Title

Social Remittances as Credible Yardsticks: Expectations and the Information that Migrants Send Home

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Social Remittances as Credible Yardsticks:
Expectations and the Information that Migrants Send Home

By

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DISSERTATION

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-ABSTRACT-

How do social remittances (communication from contacts abroad) affect the political behavior of individuals at home? I argue that social remittances are an influential yet understudied source of naturally occurring information that causes individuals to form *credible yardsticks*. I define *yardstick* as a reference point that allows individuals to compare the provision of services in their country with service provision elsewhere. Individuals find the yardstick *credible* because it is influenced by a trusted source. When social remittances come from a higher-income country, I expect recipients to utilize that information to raise their expectations for service provision, lower their evaluation of existing government services in their home country, and act to improve their lives dependent on their circumstances. I expect individuals to take action within formal institutions when those institutions are reliable or outside of formal institutions when they are unreliable. Original semi-structured interview data from Guatemala provides a narrative that illustrates the feasibility of my argument. Utilizing individual-level public-opinion data from the AmericasBarometer (LAPOP) project, I identify quantitative support for my argument. Social remittances are positively correlated to expectations, negatively correlated to evaluation of government and existing services for monetary remittance recipients, and positively correlated to context-dependent action. Individuals respond by acting within institutions when they can rely on their governments but outside of them when they cannot. Additionally, social remittance recipients are less likely than non-recipients to respond to unreliable institutions by disengaging. These findings illuminate how social remittances are motivating for political participation and important to political behavior.

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Abstract for each chapter, which are stand-alone manuscripts, are as follows:

How do social remittances (communication from friends and family abroad) affect the expectations, evaluation of government and services, and political behavior of individuals at home? Building on theories on information, public administration, and political behavior, I argue that social remittances are a key, influential, yet understudied source of naturally occurring transnational information that causes individuals to form credible yardsticks. I define yardstick as a reference point that allows individuals to compare the provision of social services in their country with service provision elsewhere. Individuals find the yardstick credible, because it is influenced by a trusted source of first-hand information. When social remittances come from a higher-income country, I expect recipients to utilize that information increase their expectations for service provision, lower their evaluation of existing government services, and inspire them to act outside of formal institutions to improve their circumstances. This paper employs semi-structured interviews with 20 individuals across Guatemala to try to trace the causal processes linking social remittances to my outcomes of interest. Indeed, original interview illustrates support for the causal process that I advance. Recipients of social remittances reflect clear pictures of the better access to services abroad (credible yardstick), are passionate about wanting those services in Guatemala (expectations), are highly critical of their existing services and government (evaluation), and most take some type of action outside of existing institutions in an

effort to improve their lives. Individuals who are not in contact with a friend or family member abroad in a higher-income country have lower or less clear preferences, are not as critical of the services and government in Guatemala, and take less action with the goal of improving their circumstance. This project highlights the importance of social remittances for political behavior, and by extension for democratic backsliding, conflict, and a host of other issues.

CHAPTER 2: Social Remittances, Expectations, and Evaluations: How do social remittances alter expectations and evaluation of existing services and government?

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Why don't individuals expect better services when provision of services is low? In countries with historically low provision of services, expectations should be low. Information with the capacity to alter expectations is important to understanding expectations for services, and by extension individuals' motives to hold government officials accountable. This paper explores the first link in this argument, the relationship between social remittances, expectations, and evaluation of existing government and services. I argue that social remittances (information and ideas sent home to contacts in migrants' countries of origin) cause individuals to measure their service experience against *credible yardsticks* based on the service that they hear about from abroad. Hence, social remittances from countries with better service provision abroad will motivate a change in recipient expectations for better service provision in their own country. These social remittances will also cause a lower evaluation of the home country government and existing services for monetary remittance recipients, as they resent spending received money to replace absent government services. Utilizing individual-level public opinion data from the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), I identify evidence in support of this argument with

some caveats. Understanding how social remittances impact expectations and evaluation of existing government and services has implications for scholars, development practitioners, and policy makers.

