

# Democracy, Governance, and Emigration Intentions in Latin America and the Caribbean

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## Abstract

It is now clear that the global shift toward democracy in recent decades has resulted in a highly uneven democratic landscape in which the quality and performance of democracies around the world vary greatly. In an era characterized not only by this variance in democratic quality, but also by increasingly open borders to goods, services, information, and, at times, labor, we argue that political system performance issues are an important, yet underexplored, component in one's emigration calculus. We test this argument through analysis of survey data across 22 Latin American countries, and find strong and consistent evidence that both the degree of democracy and the specific performance of the political system in basic areas of governance strongly influence the degree to which an individual considers emigration as a viable life strategy.

## **Introduction**

Somewhat lost in the past three decades of watershed political changes in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is an equally dramatic demographic transition in the region. By 2010 the stock of LAC emigrants had reached a total of 30.2 million (5.2 percent of the total population), ranking it as the second-leading sending region in the world in both absolute and relative terms (World Bank 2011).<sup>i</sup> Thus during precisely the same period that the area's countries were transitioning to more democratic political regimes, theoretically becoming more open and accessible to citizens in the process, an historic number of individuals were making the difficult decision to leave their native country for an extended period of time. Figure 1 highlights both the longer-term emigration trend in the region as well as its clear acceleration in the 1980s and 1990s. Though countless scholars, development practitioners, and policymakers have examined the causes and consequences of countries' democratic openings on the one hand, and the LAC's historic shift from a net-receiving to a net-sending region on the other, few have explored the connections between these two trends.

In the following pages we posit a link between the flawed nature and poor performance of many of the region's newly democratic regimes and an individual's consideration of emigration as a viable life option. While other factors—economic, “migration connectedness”, and geography in particular— without a doubt play a significant role in the decision to emigrate, we argue that an individual's experiences with her political system and the democratic quality of that system both play a significant role in whether she will consider leaving her home country. For as much as one's evaluation of her personal economic situation, for example, may influence this decision, we see an individual's political system, and her experiences with it, as an important element in one's assessment of what we refer to as her “life opportunity horizon,” that will in

turn affect the decision calculus regarding emigration as a possible plan of action in the near future.

### **Uneven Democratization in Latin America and the Caribbean**

To varying degrees, the new democratic regimes that have emerged throughout LAC over the past thirty years have been widely viewed as incomplete, illiberal, and/or ineffective (Armony and Schamis 2005; Diamond 1999; 2002; Levitsky and Way, 2002; McFaul 2002; Schedler 1998). During this period, some governments in the region at times seem to have been overwhelmed in their efforts to fulfill even the most basic tasks of the state, as evidenced by rising crime and corruption rates, the continued recurrence of macroeconomic instability, and persistent gaps in basic service delivery (Huber et al. 2004; Kurtz 2004; Johnson and Crisp 2003; Rodrik 2000; Seligson 2006). Even in terms of providing the fundamental elements of democracy itself, these systems vary widely. As O'Donnell (2004) noted several years ago, “in many new (and not so new) democracies, in Latin America and other regions, there exist numerous points of rupture in formal legal systems” that he argued have led to significant segments of these societies living in highly undemocratic, underperforming local political systems (41).

These less-than-stellar track records for LAC's new democracies have been accompanied by persistently high rates of citizen dissatisfaction with government and, in some cases, with democracy in general. Repeated surveys of LAC citizens over the past decade document these deficiencies, and citizens' reaction to them. The biennial *Americasbarometer* surveys (2004-2010) have consistently revealed that close to half of the citizens in the region are dissatisfied with democracy in their country.<sup>ii</sup> A somewhat more concrete manifestation of citizen reaction to the poor performance of Latin American democracies emerges from the 80 percent of

respondents who reported feeling that political corruption was at least “somewhat widespread” in their country. Not surprisingly, only an average of ten to fifteen percent had “much confidence” in their government. While such numbers do not capture the tremendous intraregional variation that exists within LAC, they do support the conventional view that the region’s democratic transition to date has been less than overwhelming in terms of the degree of democracy attained and citizens’ satisfaction with it.

The day-to-day performance of these democracies has been equally problematic. From a macroeconomic perspective, since 1982 there have been over fifty instances where a Latin American country has suffered an annual decline in its gross domestic product of over two percent (adapted from Lustig 2000). Though some Latin American countries established impressive records of sustained economic growth in the early 2000s, and, more recently, have fared relatively well through the 2008 global financial crisis (World Bank 2010), others have continued their patterns of “crisis-based development” (Hiskey 2005). On top of this sporadic regional economic performance, the past twenty years have also been marred by countless episodes of political corruption that have resulted in the removal of several presidents and other high-ranking officials across the region (Pérez-Liñán 2007). Further, street-level crime and corruption now consistently rank as two of the most critical problems for citizens across the region. Many countries in the region, for example, have crime rates that are between ten and twenty times those found in the U.S. <sup>iii</sup>

A government’s inability to effectively control crime and corruption falls under the more general governance problem that confronts many LAC countries. The widely used “governance index” of Kaufmann, et al. (2007), that includes such dimensions as “control of corruption”, “rule of law”, and “government effectiveness”, paints a dismal picture for much of the region. In

the most recent release of their governance scores, only Chile and Uruguay rise above the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile in the category of governments' ability to control corruption, with most other countries falling below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile. In the categories of "voice and accountability", "rule of law", and "government effectiveness" the story is the same – a region-wide failing report card with respect to these various dimensions of governance.<sup>iv</sup>

### **Current Research on the Act of Emigration**

How might such political system characteristics influence the emigration decision?

Though very little work exists on the cognitive process that precedes the actual act of emigration, there is ample theoretical and empirical research on the macro- and micro-level factors related to the movement of people from one country to another. Surprisingly, with the exception of work on political refugees, very little attention has been devoted to the possible political determinants of emigration. The point of departure for most current discussions of emigration concerns the economic motivations behind such a choice. Popular media and political rhetoric tell us that emigration is largely a story of the poorest of the poor leaving their homes in order to improve their economic situations, an account largely consistent with earlier research on the question (e.g., Borjas 1989). Through the more systematic work of recent migration scholars, however, we now know that this account is in fact far from the entire story (e.g., Durand, et al. 2000; Massey, et al. 1998; Massey, et al. 1994; Massey et al. 2003; Stark 1991; Taylor 1987).<sup>v</sup>

In one of the most comprehensive assessments of emigration research to date, Massey and his coauthors (1998) offer a "theoretical synthesis" of the myriad factors associated with emigration, beginning with the "rapid change and development" that many countries have undergone over the past thirty years "as a result of their incorporations into global trade, information, and production networks" (277). Portes' and Hoffman's (2003) examination of

Latin America's market-based economic transition arrives at a similar conclusion, attributing the region's recent surge in emigration in part to the watershed shift in economic development strategies and the consequent labor market disruptions.

A second element of the emigration equation involves the larger market failures commonly found in developing country economies that lead families to pursue multiple economic strategies, including migration, as a response. Thus, emigration does not begin with the poorest of the poor, but rather involves those most affected by market failures in such areas as credit and insurance. From this perspective, "families, households, or other culturally defined units of production and consumption, not the autonomous individual, are the appropriate units of analysis for migration research" (Massey, et al. 1998, 27). The families' cost-benefit analysis, then, does not simply include employment prospects within the home community but rather incorporates a much broader set of considerations. It is this more general evaluation of local markets that raises the potential connection between governance issues and a household's decisions with respect to emigration. If governance quality affects, as many have argued, the growth potential of one's local (and national) economy, then governance quality will also affect a family's assessment of this growth potential (or "opportunity horizon"), and thus their willingness to consider emigration as part of the family's economic strategy.

