Dividing or Converging?
Political Loyalties, Transnational Organizations, and the Incorporation of Latin American Immigrants in the United States

Can immigrants become fully integrated if they remain dedicated to promoting the welfare of their home towns and countries? What does transnational political participation mean for commitment to civic life in the United States?

Alejandro Portes, one of the top immigration experts in the United States, co-founder and director of Princeton’s Center for Migration and Development, and former President of the American Sociological Association, takes on these questions in his newest research. His work challenges the argument, offered most prominently by the late Samuel Huntington, that Latino immigrants are different than earlier immigrants and are not likely to be politically involved or incorporated due to resilient home country loyalties. Drawing on two unique data sets, Portes argues that this is a false dichotomy: while transnational ties are strong, leaders see no contradiction between doing this and pursuing full and successful integration into American society.

Portes brings a fresh perspective deeply rooted in careful empirical research. His work asks us to rethink what we mean by political integration, and raises important policy and organizing issues for a country poised for a renewed national discussion of comprehensive immigration reform.

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