CHAPTER 3: Social Remittances, Credible Yardsticks, Institutionalized and Non-institutionalized Action **Page 87**

How do social remittances (communication from contacts abroad) affect the political behavior of their contacts at home? I argue that social remittances are an influential yet understudied source of naturally occurring information that causes individuals to form *credible yardsticks*. I define *yardstick* as a reference point that allows individuals to compare the provision of services in their country with service provision elsewhere. Individuals find the yardstick *credible,* because it is informed by a trusted source. When social remittances come from a higher-income country, I expect recipients to utilize that information to raise their expectations for service provision, lower their evaluation of existing government services in their home country, and act to improve their lives dependent on their circumstances. I only expect individuals to take action within formal institutions when those institutions are reliable. Utilizing individual-level public-opinion data from the AmericasBarometer project, I identify support for my argument. Social remittances motivate action, and individuals respond by acting within institutions when they can rely on their governments but outside of them when they cannot. Additionally, social remittance recipients are less likely than non-recipients to respond to unreliable institutions by disengaging. These findings illuminate how social remittances are motivating for political participation and important to political behavior.

-CHAPTER 1-

Social Remittances and Political Behavior in Guatemala: Does communication with friends and family lead to credible yardsticks that alter political behavior?

Abstract

How do social remittances (communication from friends and family abroad) affect the expectations, evaluation of service provision, and political behavior of individuals back home?" Building on theories on information, public administration, and political behavior, I argue that social remittances are a key, influential, yet understudied source of naturally occurring transnational information that causes individuals to form credible yardsticks. I define yardstick as a reference point that allows individuals to compare the provision of social services in their country with service provision elsewhere. Individuals find the yardstick credible, because it is influenced by a trusted source of first-hand information. When social remittances come from a higher-income country, I expect recipients to utilize that information increase their expectations for service provision, lower their evaluation of existing government services, and inspire them to act outside of formal institutions to improve their circumstances. This paper employs semi-structured interviews with 20 individuals across Guatemala to try to trace the causal processes linking social remittances to my outcomes of interest. Indeed, original interview illustrates support for the causal process that I advance. Recipients of social remittances reflect clear pictures of the better access to services abroad (credible yardstick), are passionate about wanting those services in Guatemala (expectations), are highly critical of their existing services and government (evaluation), and most take some type of action outside of existing institutions in an effort to improve their lives. Individuals who are not in contact with a friend or family member abroad in a higher-income country have lower or less clear preferences, are not as critical of the services and government in Guatemala, and take less action with the goal of improving their circumstance. This project highlights the importance of social remittances for political behavior, and by extension for democratic backsliding, conflict, and a host of other issues.

INTRODUCTION

Across Guatemala, individuals share that their public services are lacking, from underfunded schools without desks to medical centers without space for patients who desperately need care. This is the case across many low-income countries, so why don't people rally to demand change? Government-provided services are central to whether citizens are able to pursue their livelihood and contribute to society (Lake and Baum 2001). They are central to development and are obvious factors that clearly indicate to individuals whether a government is or is not benefitting them (WDR 1997;WDR 2004; WDR 2018). One reason that individuals likely do not hold their government officials accountable for poor provision of services is because their expectations are too low (Gottlieb 2016). Information, including social remittances, has the capacity to raise expectations for provision of services.

Social remittances (or the information communicated to contacts at home from abroad) are likely an important source of information with implications for political behavior. Social remittances are a naturally occurring but understudied type of information. Information has long been a prominent topic across many fields in political science. In this paper, I spell out a detailed theory on how social remittances have the capacity to alter expectations, evaluation of services, and political behavior by causing individuals to form *credible yardsticks* (or reference points to which individuals compare their own service experience).

Indeed, there is extensive work on the relationship between information and politics, Information can be used as a shortcut for political decisions (Downs 1957; Lupia and McCubbins 1998),[1] information from within an individual's social network is very influential (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Druckman, Levendusky, and McLain 2018), salience (Boas and Hidalgo 2019;

[1] Note that there is a vast literature on other types of political communication (such as communication from the media or a public authority figures), but that debate is outside the scope of this argument.