Adding to this more complex cost-benefit analysis is the "cumulative" causal role that migrant networks and a community's migration history play in an individual's decision to emigrate. Membership in such a network, where family members or friends already reside abroad, as well as the larger community's migration history, greatly shapes an individual's migration decision by reducing the costs of a move to another country and increasing the information available to the individual about such a move. Massey, et al. (1998) succinctly

describe this process as one where “each act of migration alters the social context within which subsequent migration decisions are made, typically in ways that make additional movement more likely” (45-46). Once begun, then, a migrant network will often become self-reinforcing to a point, as potential migrants have more and more relatives and friends residing in the receiving country, reducing the costs of leaving one’s country (Massey, et al. 2003).

Despite this comprehensive corrective to our understanding of why people leave, the potential influence of political factors in the migration calculation is largely missing from conventional accounts (see also Clark, et al., 2003). Though work on “voting with one’s feet” has a long history in research on local government and decentralization (e.g., Tiebout 1956), much less research exists on how governance issues and variations in the degree of democracy may affect the international movement of people. Most work on the political factors behind migration has tended to focus on the more extreme incidents of political repression and its relation to emigration in the form of political refugees, most notably the cases of Cuba and East Germany (e.g., Hirschman 1978; 1993; Hoffman 2005; Praff and Kim 2003).<sup>vi</sup>

Fleck and Hanssen (2005) offer one of the more recent exceptions to this dearth of work on the political factors behind emigration in their analysis of emigration and government quality, testing a model where a “citizen’s decision to stay in the country depends on the quality of government in that country, the quality of government in countries to which the citizen can move, and the cost of relocating to those countries” (4). Herbst (1990) explores a similar emigration dynamic, but focuses on the enhanced ability of many governments to limit both the exit and the voice option for their citizens. Finally, Lundquist and Massey (2005) have recently made progress in untangling the overlapping economic and political factors behind Nicaraguan emigration to Costa Rica and the United States during the 1980s. The fact that these authors find

strong evidence for both factors makes clear that the question of whether emigration is an economic or political phenomenon is not an either/or question, but rather a complex mix of a wide range of economic, contextual, and, we argue, political factors.

### **Political Regimes and the Decision to Emigrate**

At the extremes, the connection between political regimes and one's life opportunity horizon is clear. Whether a Batista supporter in Castro's Cuba or a newspaper editor in Argentina of the late 1970s, an individual targeted by an authoritarian regime will likely have a significantly constrained life opportunity horizon that should greatly color her future plans. In Hirschman's terms, the most likely option for such an individual is exit, if possible. An individual who is slightly less of a regime target may instead opt for a path of passive "loyalty" in hopes of expanding her life opportunity horizon by "going along to get along". A few may attempt "voice" as a strategy, but the more repressive the political regime is that one faces, the lower the chances "voice" may have to effect change in a way that broadens the life opportunity horizon.

In such a context, then, highly targeted citizens will likely become political refugees (again, if possible), and the vast majority of remaining citizens will likely adopt a loyalty strategy. And indeed, this is generally the pattern we see unfold in highly repressive regimes – sporadic flows of political refugees interspersed with what at least appears from afar as a largely "loyal" population. Though no regime is able to rid itself entirely of those who choose to exercise their voice, the more its internal security apparatus is able to suppress that voice or otherwise render it ineffective, the more "loyalty" will at least appear to prevail. The loudest voice in this situation in fact will likely emerge from the émigré population, those that initially

opted for exit. Castro's Cuba, again, offers a fairly clean case of such dynamics playing out over the course of the regime's existence.

In such extreme cases, there is ample evidence that regime characteristics shape citizens' emigration calculus. Though the economic conditions and the future survival prospects of an authoritarian regime also will play a role in this decision, as will geographic and familial considerations, in this extreme example, politics clearly plays a role. The same could be said for a fully democratic and effective political system. With an effective and high quality democracy in place, one likely will be more inclined to make a go of it in her native country rather than leave to work in another. As Hirschman argued:

What is needed in order to avoid excessive emigration . . . is for a society to provide its members with *some* "attractions" that will reinforce their normal reluctance to leave. Besides an adequate supply of goods for individual consumption, such attractions can also consist of what is known to economists as "public goods" . . . [such as] guaranteeing human rights and democratic liberties. The latter two would make a country attractive to its citizens, especially in a world where . . . many governments habitually suppress criticism and mistreat their political opponents (105).

One would think, then, that because a democratic regime will tend to offer more and better public goods than a non-democratic one, all else equal, citizens will choose to stay in their democratic country. The prevailing view regarding the impact of LAC's newly democratic, more "voice-friendly" regimes on the emigration decision understandably seems to have been along the lines of Hirschman's argument – more democratic regimes will provide more and better political "public goods" that should translate into fewer citizens feeling as though they need to leave their country to improve their lives. Though the actual emigration rates in authoritarian regimes may have been lower due to the use of repressive tactics (e.g., Cuba),

consideration of emigration, according to Hirschman, would likely be lower in the newly democratic systems.

The key assumption in this view of democracy's impact on emigration, however, is that all democratic systems are created equal with respect to the political "public goods" they provide. Such an assumption, we now know, is incorrect. Rather, as previously mentioned, the quality of democracy and governance performance levels vary quite dramatically across LAC countries. Costa Rica, for example, has a long history of a high quality democracy and effective governance, while Guatemala remains problematic on both counts. We contend that these differences in regime characteristics and performance matter for the decision to stay or go, even if both systems might be nominally referred to as democracies.

Our conceptualization of the quality of a democracy and a system's performance in basic areas of governance include the more general tendencies of one's political system to abide by basic democratic political and civil rights, and the more specific, but no less important, performance issues such as a government's ability to provide basic services, control crime, and behave in a relatively clean and transparent manner. It is these latter, more concrete, manifestations of system performance that individuals confront in their daily lives that we see as critical in understanding one's thoughts about emigration. Across all of these dimensions of democratic system performance, the common thread is the impact each has on one's perceived life opportunity horizon. When a member of a household is victimized by corruption or crime, or when a president overtly, and without penalty, violates the constitution, an entire household's short- and long-term survival strategies are affected. Though this opportunity horizon is surely shaped as well by local and personal economic conditions, we view the democratic system's

performance as an important component in calculations of whether current economic and social conditions will improve, stay the same, or deteriorate even further.

### **Modeling Motivations to Migrate**

In order to uncover any potential role for both political system performance and the quality of democracy in emigration intentions, we rely on a multilevel analysis that allows for the inclusion of both individual and national-level data. Individual-level analyses alone make it difficult to uncover the impact of one's political context and the cross-national variations in democratic quality that exist in LAC. On the other hand, cross-national analyses can show that political characteristics such as regime type matter for emigration, but they are unable to explain why individual citizens might be more or less likely to consider emigration. In order to address these shortcomings, we link these levels of analysis through the inclusion of second-level variables in our models of the emigration decision.

Individual-level data are drawn from nationally representative surveys conducted across twenty-two LAC nations. These data were collected as part of the *AmericasBarometer 2008*<sup>vii</sup> surveys and offer the most comprehensive collection of citizen attitudes in Latin America. Included in the survey instrument are a set of emigration items that allow for assessments of respondents' connections to and thoughts about emigration. We test our propositions concerning the impact of democratic quality and performance on the migration decision alongside more conventional accounts of why individuals may consider leaving for another country. We thus include in the model a host of variables designed to capture the socioeconomic and migrant network factors that are central to the most widely accepted explanations for the migration decision.

Similarly, in order to understand the impact that the quality of one's democracy has on her willingness to consider emigration, we use (separately) two measures of democracy drawn from Freedom House and Polity. For the former, we invert the original scale so lower values indicate less freedom and higher values more freedom. We use the average regime score over a fifteen-year period (1994-2008) in order to better capture what we posit as the cumulative effects of these systemic factors on an individual's emigration decision. That is, it is not simply the current degree of democracy that we see affecting the emigration thought process, but rather the accumulated experiences a person has had with the political system over an extended period of time.

