican-, Dominican-, and Salvadoran-immigrant and Ancestry Populations to Home-Country Populations.

Mexico (2003)	104,907,991
Mexican Americans (2003)	25,100,000
Ratio:	4.2:1
Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico (2003)	3,885,887
Puerto Ricans in the U.S. (2003)	3,200,000
Ratio:	1.2:1
Dominican Republic (2003)	8,715,602
Dominicans in U.S. (2000)	764,945
Ratio:	11.4:1
El Salvador (2003)	6,470,379
Salvadorans in the U.S. (2000)	655,165
Ratio:	9.9:1

Note: The 2000 Census data for Dominican- and Salvadoran-origin and ancestry populations in the United States likely underestimate the populations. Rubén Rumbaut estimates that there were 1,115,481 1st and 2nd generation Dominicans and 1,535,850 1st and 2nd generation Salvadorans in the United States and counted in the Current Population Survey in the 1998-2002 period. Using these figures, the Dominican ratio drops to 7.8:1 and the Salvadoran to 4.2:1

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census 2001; 2003. *Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook*, <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>, [Accessed April 15, 2004].

Table Two. Residential and Political Focus, by National Origin, Tomás Rivera Policy Institute Immigrant Political Participation Survey.

	Mexico %	Puerto Rico %	El Salvador %	Dominican Republic %
<i>Residential Intentions</i>				
Plan to make a permanent home of the United States	62.3	61.2	71.1	49.7
Plan to return to nation of origin	37.7	38.8	28.9	39.0
<i>Visits to Nation of Origin (2000-2001)</i>				
None	45.0	54.0	41.3	65.3
One or more	55.0	46.0	58.8	34.8
Average number of visits among those who did visit home nation	2.69	2.24	2.29	2.31
<i>Locus of Political Concerns</i>				
Country of origin	14.5	8.2	11.0	9.3
United States	27.2	20.7	23.5	28.4
Both equally	52.4	65.5	62.1	61.6
Doesn't follow politics	5.9	5.6	3.4	0.8

Source: Tomás Rivera Policy Institute Immigrant Political Participation Survey.

Table Three. Mexican, Puerto Rican, Salvadoran, and Dominican Migrant Transnational Engagement

	Mexico %	Puerto Rico %	El Salvador %	Dominican Republic %
<i>Latin American migrant involvement in home country associations/activities</i>				
Over the past year, have you ...				
Gone to a meeting to discuss the politics of [HC]	6.2	14.6	5.8	21.8
Attended cultural or Educational event related to [HC]	26.6	42.7	23.1	43.9
Been a member of an Organization that seeks to promote cultural ties between the United States and [HC]	6.7	15.2	5.6	12.8
Been a member of an organization of people from your hometown or state in [HC]	8.5	12.1	7.8	22.8
<i>Latin American migrant Participation in home country politics</i>				
Voted	9.5	14.6	8.5	15.0
Contributed money to candidates or parties	2.0	5.3	2.8	6.3
Gone to a rally in the U.S for an [HC] candidate or party	2.7	11.6	2.3	17.3

Note: [HC] - fill in the name of the home nation

Source: Tomás Rivera Policy Institute Immigrant Political Participation Survey.

Table Four. Predictors of Home Country Associations and Activities.