Dionne 2018) and credibility (Banerjee, Kumar, Pande, and Su 2011; Humphreys and Weinstein 2012; Dunning et al. 2019) alter the impact of information. Some work indicates that individuals may need more information in order to participate effectively in politics. There is evidence that comparative yardsticks (Linos 2011; Kayser and Peress 2012; Hansen, Olsen and Beck 2015) and learning (Gottlieb 2016) help voters evaluate policy and hold leaders accountable. I highlight that social remittances are an understudied source of naturally occurring information that should be influential based on prior work surrounding information.

This project is also relevant to ongoing debates on migration and politics. Recent work has made major strides illuminating our understanding of the role of social remittances (Levitt 1998, 2001; Jiménez 2008; Goodman and Hiskey 2008; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2010; Hiskey, Montalvo, and Orcés 2014; Pérez-Armendáriz 2014; Cordova and Hiskey 2015; Meseguer et al. 2016; Vari-Lavoisier 2016; Miller and Peters 2018). There is some evidence linking social remittances to participating in local politics and supporting a political party across six high – emigration states (Cordova and Hiskey 2015) and to increased support of government responsibility for citizens' well-being (Meseguer et al. 2016. Both qualitative (Pérez-Armendáriz 2014) and quantitative analyses (Miller and Peters 2018) bolster the evidence linking social remittances to democratic diffusion. However, there remains room to contribute to a deeper understanding of how and under what conditions social remittances are influential in countries of origin cross-nationally. This project presents an alternate mechanism, focused on credible yardsticks, to which individuals compare their own service provision. Additionally, I take into account the conditions under which social remittances are received.

Moreover, monetary remittances (the money migrants send home) have been studied extensively (Yang and Choi 2007; Chami et al. 2008; Tyburski 2012; Adida and Girod 2011;

Abdih et al. 2012; Ahmed 2012; Doyle 2015; Escribà-Folch et al. 2015; Easton and Montinola 2017; Bearce and Park 2019; Ley et al. 2019; Garcia and Maydom 2019; Bastiaens and Tirone 2019; Cordova and Hiskey 2019). There is evidence that monetary remittances empower political involvement (Tyburski 2012; Escribà-Folch et al. 2015), cause disengagement as individuals substitute for missing services (Abdih et al. 2012; Ahmed 2012, 2013), and that they are linked to both dependent on regime type (Easton and Montinola 2017). Yet, there remains room to understand how social and monetary remittances work together, separately, or in opposition to each other to impact politics.

I contribute to this debate by presenting a theory that articulates how social remittances impact politics by passing on information about tangible first-hand experiences through sources that individuals find credible. I argue that social remittances sent home from migrants experiencing better access to public services abroad lead to the formation of credible yardsticks (or credible reference points) that social remittance recipients compare to their own experience. This prompts comparisons that cast existing services and government in a more critical light. These comparisons yield higher public service expectations and lower evaluations of government and services and motivate individuals to take action to improve their own living conditions.

To explore potential causal processes between social remittances and political behavior, I conduct semi-structured interviews with individuals in Guatemala. This project strives to identify whether the general patterns apply in particular concrete narratives (Fearon and Laitin 2008). The interview data shed light on causal processes linking social remittances to political behavior in Guatemala. Social remittance recipients make clear comparisons to other countries and claim that information received from trusted sources abroad is more influential than other types of information. They express high expectations for provision of services, evaluate existing services

and government harshly, and take action to improve their circumstances. This project makes a strong contribution to the literature by illuminating the causal processes linking social remittances and political behavior. Below, I detail my theoretical argument. Second, I present my semi-structured interview design. Third, I present the narrative from interview data. Finally, I conclude with recommendations for future research.

THEORY

Government-provided services are necessary in order for citizens to pursue their livelihoods and productively contribute to society. Public services enable well-being and opportunities for upward mobility and are central to development (WDR 1997;WDR 2004; WDR 2018).