Finally, we explore the interactive effects between individual and country-level factors through analysis of variations in the impact a respondent's feelings of insecurity in his or her neighborhood have on the emigration decisions across different democratic contexts. Not only do we see these two factors as having independent effects on the emigration decision, but we also see the quality of democracy one lives in affecting the extent to which individual-level factors influence one's consideration of emigration. When one feels unsafe walking down her neighborhood streets, she may be more inclined to think about leaving. But in a high quality democratic system such thoughts about emigration may be fleeting. Conversely, in a highly flawed democratic system, where police are feared as much as criminals, feeling unsafe in one's neighborhood may be decisive in one's emigration decision because the prospects for future improvement in neighborhood security are so dismal. It is this interaction between system characteristics and individual experiences and attitudes that we wish to explore.

The dependent variable in the following models, then, is an individual's response to the following question: *Do you have any intention of going to live or work in another country in the*

*next three years?*<sup>viii</sup> As noted above, this item only identifies the potential pool of emigrants rather than those who will in fact leave their homes for another country. We have no way of knowing whether respondents will carry out their stated intentions of leaving, and indeed, we are certain that many end up not emigrating. It is also important to emphasize that emigration intentions should not be expected to map directly to the actual emigration rates of a country due to the role of other determinants of actual migration, such as receiving country migration policies and economic conditions. Close to sixty percent of Haitians expressed intentions to leave in 2008, for example, but a far lower percentage actually left their island nation. Rather we are interested here only in establishing the conditions that color an individual's consideration of emigration as an option, a decision that presumably is not made lightly. The fact that so many of our survey respondents (see Table 1) made clear that they did not intend to emigrate is indicative of the weight that respondents attached to this question and their response. Thousands of those respondents faced difficult economic conditions, yet only a small percentage said yes in response to a question about emigration intentions. We seek to understand why.

### *Cross-National Overview*

We begin with a cross-national overview of the relationships between emigration intentions and several indicators of interest for our subsequent multi-level analysis. Table 1 first offers the percentage of respondents in each of our countries who expressed an intention to emigrate within the next three years. As is clear, there is substantial variation on this item across the 22 countries included in our analysis. The next column provides the percentage of *Americasbarometer* respondents in each country who reported receiving remittances in the twelve months leading up to the survey.

Immediately apparent from these two items is how strongly they correlate with one another at this aggregate level. We can interpret this relationship in two ways. First, assuming that a country's percentage of remittance recipients taps in a fairly direct way its emigration rate, we might infer from the strong correlation with emigration intentions that this latter item also corresponds to actual emigration rates within a country. A second interpretation, though, is that a causal connection exists between receipt of remittances and emigration intentions. It may be the case that when one receives money from abroad, the idea of leaving one's country becomes a more viable life option than it would be for those who do not receive remittances. This alternative certainly is consistent with the argument put forth by Massey and others that once connected to a migration network, an individual becomes more likely to migrate. We explore this possibility in more detail below through inclusion of the remittance item in our multivariate models of emigration intentions. Either way, though, it is important to recognize the strong relationship that exists between emigration intentions and remittances.

The remaining columns in Table 1 offer a series of aggregate indicators of system performance and degree of democracy (corruption<sup>ix</sup>, governance<sup>x</sup>, and Polity and Freedom House scores<sup>xi</sup>) along with the relative country rankings in parentheses. Across all of these, there appears to be a reasonably strong relationship between emigration intentions and those countries that have poorly performing, less democratic systems of government. Haiti, for example, with over half of respondents reporting they intend to emigrate in the next three years, ranked last in corruption, governance, and last on both indices of democracy. At the other extreme, countries with relatively low numbers of respondents expressing a desire to leave, like Uruguay, Costa Rica, and Chile, tend to rank near the bottom in measures of corruption and near the top in terms of governance and democracy measures. The problem with all of these examples, however, is

that measures of democracy and government performance tend to correlate quite strongly with economic performance as well, making it difficult to distinguish political from economic influences. Only through a multi-variate and multi-level analysis of these questions can we begin to better understand the mix of political and economic factors that help shape an individual's emigration decision. **[Insert Table 1 here]**

### *Individual-Level and Contextual Analysis of the Emigration Decision*

We explore three sets of factors that theoretically should influence citizens' desire to emigrate. We begin with those variables related to propositions developed in previous research on the determinants of migration itself. If the choice of emigration as a viable life strategy is related to the actual decision to emigrate then we should find those factors that help explain the act of emigration should also help explain why some individuals will express intentions to emigrate while others will not. The factors we include in our model are intended to capture as best possible the socioeconomic and migrant network dimensions of current theories of emigration. To this end, we first include the standard set of controls such as a respondent's age, sex, level of education and an ordinal measure of the size of their community.<sup>xii</sup> We also include a quadratic for age to capture the well-documented nonlinear relationship between age and emigration.

To assess the role of existing migratory networks in prompting future migration, we include an item that asks respondents if they have "any close relatives" currently living abroad at the time of the interview. Another item tapping the extent of one's migratory network asks respondents whether they currently receive remittances from abroad. As discussed above, receipt of remittances is strongly correlated with the emigration decision at the aggregate level. We seek to explore the individual-level relationship.

We then include a second group of variables that tap respondents' personal economic conditions and their views of the country's macroeconomic situation. We first include a measure of individual wealth with an index of household goods ownership developed by the Latin American Public Opinion Project researchers in order to overcome documented respondent reticence to accurately report monetary income levels.<sup>xiii</sup> We also include standard pocketbook and sociotropic survey items. By including multiple measures of the economic perceptions and realities of respondents, we hope to adequately capture the role these factors play in an individual's migration intentions.

The final set of individual-level variables relate to our concepts of central concern, the degree of democracy in a political system and its performance with respect to the basic tasks of government. We measure respondents' general views of government's ability to "get things done" by constructing an additive index that consists of one's evaluations of the government's ability to fight poverty, corruption, and unemployment; promote and protect democratic principles, improve safety, and manage the economy well. We also include an item that asks respondents their overall level of satisfaction with "the way that democracy works in your country." Here we are tapping a more general respondent disposition regarding the performance of their system.

We then seek to incorporate into the model more specific components of democratic system performance that tap many of the governance indicators often used by scholars at the national level. We assess these characteristics from the individual-level by asking respondents about their experiences with corruption and crime. We view these areas as significant, "real-life" elements of a government's performance that should go a long way toward capturing those factors that we view as either expanding or constraining a respondent's life opportunity horizon.

For corruption we employ LAPOP's additive index of corruption victimization.<sup>xiv</sup> Conversely, for the crime dimension of system performance we rely on a single item that simply asks respondents whether they had been victimized by crime in the previous twelve months.

In this first portion of the analysis, we focus only on these individual-level political factors and their relationship with emigration intentions. Our second model incorporates the effects of our country-level factors. Specifically, we expect that, irrespective of individual assessments of and experiences with a political system, LAC citizens living in more democratic nations will be less likely to consider emigration as a life strategy because such a system provides a better possibility that the daily performance problems that may exist can improve in the future. A flawed democratic system, conversely, will only exacerbate one's sense that the governance problems she confronts on a daily basis will continue.