Independent Variable	Puerto Ricans		Other Latino Immigrants	
	Odds Ratio	SE	Odds Ratio	SE
Demographics				
Age	-0.004	0.010	0.002	0.006
Education (Grade School or Less)				
Some high school	-0.183	0.388	0.762***	0.208
HS graduate	0.537	0.442	0.897***	0.224
Post-high school	0.536	0.431	1.551***	0.227
Household Income (\$15,000 or less)				
\$15,000-\$24,999	0.255	0.409	0.121	0.212
\$25,000-\$34,999	-0.517	0.541	0.176	0.260
\$35,000-\$49,999	0.956	0.599	0.421	0.313
\$50,000+	0.315	0.534	-0.351	0.373
Don't know/refused	-0.895	0.416	-0.150	0.224
Immigration Characteristics				
Plans for long-term residence (Home Country)				
Not sure	-0.103	0.409	-0.318	0.231
U.S.	-0.295	0.336	-0.375**	0.178
Location of family (Most in home country)				
Equally divided	0.079	0.355	0.024	0.195
Most in United States	0.024	0.397	0.175	0.219
Ratio of Life Spent in the United States	-1.269**	0.636	-0.865**	0.419
Incorporation/Efficacy				
Level of attention paid to co-ethnics (Hardly at all)				
Now and then	0.226	0.550	0.383	0.310
Some of the time	1.051*	0.562	0.485	0.311
Most of the time	1.193**	0.532	0.773*	0.298
Experience of discrimination in U.S. (None)				
One agency	0.061	0.420	0.396**	0.193
Two or more agencies	0.301	0.368	0.452*	0.257
Migrant Influence on HC Politics in Last Year (None)				
Not much	1.505***	0.542	-0.173	0.314
Not sure	0.312	0.547	-0.302	0.331
Some	2.022***	0.569	0.208	0.310
A great deal	1.372***	0.548	0.100	0.296
Constant	-0.925	0.892	-1.344***	0.517
Total cases		282		837
Predicted correctly		70.6%		66.5%
		r ² =.320		r ² =.159

Note: "Other Latino immigrants" includes Mexican, Salvadoran, and Dominican immigrants.

Key: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.10$.

Source: The TRPI Immigrant Political Participation Survey, 2002.

Table Five. Predictors of Home Nation Electoral Activity.

Independent Variable	Puerto Ricans		Other Latino Immigrants	
	Odds Ratio	SE	Odds Ratio	SE
Demographics				
Age	0.021**	0.010	0.030***	0.008
Education (Grade School or Less)				
Some high school	-0.002	0.403	0.379	0.265
HS graduate	-0.768	0.492	0.201	0.289
Post-high school	-0.133	0.445	0.886***	0.270
Household Income (\$15,000 or less)				
\$15,000-\$24,999	-0.667	0.427	0.136	0.262
\$25,000-\$34,999	-0.804	0.576	0.013	0.317
\$35,000-\$49,999	-0.993	0.618	-0.701	0.444
\$50,000+	-0.309	0.543	0.236	0.436
Don't know/refused	-0.904***	0.442	-0.084	0.275
Immigration Characteristics				
Plans for long-term residence (Home Country)				
Not sure	0.062	0.435	-0.943***	0.293
U.S.	0.248	0.344	-1.005***	0.215
Location of family (Most in home country)				
Equally divided	0.178	0.364	0.102	0.240
Most in United States	-0.557	0.419	0.079	0.268
Ratio of Life Spent in the United States	-0.384	0.649	-0.379	0.526
Incorporation/Efficacy				
Level of attention paid to co-ethnics (Hardly at all)				
Now and then	0.969	0.640	0.354	0.410
Some of the time	0.887*	0.664	0.363	0.410
Most of the time	1.460**	0.624	0.687*	0.385
Experience of discrimination in U.S. (None)				
One agency	0.186	0.441	0.441*	0.234
Two or more agencies	-0.166	0.387	0.892***	0.283
Migrant Influence on HC Politics in Last Year (None)				
Not much	0.318	0.565	0.158	0.394
Not sure	-0.254	0.586	-0.062	0.420
Some	0.371	0.568	-0.088	0.401
A great deal	-0.364	0.580	0.265	0.371
Constant	-2.353***	0.971	-3.063***	0.643
Total cases		285		845
Predicted correctly		74.7%		82.1%
		r ² =.141		r ² =.142

Note: "Other Latino immigrants" includes Mexican, Salvadoran, and Dominican immigrants.

Key: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.10$.

Source: The TRPI Immigrant Political Participation Survey, 2002.