When government-provided services are inadequate, why don't citizens demand more? Especially in democratic countries where citizens are empowered to hold their government officials accountable, incentives to request better provision of services should be high. Central to this contention is the fact that individuals have expectations based on their experiences and the information to which they are exposed. Hence, if individuals and their social circle have always experienced a low-level of government-provided services, any minor improvement in such services will exceed their low expectations (Van Ryzin 2006; Roch and Poister 2006; James 2009).

If any gap that exists between expectations and provision of services, this will negatively impact satisfaction (Van Ryzin 2006; Roch and Poister 2006; James 2009). This means that as the expectations gap gets bigger, satisfaction goes down. However, if expectations are low, then it won't require a much high level of services in order to satisfy citizens. The higher an

individual's expectations are, the more services that governments should need to provide in order to satisfy them.

So where do citizens' expectations come from? Apart from their first-hand experiences, individual expectations are influenced by information. Information shortcuts are recognized to help individuals learn key information without expending time or resources (Downs 1957; Lupia and McCubbins 1998).[2] Information received from within individuals' networks is shown to be very persuasive (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Druckman, Levendusky, and McLain 2018). Indeed, information passed through social remittances from individuals within one's social network should be a persuasive and useful information shortcut. Additionally, as information arrives from trusted individuals within a network but removed from the same surroundings, it has the capacity to counter cognitive biases that are often generated by shared social, political, and geographic factors (Van de Walle, 2007; Ichino and Nathan 2013; Horowitz and Long 2016). Recipients likely receive social remittances as credible because they arrive first-hand from a trusted source, making them relevant to many of the outcomes linked to credible information (Banerjee, Kumar, Pande, and Su 2011; Humphreys and Weinstein 2012; Dunning et al. 2019). Finally, social remittances should be salient to recipients because they are receiving them from individuals whom they know and trust, a factor that has been shown to raise the significance of information treatments (Boas and Hidalgo 2019; Dionne 2018).

I emphasize that social remittances from higher-income countries likely elicit an affective (emotional) reaction, contributing to their influence. Such reactions to information make it more impactful as they are highly influential in cognitive decision-making processes (Zajonc, 1984). As affective reactions are repeated, concepts gain a positive or negative connotation (Kim 2011)

[2] Note that there is a vast literature on other types of political communication (such as communication from the media or a public authority figures), but that debate is outside the scope of this argument.

and the strength of these connotations contributes to whether individuals remember a topic (Lodge and Taber, 2005). Meaning, that the more that social remittance recipients hear about the better provision of services abroad, the more negative their affective response and the more present the topic will be in their minds.

Information can serve as reference points, or yardsticks, allowing individuals to evaluate their own government and hold them accountable. Salmon (1987) advocated for "comparative yardsticks" as a tool to hold politicians accountable by providing meaningful comparisons. In more recent work, scholars have employed similar concepts to show that yardsticks (or social reference points) help voters evaluate policy (Linos 2011; Kayser and Peress 2012; Hansen, Olsen and Beck 2015). I argue that social remittances should generate credible yardsticks, when they arrive from higher income countries, because they come from a source that individuals know and trust. As individuals naturally receive this influential form of information via social remittances, I expect them to form credible yardsticks. That is, social remittance recipients generate new or alter existing yardsticks based on information that they perceive as more credible than other sources of information and should therefore be more consequential. Social remittances should change the yardstick, increasing the expectations gap.

Below, Figures 1 and 2 illustrate my argument. I expect social remittances (from higher income countries) to lead recipients for form a credible yardstick to which they compare their own service experience. The top yardstick in each figure illustrates how services or absence of services at home measure up, while the bottom figures represent the credible yardstick formed by hearing about services abroad. Whether services at home are present but comparatively inadequate or absent, I expect social remittance recipients to form an expectations gap.