Our third and final model explores the possibility of interaction effects between country and individual level political variables. We posit that the relative impact of individual performance factors will be influenced by the quality of the democratic system in which a person resides. Put simply, a negative experience with or attitude toward government performance will be far more consequential (in terms of the emigration decision) in a less-than-democratic system that reinforces those negative personal experiences and offers no prospects for future improvement. Conversely, an individual who feels unsafe in her neighborhood, for example, in a country with an effective criminal justice system will be less likely to consider leaving the country as a result of those feelings of insecurity, hoping instead that neighborhood security will improve in the future. In this analysis we focus on feelings of insecurity because in our view it offers the most theoretically compelling case of a non-economic, system performance assessment that should influence the emigration decision. All else equal, if one feels unsafe in her

neighborhood, she will be more likely to consider leaving. With this analysis, we seek to determine the extent to which a high quality democracy can mitigate those feelings, or, conversely, how much a low quality democracy magnifies them.

## **Results**

Due to the dichotomous dependent variable, we fit a Hierarchical Linear Model (HLM), specifying the outcome variable as “Bernoulli.” This specification takes into account the identity link function for dichotomous variables, in this case, coded “1” for those who affirmed having intentions to migrate and “0” for those in opposition. Results of the three models analyzed when including Freedom House as our national level variable are shown in Table 2, while Table 3 displays the results of the analysis when using the Polity regime measure. The first column in Tables 2 and 3 displays the results for our baseline models including only the individual-level variables (Model I). Next, we introduce the country-level variables for the means as outcomes model (Model II) only. The means and slopes as outcomes (Model III) examine the interaction effects between the individual and country level variables **[Insert Table 2 and 3 here]**.

Turning first to Table 2, we find strong support for the role of those economic and social factors identified in migration research as important to understanding the migration process.<sup>xv</sup> As Massey and many others have documented, for example, it is clear that membership in a migrant network is essential to understanding the migration decision. Those respondents with family members abroad and those who receive remittances are far more likely to express intentions to emigrate than their counterparts with no such pre-existing migrant connections. This finding then is highly supportive of extant research on such networks and highlights the power such connections have in laying the groundwork for possible future migration.

Turning to the role social and demographic factors play in one's willingness to consider emigration, we once again find support for current understandings of the migration decision. Those respondents that are male, young, and relatively well educated are more likely than others to consider emigration. Among the economic variables, the most powerful predictor of migration intentions supports the intuition that individuals unhappy with their income level and those who have a negative perception of their personal economic situation will be far more likely to consider emigration than their more satisfied counterparts. In addition to the support this baseline model provides for the synthetic theory of migration, it also strengthens our contention that we have a model that contains a proper set of controls with which we can then confidently analyze the additional contributions of the political performance variables.

Moving on to these variables of interest, we find substantial support for the idea that political system performance is critical in pushing citizens to at least consider the idea of leaving their country. Once controlling for the socioeconomic and migrant network elements involved in the emigration decision, an individual's experience with and attitudes towards the political system emerge in our model as essential in understanding why a person will consider emigration as a viable option. With the exception of respondents' perception of corruption, all of the system performance variables are both highly significant and in the expected direction. For each, the more negative a respondent's attitudes or experiences with the political system, the more likely she is to express intentions to emigrate.

Even more striking is the consistency of results across the various dimensions of system performance that we included in the model. Those respondents expressing negative perceptions of government efficacy and showing less satisfaction with the way democracy works are more inclined to consider emigration, as are those who report experiencing incidents of corruption and

crime. Similarly, those who perceive higher levels of insecurity are more likely to express plans to leave their native country. Given the continued problems with crime and corruption across many parts of the region, the implications of these findings are clear. Though economic and socio-demographic factors will continue to play a significant role in emigration rates, the results presented here suggest that political system performance may very well grow in importance as performance issues such as crime and corruption continue to fester.

Moving to the contextual factors that we see as potentially involved in the emigration decision, we again find evidence supporting the proposition that the quality of democracy matters for citizens in their considerations of their life strategies. Both measures of democracy we use to assess the quality of democracy emerge in Model II as statistically significant and in the expected direction. Thus, not only do personal experiences with the government matter, but the overall quality of the system also influences citizens' willingness to consider the exit option.

The final step for our analytical strategy is the introduction of the cross-level interaction term in order to explore how the overall quality of the system affects individual-level predictors of the emigration decision. In Model III, then we focus on the interaction between quality of democracy and a person's feelings of insecurity. Table 2 reveals that this term has a significant impact on citizens' intention to emigrate. The effect of an individual's perceptions of insecurity on the emigration decision, then, is moderated by the degree of democracy that exists in her country as a whole. In order to have a better idea of these results, we graph the effect for countries at the high and low end of the democracy measure, as illustrated in Figure 2. From this graph, we see that the impact of feelings of insecurity on the emigration decision in highly democratic nations is negligible. Where these feelings of insecurity greatly increase the probability that an individual considers emigration is in those countries with flawed democracies.

An individual living in Uruguay, for example, will be significantly less likely to let her feelings of insecurity move her to consider emigration than a similar person living in Haiti.<sup>xvi</sup> These findings highlight the pernicious, but highly intuitive, interactive effect of individual experiences with poor governance (e.g., crime victimization) in a flawed democracy on one's inclination to leave the country. What such a combination produces is a situation where individuals living in a more democratic system might give voice to their frustrations or dissatisfaction with government performance through participation in the system, while in a flawed democratic system they may choose to leave instead. **[INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE]**

Turning to Table 3 we see the results follow the same basic pattern as those displayed in Table 2. All of the individual level variables again behave as expected except for perception of corruption and perception of national economic well-being. The only variable that differs from previous results is that of perception of government efficacy. The rest of the individual-level characteristics remain strong predictors of Latin Americans' willingness to consider leaving their country. The same holds true for Models II and III. The second order measure of democracy again suggests that the more democratic a country is, the less likely its citizens will be to express desires to emigrate.<sup>xvii</sup> Finally, the cross-level interaction term for perception of insecurity is also significant. The effect of fear of insecurity on emigration intentions is mediated by democracy. More than anything, the strong parallels between the results in Tables 2 and 3 suggest that these findings are robust and not subject to particular specifications of our key national-level variable. No matter how it is measured, democracy seems to matter.

## **Conclusion**

Though much has been written and said about Latin America's democratization process, and the concurrent movement towards market-based economies, few have explored the

connections between these watershed transitions in Latin America and the dramatic exodus that has taken place across many of the region's countries over the past twenty years. Those scholars and policymakers that have examined the link between Latin America's dual transition and the increasing rates of emigration have tended to focus on the disruptive impact that market reforms have had on traditional labor markets as a principal cause of emigration. Yet many countries in the region have suffered through similar processes of market reforms but exhibit dramatically different rates of emigration, and, as we have demonstrated in this paper, differences in the proportion of citizens considering emigration. There is ample research that adequately explains a good portion of the variation in actual emigration rates as a function of the socioeconomic characteristics of the population, its pre-existing migration networks, and the extent of geographic and policy obstacles to emigration. Similarly, there is an abundance of work on the development consequences of the region's well-documented governance and democracy problems, with well-established links between such issues as corruption and levels of system support among the citizenry. In this paper we identify a connection between these three topics of interest—migration, governance, and democracy—that enriches our understanding of how political system performance affects citizens' attitudes about their place in that system, and whether or not they would consider exiting that system. We find that both the degree of democracy and its day-to-day performance matter for whether citizens choose to stick it out in their country or leave for another one. These findings provide support for many of the ideas developed by Hirschman over thirty years ago that, since then, have not been systematically explored at either the individual or national level.

Notwithstanding our focus on the political determinants of migration, our findings also offer support for much of the existing work on the causes of emigration. From the multi-level

model we identify as strong predictors of emigration intentions such factors as education, gender, and whether an individual has family members living abroad and receives remittances from them. The fact that we find these elements to be important components in the emigration decision not only supports much of the extant research on actual emigration rates, but also makes even more robust the findings that political system performance is important in shaping one's emigration plans. For even after taking into account these factors, political system performance still matters a great deal in whether or not a person thinks about leaving their country.

The political story that emerges from our findings is in many ways very intuitive – given that citizens interact with their political system in one form or another on a daily basis, it is not surprising that political system performance, and the degree of democracy that exists within that system, influence the degree to which one considers emigration a viable option. In a system that performs well, hope for improvements across all dimensions of one's life is raised. In a poorly performing system with flawed democratic institutions, hope may indeed be more easily lost, making the present day reality of insufficient income or opportunity all the more problematic.

Our findings too suggest that improvements in democracy at the systemic level can help to mitigate the negative effects of citizen experiences with poor governance at the individual level precisely because a more democratic system overall offers a stronger basis for the belief that individual success may still be possible within the system despite any present-day governance problems. Though individual-level experiences with poor governance may push someone to the brink of exit, the life opportunity horizon provided by a fuller democratic system appears to make such thoughts less likely to materialize. So while Latin America's period of less-than-complete democratization may have created some of the conditions that have contributed to the unprecedented exit of individuals, the very same process may hold the key for

ultimately convincing many of the region's current citizens to remain at home, give voice to their frustrations with their government, and push for change from within.

**Table 1. Country Rankings of Emigration and Performance Measures**

Country	Intend To Emigrate (%)	Receive Remittances (%)	Corruption Victimization Rate (%)	Avg. Governance Percentile Rank <sup>xviii</sup>	Levels of Democracy	
					Freedom House Index	Polity Index
					1994-2008	1994-2008
Haiti	61.5	49.2 (1)	48.2 (1)	7.7 (22)	3.5 (22)	1.9 (21)
Guyana	45.0	34.8 (3)	22.4 (8)	45.4 (10)	9.7 (6)	6 (18)
Jamaica	43.4	40.4 (2)	24.5 (7)	54.5 (7)	9.2 (8)	9 (3)
Peru	40.1	7.8 (13)	27.1 (5)	41.4 (13)	7.5 (17)	4.7 (20)
Nicaragua	33.2	22.0 (5)	16.6 (13)	34.5 (16)	7.7 (16)	7.7 (8)
Paraguay	29.9	13.6 (8)	18.2 (11)	18.0 (21)	7.4 (18)	7.3 (11)
Bolivia	27.2	10.8 (10)	32.9 (2)	43.1 (11)	8.9 (10)	8.7(4)
Colombia	26.1	5.6 (14)	9.5 (20)	36.1 (15)	6.6 (20)	7.3 (11)
El Salvador	25.3	26.7 (4)	14.8 (15)	40.6 (14)	8.8 (11)	7 (14)
Dom. Rep.	24.3	19.2 (7)	16.3 (14)	42.0 (12)	9.1 (9)	7.5 (9)
Ecuador	23.7	10.3 (12)	25.5 (6)	30.6 (17)	8.3 (13)	7.3(11)
Honduras	21.2	20.2 (6)	13.8 (16)	29.3 (19)	8.1 (15)	6.6 (16)
Guatemala	17.9	11.0 (9)	19.6 (9)	30.4 (18)	6.5 (21)	6.7 (15)
Belize	16.8	10.5 (11)	19.0 (10)	57.8 (5)	11.5 (1)	N/A
Costa Rica	16.1	5.3 (15)	17.5 (12)	74.5 (2)	11.3 (3)	10 (1)
Uruguay	15.1	3.6 (16)	8.9 (22)	72.7 (3)	11.5 (1)	10 (1)
Mexico	13.8	8.8 (12)	30.3 (3)	49.8 (9)	8.3 (13)	5.9 (19)
Argentina	13.0	2.9 (18)	27.5 (4)	51.3 (8)	9.3 (7)	7.5 (9)
Panama	12.9	3.5 (17)	9.2 (21)	54.8 (6)	10.3 (5)	8.9 (4)
Chile	12.8	1.4 (20)	11.7 (17)	84.6 (1)	10.8 (4)	8.6 (6)
Venezuela	10.2	1.6 (19)	10.6 (19)	25.6 (20)	7.1 (19)	6.6 (16)
Brazil	9.2	0.7 (21)	11.5 (18)	63.7 (4)	8.5 (12)	8 (6)

Country rank in parentheses

Sources: Emigration and corruption data from LAPOP *AmericasBarometer, 2008*. Democracy data from Freedom House (<http://freedomhouse.org/>, last accessed 17 March, 2010) and from Polity IV (<http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>, last accessed 17 March, 2010).

Governance data from World Bank Governance Indicators project website (<http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp>), last accessed 14 October, 2010.

**Table 2: Multilevel Modeling of Emigration Intentions (Freedom House: Period 1994-2008)**

	<b>Model I Individual-Level Only</b>	<b>Model II Country-Level Intercept Effects</b>	<b>Model III Full Model with Interaction Effects</b>
<b>Intercept</b>	-1.4591*** (0.128)	-1.492*** (0.111)	-1.492*** (0.111)
<b>Individual-Level</b>			
<i>Socioeconomic</i>			
Education	0.031*** (0.007)	0.031*** (0.007)	0.031*** (0.007)
Age	-0.028** (0.011)	-0.028** (0.012)	-0.028** (0.011)
Age Squared	-0.0003* (0.000)	-0.0003* (0.000)	-0.0003* (0.000)
Female	-0.400*** (0.050)	-0.400*** (0.050)	-0.400*** (0.050)
Wealth	-0.047** (0.021)	-0.047** (0.021)	-0.047** (0.021)
Size of City/Town	0.052*** (0.0133)	0.052*** (0.0133)	0.052*** (0.0133)
<i>Economics</i>			
Personal economic Situation	-0.005*** (0.0009)	-0.005*** (0.0009)	-0.005*** (0.0009)
Macroeconomic Situation	-0.0011 (0.0008)	-0.0011 (0.0008)	-0.0011 (0.0008)
<i>Migration Networks</i>			
Remittance-Recipients Family Living Abroad	0.006*** (0.0007)	0.006*** (0.0007)	0.006*** (0.0007)
<i>Governance Indicators</i>			
Perception of Insecurity FREEDOM HOUSE (94-08)	0.003*** (0.0007)	0.003*** (0.0007)	0.003*** (0.0007)
Perception of Corruption	0.0010 (0.0007)	0.0010 (0.0007)	0.0011 (0.0007)
Crime Victimization	0.002*** (0.0005)	0.002*** (0.0005)	0.0021*** (0.0005)
Corruption Victimization	0.002*** (0.0004)	0.002*** (0.0004)	0.002*** (0.0005)
Governmental Efficacy Perception	-0.002* (0.0009)	-0.002* (0.0009)	-0.002* (0.0009)
Satisfaction with Democracy	-0.003** (0.0011)	-0.003** (0.0011)	-0.003** (0.0011)
<b>Country-Level Intercepts Effects</b>			
FREEDOM HOUSE (94-08)		-0.117* (0.059)	-0.117* (0.060)
<b>Variance Components</b>			
Random effect			
Intentions to emigrate, $u_{0j}$	0.343***	0.309***	0.3103***
Reliability estimate	0.984	0.982	0.982

Note: Entries are restricted maximum likelihood unstandardized coefficients estimated with HLM 6.0. For a detailed explanation of coding, see Appendices  
\* =  $p < .10$ ; \*\* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .01$       Number of Countries = 20      Number of Cases = 30315  
Sources: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP and Freedom House