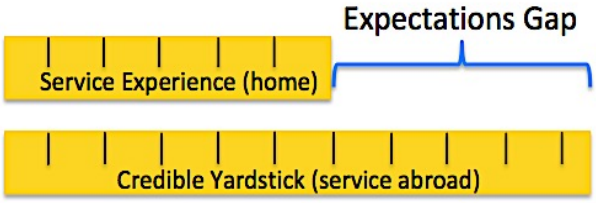

Figure 1: No Service vs. Credible Yardstick

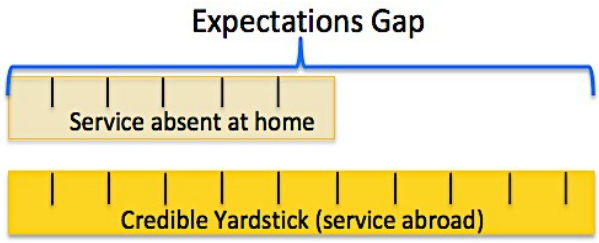

Figure 2: Lower Service vs. Credible Yardstick

Hence, social remittance recipients should be more aware that better provision of government services is possible, and have higher expectations. For example, if social remittance recipients live in a municipality with challenges in accessing safe reliable water, and they hear about easy government provided access to safe reliable water from their friends and family abroad, they are likely to have increased expectations that their government should provide that service.

In the absence of an incentivizing credible yardstick from a contact experiencing better services abroad, I do not expect individuals to form a comparable expectations gap. In the absence of a social-remittance-generated credible yardstick, individuals strongest heuristic to compare their services to is likely their past experiences and the norms within their social network (Salmon 1987). These yardsticks are likely less-clear (as in Figure 3) because they do not arrive from a trusted contact who is making informed comparisons about the different levels of services that they have experienced. I expect a similar phenomenon for individuals who are paying to substitute for inadequate government services but do not receive social remittances. In the absence of the comparison between inadequate government services at home and adequate ones abroad, individuals likely have lower expectations and are more easily satisfied.

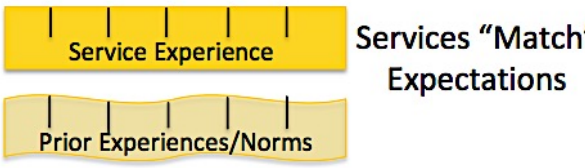

Figure 3: No Substitution, yardstick unclear/ based on local norms

Figure 4: Substitution, yardstick as experience and local norms

Additionally, as the expectations gap between the credible yardstick and service provision increases, I expect individuals to be more critical evaluators of their existing government and services. When social remittances generate credible yardsticks and higher expectations this should in turn lead to lower evaluation of existing services. Evidence from the public administration literature shows that comparison to public services in other locales impacts evaluation of government performance (Charbonneau and Van Ryzin 2015; Olsen 2017). Satisfaction with government provision of services is a function of the difference between the actual performance of the government and the individual's expectations (Van Ryzin 2006; Roch and Poister 2006; James 2009). Hence, if expectations increase but performance remains the same, satisfaction with services (and by extension the government) should go down. In contrast, those without a credible yardstick are likely to remain neutral or have a more favorable view of their government and services, especially for individuals who receive monetary remittances but no social remittances.

Monetary remittances (money) in the absence of social remittances (credible information) should not alter expectations but should enable private substitution for services. For example, individuals can pay for private services to improve their living in substitution of missing government-provided services. Indeed, this point may help explain why some scholars link monetary remittances to stronger accountability for government officials, while others link it to

weaker accountability. Social remittances may be the key to solving the political accountability curse (Abdih et al. 2012; Doyle 2015) that monetary remittances can generate. Monetary remittances likely do negatively impact political accountability in the absence of social remittances, but that when both are present, I expect the opposite to be true. I expect that as exposure to social remittances increases for monetary remittance recipients, recipients will form credible yardsticks, want more from their government, and evaluate it more critically. Frequency of communication with friends and family abroad should impact whether or not individuals evaluate their government and service more critically. I anticipate that multiple conversations each month versus a single call confirming receipt of monetary funds likely impact expectations differently.

I argue that as social remittances increase in the presence of monetary remittances, this will correlate to a lower evaluation of government by the remittance recipients. The contrast between the credible yardstick that social remittances generate and government services in the recipients' countries should be highly motivating. For individuals who receive monetary remittances and want the freedom to spend them as they choose rather than feeling that they must spend them to replace inadequate or absent government services (such as education), this effect should be especially strong. As in Figure 5, individuals who are substituting for poor or missing government provision of services will have a large expectations gap and resent spending their money on those services. I expect this credible yardstick to be impactful regardless of whether their substitutes are adequate or inadequate. Despite the ability to substitute for services that often accompanies monetary remittances, individuals will resent having to spend their money on substitution when they have formed a credible yardstick and will have lower evaluations of their existing government and services.