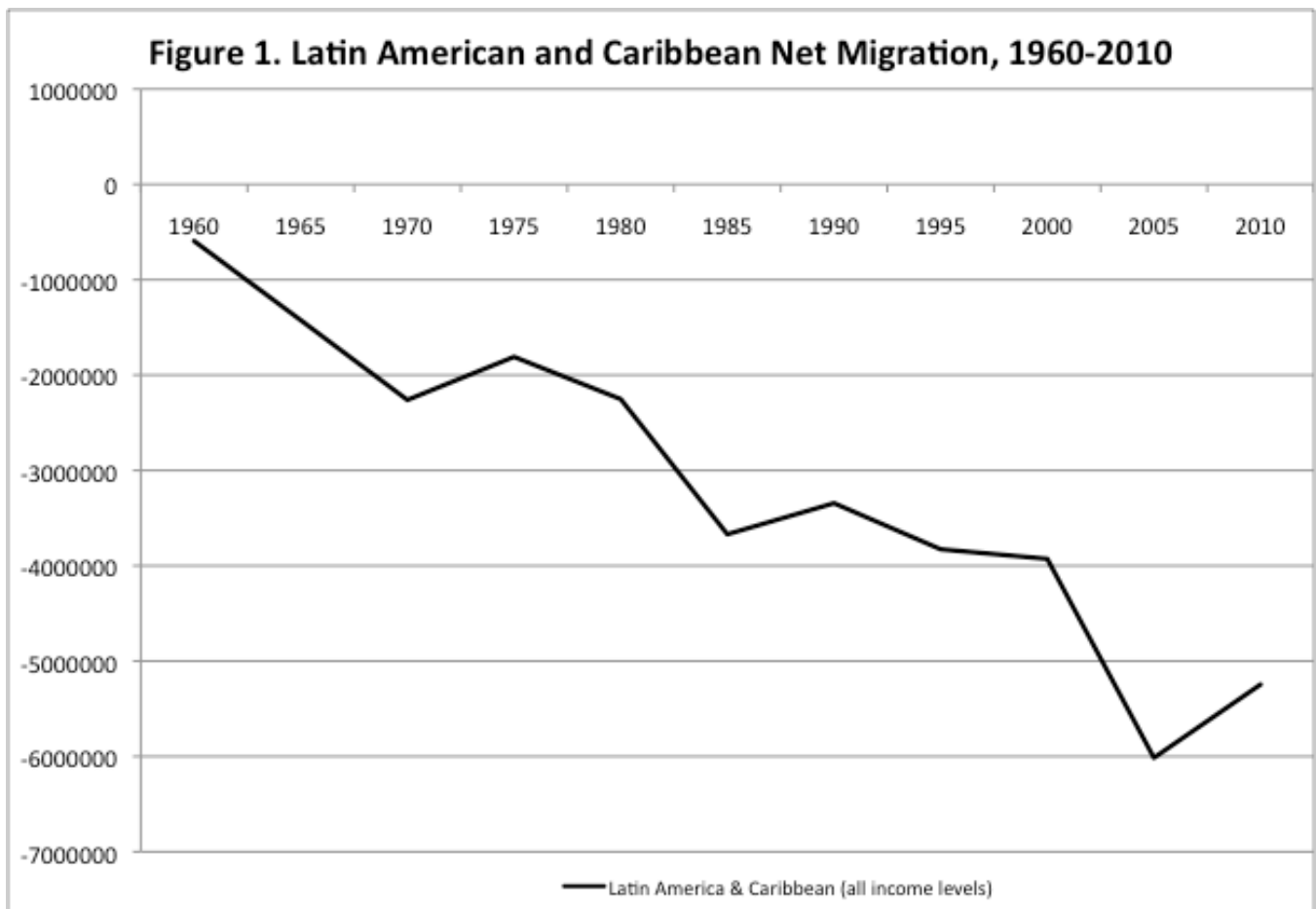
**Table 3: Multilevel Modeling of Emigration Intentions (Polity: Period 1994-2008)**

	<b>Model I Individual-Level Only</b>	<b>Model II Country-Level Intercept Effects</b>	<b>Model III Full Model with Interaction Effects</b>
<b>Intercept</b>	0.248*** (0.0211)	0.243*** (0.02)	0.241*** (0.0211)
<b>Individual-Level</b>			
<i>Socioeconomic</i>			
Education	0.0045*** (0.001)	0.0045*** (0.001)	0.0045*** (0.001)
Age	-0.012*** (0.0013)	-0.012*** (0.0013)	-0.012*** (0.0013)
Age Squared	0.0001*** (0.000)	0.0001*** (0.000)	0.0001*** (0.000)
Female	-0.061*** (0.008)	-0.061*** (0.008)	-0.061*** (0.008)
Wealth	-0.0062* (0.003)	-0.0061* (0.003)	-0.006* (0.003)
Size of City/Town	0.0081*** (0.002)	0.0081*** (0.002)	0.0081*** (0.002)
<i>Economics</i>			
Personal economic Situation	-0.0008*** (0.00014)	-0.0008*** (0.00014)	-0.0008*** (0.00014)
Macroeconomic Situation	-0.0002 (0.00014)	-0.0002 (0.00014)	-0.0002 (0.00014)
<i>Migration Networks</i>			
Remittance-Recipients Family Living Abroad	0.0011*** (0.0002)	0.0011*** (0.0002)	0.0011*** (0.0002)
	0.001*** (0.0001)	0.001*** (0.0001)	0.001*** (0.0001)
<i>Governance Indicators</i>			
Perception of Insecurity POLITY (94-08)	0.00041*** (0.0001)	0.0004*** (0.0001)	0.0004*** (0.0001)
			-0.0002** (0.0001)
Perception of Corruption	0.00014 (0.0001)	0.00014 (0.0001)	0.00014 (0.0001)
Crime Victimization	0.0004*** (0.0001)	0.0004*** (0.0001)	0.0004*** (0.0001)
Corruption Victimization	0.00043*** (0.0001)	0.00043*** (0.0001)	0.00043*** (0.0001)
Governmental Efficacy Perception	-0.0002 (0.00014)	-0.0002 (0.00014)	-0.0002 (0.00014)
Satisfaction with Democracy	-0.0004** (0.00014)	-0.0004** (0.00014)	-0.0004** (0.00014)
<b>Country-Level Intercepts Effects</b>			
POLITY (94-08)		-0.0223* (0.122)	-0.0332** (0.015)
<b>Variance Components</b>			
Random effect			
Intentions to emigrate, $u_{0j}$	0.0102***	0.0082***	0.0079***
Reliability estimate	0.988	0.986	0.985

Note: Entries are restricted maximum likelihood unstandardized coefficients estimated with HLM 6.0. For a detailed explanation of coding, see Appendices

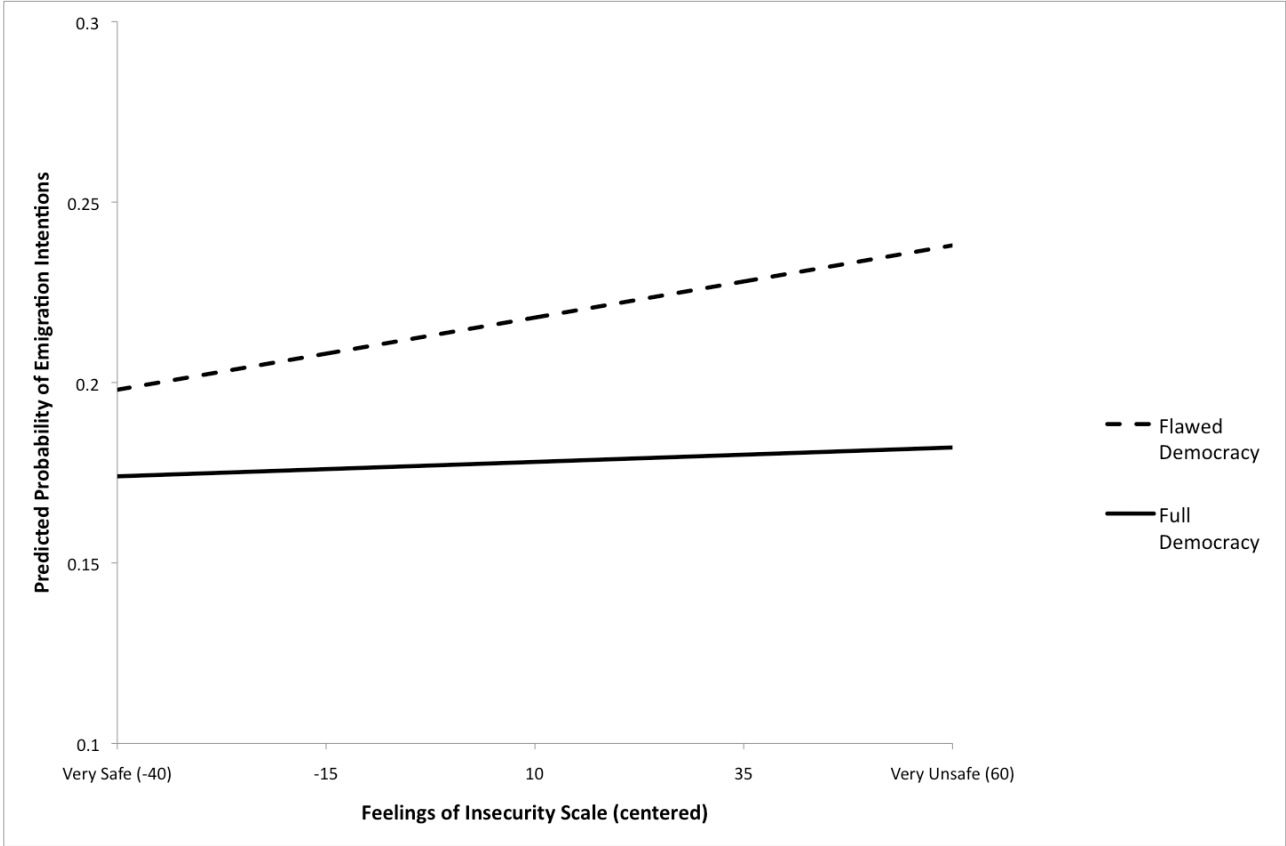
\* =  $p < .10$ ; \*\* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .01$       Number of Countries = 19      Number of Cases = 29244

Sources: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP and Polity IV



Source: World Bank Data [<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SM.POP.NETM>]

**Figure 2. Understanding Governance, Democracy, and Emigration Intentions**



## Appendix 1. Principle Variables Used

- **Perception of Insecurity:** “Speaking of the neighborhood where you live and thinking of the possibility of being assaulted or robbed, do you feel very safe, somewhat safe, somewhat unsafe or very unsafe?”
- **Perception of Corruption:** “Taking into account your own experience or what you have heard, corruption among public officials is very common, common, uncommon or very uncommon?”
- **Crime Victimization:** “Now, changing the subject, have you been a victim of any type of crime in the past 12 months?”
- **Corruption Victimization:** “(1) Did any police officer ask you for bribe during the last year? (2) During the last year, did any public official ask you for a bribe? (3) During the last year, to process any kind of document (such as a license, for example) did you have to pay any money above that required by law? (4) At work, did anyone ask you for an inappropriate payment during the last year? (5) Did you have to pay a bribe in court during the last year? (6) In order to receive attention in a hospital or a clinic during the last year, did you have to pay a bribe? (7) Did you have to pay a bribe at school during the last year?”
- **Government Efficacy Index:** Comprised of the following items, (1) “To what extent do you think the courts of justice in [name of the country] guarantee a fair trial?” (2) “To what extent do you respect the political institutions?” (3) “To what extent do you think that citizens’ basic rights are well protected by the political system in [name of the country]?” (4) “To what extent do you feel proud of living under the political system of (country)” (5) “To what extent do you think that citizens should support the political system of [name of the country]?”
- **Satisfaction with Democracy:** “In general, would you say that you are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works in [name of the country]?”
- **Relatives living abroad:** “Do you have close relatives who lived before in this household and are now living abroad?”
- **Remittance-Recipient:** “Do you or someone else living in your household receive remittances, that is, economic assistance from abroad?”
- **Personal economic situation:** “How would you describe your personal economic situation? Would you say that it is very bad; bad; neither good nor bad; good; very good?”
- **Macroeconomic situation:** “How would you describe your country’s economic situation? Would you say that it is very bad; bad; neither good nor bad; good; very good?”

## Appendix 2. Summary Statistics, Mean Values by Country

Country	Variables			
	Perception of Corruption (mean)	Perception of Insecurity (mean)	Government Efficacy (mean)	Satisfaction Democracy (mean)
Argentina	84.46	57.30	33.75	50.16
Belize	68.36	32.62	44.55	52.63
Bolivia	72.67	47.60	51.44	49.60
Brazil	69.29	41.25	43.51	53.06
Chile	65.85	49.34	50.84	48.10
Colombia	72.32	39.00	54.37	51.35
Costa Rica	72.13	34.52	53.05	65.10
Dominican Republic	74.52	39.49	53.04	53.96
Ecuador	76.70	43.94	46.80	52.83
El Salvador	70.72	41.51	39.73	44.47
Guatemala	80.35	39.56	49.77	52.10
Guyana	71.66	35.75	49.16	48.91
Haiti	56.41	45.20	33.23	38.91
Honduras	76.48	41.74	30.54	44.79
Jamaica	85.64	31.29	45.58	48.68
Mexico	74.37	39.61	47.71	50.38
Nicaragua	74.27	33.69	33.88	46.16
Panama	70.16	35.49	37.52	53.24
Paraguay	78.05	42.20	15.39	30.19
Peru	75.81	51.64	32.44	42.68
Uruguay	63.05	44.49	56.15	60.64
Venezuela	79.87	46.74	38.90	58.80
<i>Total Sample</i>	<i>72.08</i>	<i>39.97</i>	<i>43.42</i>	<i>51.16</i>

All variables were recoded on a 0-100 scale with the purpose of simplifying interpretation.

Exact wording can be found online at [www.AmericasBarometer.org](http://www.AmericasBarometer.org)

Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

### Appendix 3. Summary Statistics, Percentages and Mean Values by Country

Country	Variables			
	Personal Economic Situation (mean)	Macroeconomic Situation (mean)	Relatives Living Abroad (%)	Remittance-Recipient (%)
Argentina	53.01	46.11	8.11	2.94
Belize	42.85	33.41	24.20	10.48
Bolivia	49.69	42.47	33.48	10.81
Brazil	50.43	46.45	5.16	0.67
Chile	48.34	46.83	9.02	1.35
Colombia	52.84	45.71	12.32	5.55
Costa Rica	50	43.13	22.42	5.26
Dominican Republic	39.83	36.23	24.86	19.24
Ecuador	50.87	43.02	24.17	10.34
El Salvador	40.34	28.48	41.56	26.66
Guatemala	44.38	31.96	28.29	10.95
Guyana	50.90	43.30	47.89	34.82
Haiti	23.75	17.72	51.03	49.19
Honduras	41.58	38.34	34.24	20.23
Jamaica	40.62	31.00	49.79	40.39
Mexico	47.81	38.17	24.37	8.82
Nicaragua	36.01	25.32	38.53	22.04
Panama	43.97	37.31	17.29	3.47
Paraguay	49.42	24.31	26.72	13.60
Peru	45.86	38.37	17.87	7.77
Uruguay	50.58	46.91	11.68	3.58
Venezuela	52.77	44.90	6.15	1.55
<i>Total Sample</i>	<i>46.14</i>	<i>38.02</i>	<i>26.40</i>	<i>14.39</i>

All variables were recoded on a 0-100 scale with the purpose of simplifying interpretation.