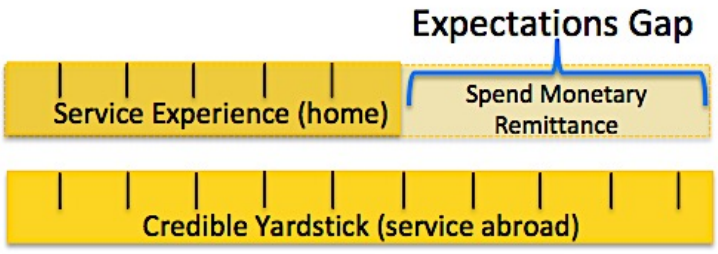

Figure 5: Pays for Substitute

New expectations and lower evaluation of existing government and services should in turn impact political behavior. If credible yardsticks generate new preferences and a lower evaluation of existing services, individuals should be motivated to take action to improve their situation. However, the types of action that they take should be contingent on whether they find the formal institutions within their country reliable (Figure 6). Political opportunity structures, or the opportunities for influence that state structure allow, influence how individuals mobilize (Meyer and Minkoff 2004) and whether they support violence (Dyrstad and Hillesund 2020). Figure 6 illustrates that when institutions are reliable, I expect individuals to strive to improve their lives through formal institutions. However, when institutions are not reliable, I expect the same mechanism to lead them to act outside of existing institutions or to be motivated to leave. For example, if elections have historically been deemed illegitimate, individuals are likely to pursue change through alternate channels such as joining a protest or a women's group.

Therefore, I expect that acting outside of formal institutions should be associated with social remittances when individuals cannot rely on existing institutions. This may manifest as individuals who receive social remittances being likely to take a variety of actions outside of existing formal institutions. In contrast, I expect individuals who are not recipients of social remittances to be more disengaged or resigned. This theory clarifies how social remittances likely impact expectations, evaluation of services and government, and political behavior.

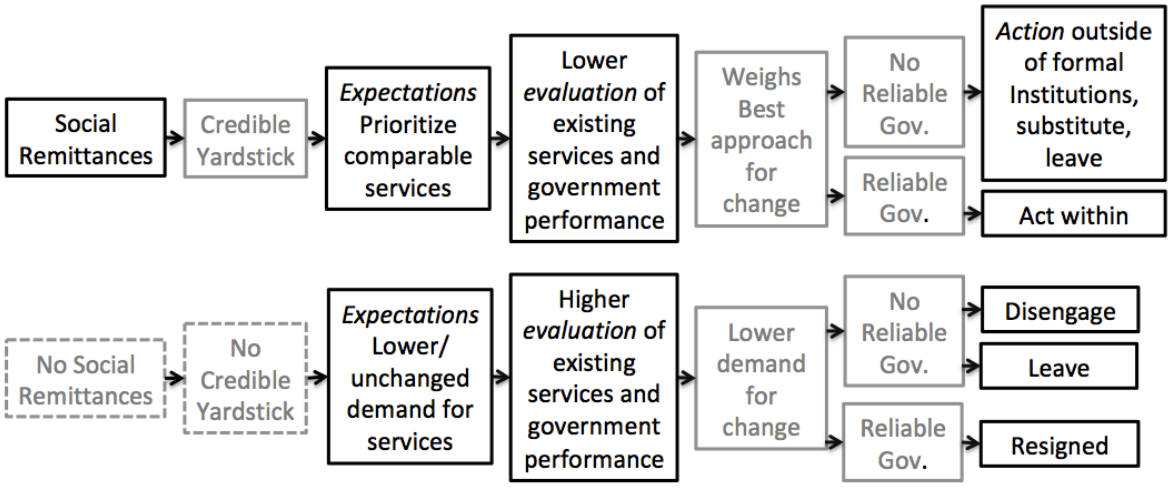

Figure 6: Causal Chart Social Remittances, Preferences, Evaluation, and Action

Compared to non-recipients, I expect social remittance recipients to have a higher expectations, be critical evaluators of existing services, and to be more motivated to take (or have historically taken) action to improve access to services for themselves and their families. For individuals who cannot trust their government, I expect them to act outside of existing formal institutions or leave. I expect individuals who can trust their government to act within existing formal institutions in response to social remittances. I expect that absent social remittances, individuals will me more likely to disengage rather than take action.

RESEARCH DESIGN

I explore the argument outlined above by interviewing social remittance recipients and non-recipients in Guatemala. The goal of this paper is three fold: 1) to determine whether the argument above seems to fit a particular narrative case (Fearon and Laitin 2008), 2) to trace the causal process chain, and 3) to generate new theoretical insights for future research.

I compare interview responses to my theoretical argument by utilizing Figure 6's causal process chain following the recommendation of Ricks and Liu (2018). This chart is based on the

mechanisms I expect to find evidence of for both social remittance recipients and non-recipients. As the causal chart above illustrates, for social remittance recipients I expect to identify evidence of a credible yardstick, expectations for comparable services, dissatisfaction with existing government and services, weighing whether their government is reliable when striving for positive change, and taking action accordingly.

I expect that the narratives from individuals who are in frequent contact with a friend or family member living abroad in a higher income country will help illuminate how social remittances encourage higher expectations for government, lower evaluations of existing services, and motivate action. I expect to find more evidence of these variables for individuals who are receiving social remittances. However, this is a small-N qualitative study and I do not aim to make any claims causality. Next, I detail and justify my survey design, execution, and analysis.

Semi-structured Interview Design

I utilize semi-structured interviews to trace the causal processes that I argue link social remittances to political behavior. The following design considerations justify my approach and encourage replication (Ricks and Liu 2018). This approach should illuminate that logic for social remittances and political behavior, allowing me to explore the potential causal processes outlined above. Interviews help illuminate the logic by which variables of interest are connected (Small 2009), as individuals share narratives that may or may not align with expectations. I employ this interview strategy to identify whether the "general story told about many cases is discernible in particular, concrete cases" based on the reasoning of individuals (Fearon and Laitin 2008). Semi-structured interviews provide respondents with a sufficient structure in order to gain leverage on the theory, while allowing respondents to direct the focus of the interview as they wish (Galletta

2013). This provides the researcher with the opportunity to witness respondent thought processes, reactions, and connected themes for respondents. These are valuable data points when exploring potential causal mechanisms.

Interview population: I conduct interviews with individuals living in Guatemala. This location contributes to the application, interpretation, and utility of my study (Levy 2008). Emigration out of Guatemala is common, a necessary condition for my independent variable of interest, social remittances (Migration Data Portal 2021). In fact, approximately 30% of Guatemalan respondents in 2010 had a family member living abroad (AmericasBarometer). Guatemala has a much lower level of government service provision than many of the countries that citizens emigrate to (United Nations 2016). Additionally, there is variation on provision of government services across Guatemala, as illustrated by the development score from the heat map in Figure 7 with the eight districts across Guatemala ranking from orange (low) to light green (mid-level) (Global Data Lab 2021).

I sent flyers strategically to contacts within different economic zones in order to obtain an interview population with a varied level of access to public services. As Figure 7 shows, six of the interview respondents come from one of the lowest ranked development zones, six from a middle ranked zone, and eight from the two highest ranked development zones. The regions without interview respondents are less populated, more forested, agricultural, and rural. Additionally, Guatemala is a democracy but scores low on many of the variables that reflect political freedom and government effectiveness (Polity IV; World Governance Indicators 2020). The most similar work to the present project includes semi-structured interviews in Mexico that largely focus on democratic norms (Pérez-Armendáriz 2014). As that project highlights, it is necessary for scholars to conduct further work in other countries to understand how social

remittances impact recipients in other contexts. Finally, conducting interviews with individuals in Guatemala was built into this research design due to convenience. I have contacts in Guatemala who were able to pass my recruitment flyer to their contacts and I speak basic Spanish.