Exact wording can be found online at [www.AmericasBarometer.org](http://www.AmericasBarometer.org)

Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

#### Appendix 4. Summary Statistics of Socioeconomic Variables by Country

Country	Variables				
	Years of Education (mean)	Age (mean)	Female (%)	Size of City/Town (mean)	Wealth* (mean)
Argentina	10.887	36.651	51.30	3.615	5.321
Belize	8.271	37.003	49.35	2.173	4.148
Bolivia	9.945	36.897	49.70	2.514	2.932
Brazil	7.295	41.427	53.70	3.129	4.507
Chile	10.483	43.599	59.20	3.613	5.275
Colombia	8.767	36.828	50.10	2.886	3.749
Costa Rica	8.160	40.779	51.10	2.532	5.629
Dominican Republic	7.316	41.171	54.80	3.114	3.679
Ecuador	10.168	38.485	50.00	2.606	3.824
El Salvador	8.396	38.451	52.10	2.848	3.604
Guatemala	6.007	39.414	49.80	2.328	2.941
Guyana	8.489	38.346	50.00	1.706	3.462
Haiti	8.565	37.320	50.00	1.942	1.147
Honduras	7.246	35.339	50.10	2.045	3.164
Jamaica	9.414	43.908	50.00	2.286	3.855
Mexico	8.269	40.841	50.50	2.953	4.980
Nicaragua	8.005	34.151	50.00	2.589	2.610
Panama	10.238	38.983	50.00	2.942	4.435
Paraguay	8.992	35.736	49.70	2.570	3.659
Peru	10.671	39.020	50.20	3.268	3.377
Uruguay	8.984	45.296	53.40	3.622	4.903
Venezuela	9.961	38.659	54.60	3.373	4.930
<i>Total Sample</i>	<i>8.947</i>	<i>39.470</i>	<i>51.21</i>	<i>2.712</i>	<i>3.858</i>

Exact wording can be found online at [www.AmericasBarometer.org](http://www.AmericasBarometer.org)

\* The “wealth” index consists of a count of household assets and access to basic services at the household level. The list of assets in the survey includes durable goods, such as a TV set, a refrigerator, a car, and a computer, and access to basic services like clean water and sewage inside the house.

Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

**Appendix 5. Variable Ranges**

Variable	SCALE	
	MIN	MAX
City/Town Size	1=Rural area	5=Capital
Sex	0=Male	1=Female
Age	16	99
Education	0=None	3=University
Relatives in this household living abroad	0=No	1=Yes
Remittance-Recipient	0=No	1=Yes
Wealth	0= None of nine items	9=All nine items
Individual's economic situation	0=Very bad	100=Very good
Country's economic situation	0=Very bad	100=Very good
Corruption victimization	0=No	1=Yes
Victim of any type of crime	0=No	1=Yes
Perception of insecurity	0=Very safe	100=Very unsafe
Government Efficacy	0=Not at all	100=A lot
Satisfaction with Democracy	0=Not at all	100=A lot
Intends to emigrate in the next 3 years	0=No	1=Yes

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## Notes

<sup>i</sup> These data are also drawn from the World Bank's web source, "Migration and Remittances Factbook, compiled by Dilip Ratha and Zhimei Xu, Migration and Remittances Team, Development Prospects Group, World Bank. The Factbook's permanent url address is: <http://go.worldbank.org/U1S23A9QR0>, last accessed July 20, 2011.

<sup>ii</sup> The Americas Barometer is a product of the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) at Vanderbilt University. These data are drawn from the 2006 and 2008 surveys that conducted over 28,000 interviews across 19 countries in 2006 and over 40,000 interviews across 24 countries in 2008 in Latin America and the Caribbean. Complete information on the survey instrument and data is available at [www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/).

<sup>iii</sup> Data accessed at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and Latin America and the Caribbean region of the World Bank's website [<http://www.unodc.org>] April 2, 2010.

<sup>iv</sup> Data accessed at World Bank's "Governance and Anti-Corruption" website [[http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/sc\\_country.asp](http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/sc_country.asp)] October 29, 2008.

<sup>v</sup> A notable exception is Lundquist and Massey's (2005) work on the political factors behind emigration patterns in Central America during the 1980s and 1990s.

<sup>vi</sup> We can also include in this category the many works on the political refugees and forced exiles that occurred in the many Latin American authoritarian regimes of the 1970s and the internal wars of Central America during the 1980s (e.g., Hamilton and Chinchilla 1991; Stanley 1987).

<sup>vii</sup> The Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) is sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and conducted over 40,000 interviews in 2008 in 22 countries across the Americas. The data analyzed in this paper were gathered through 36,501 face-to-face interviews in the following countries: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. To facilitate the data analysis, the number of cases per country was standardized to 1,500 by multiplying the original count by a weighted factor. Thus, the total number of cases was reduced to 30,000. The sample populations included all individuals eligible to vote in their respective countries and were selected based on a probabilistic and stratified sampling strategy – cases were randomly selected and stratified at two levels in each country through a multi-stage stratified sample design. The first stratification allowed for the inclusion of every region in each country. The second allowed for the inclusion of populations living in both urban and rural areas. Respondent households were selected based on a clustered sample design, with individuals within each household selected for interview based on the closest birthday technique, with up to three call-backs per household were carried out.

<sup>viii</sup> The response was originally coded as 1 for those answering "yes" and 2 for "no". We subsequently recoded these values to 1 if yes and 0 otherwise, excluding missing values.

<sup>ix</sup> As measured by the percentage of *AmericasBarometer* respondents within each country reporting at least one experience with corruption in the previous twelve months (2005-06).

<sup>x</sup> The governance score reported in the table is for 2007 and is the average across the four governance indicators most relevant to our analysis: "Voice and Accountability"; "Government Effectiveness"; "Rule of Law"; and "Control of Corruption". For more information on these

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measures please see, the Bank’s “Governance and Anti-Corruption” website at <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp>.

<sup>xi</sup> As measured by the average score from Freedom House (1994-2008) and (Polity 1994-2008).

<sup>xii</sup> For further information on all of the variables used in the following analysis see Appendices 1, 2, 3. The complete survey instrument is available through the Latin American Public Opinion Project’s website at [www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop).

<sup>xiii</sup> The items include: television set, refrigerator, conventional telephone, cellular telephone, vehicle, microwave oven, motorcycle, running water, indoor plumbing and computer.

<sup>xiv</sup> The index includes responses to a series of items asking respondents whether they have been asked for a bribe by a diverse group of public officials (e.g., teachers, police officers, health care officials). The reliability analysis for this index showed a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.669. For more information see [www.lapopsurveys.org](http://www.lapopsurveys.org)

<sup>xv</sup> Multilevel models presented in this paper were computed using the statistical package HLM 6. Variables that we were interested in evaluating their effects for the entire population in the sample were grand mean centered. On the other hand, variables that we considered that their effects vary across countries were group-mean centered, namely, perception of insecurity. This variable is also theoretical relevant when assessing the interaction effect with our national level characteristic. Democracy measures by Freedom House and Polity were grand mean centered because of their continuous characteristic.

<sup>xvi</sup> This evidence suggests that democracy matters when citizens are thinking of emigration as a viable option, in contrast to what previous literature (e.g., Wood et al. 2010) utilizing multilevel techniques suggest.

<sup>xvii</sup> These results are also consistent across other time periods, such as 1999 – 2008 and 2004 – 2008 for both Freedom House and Polity IV, with the exception of Polity IV 2004 – 2008, where the relationship is not statistically significant.

<sup>xviii</sup> These scores are based on the average of the four dimensions of governance most relevant to our theory. These dimensions include “voice and accountability”; “government effectiveness”; “rule of law”; and “corruption”. All of these data are drawn from the World Bank’s “Governance Matters” website, last accessed on November 15, 2008 at [<http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp>]