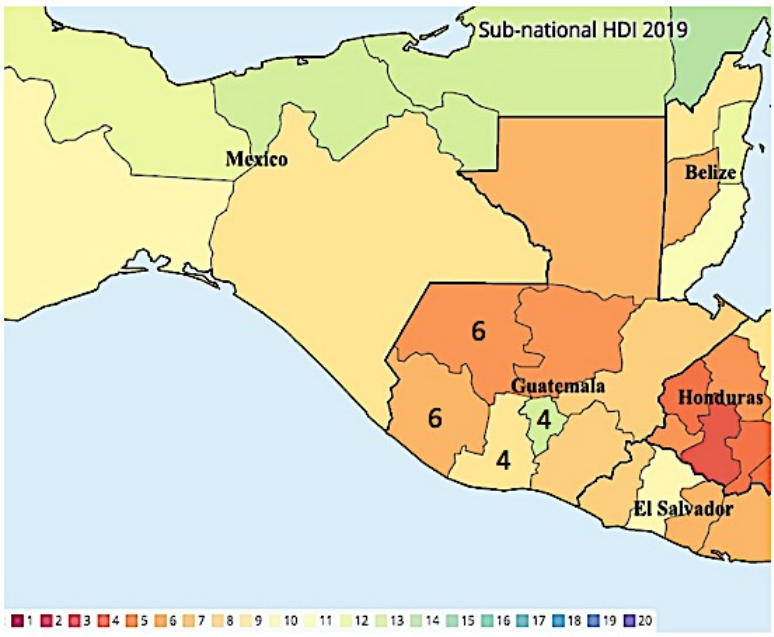

Figure 7: HDI Sub-National in Guatemala and Surrounding Countries (Global Data Lab 2021)

The popularization and increased access to social media and international calls and texts (via WhatsApp) over the last decade has enabled Guatemalans to easily communicate with friends and family who live abroad. According to the 2018 Latin American Public Opinion Project data shown in Figure 8, nearly half of the survey respondents from Guatemala had a WhatsApp account in 2018 (LAPOP 2018). This makes the population in Guatemala a good candidate for the use of WhatsApp interviews.

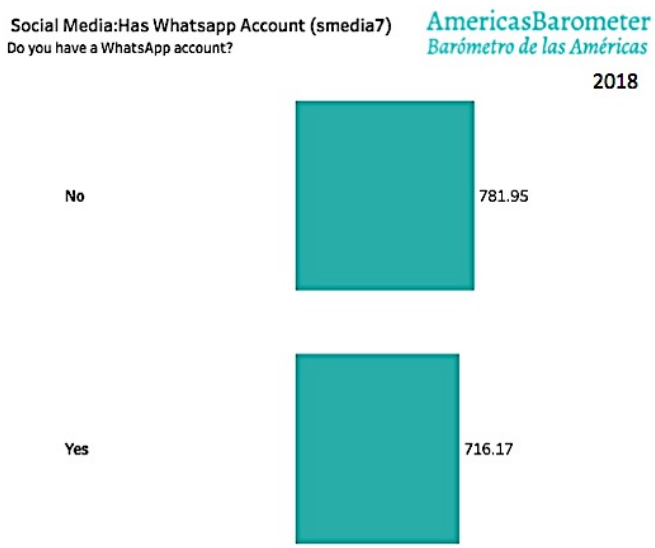

Figure 8: Whats App Account (AmericasBarometer)

Design Considerations: In order to conduct semi-structured interviews in Guatemala during a pandemic in 2021, I designed a remote interview strategy.[3] By leveraging existing technology and individuals' increasing familiarity and comfort with such technology, I was able to conduct in-depth semi-structured interviews remotely. The remote interview strategy limits the interview respondents to those who have the capacity to participate in a remote interview. However, it is likely that this leads to non-recipient respondents who are closer in socio-economic status to social remittance recipients than might be the case with standard in-person interviews.

My position as "an outsider" likely affects the questions that I ask, the data I am able to collect, and the interpretation of my evidence (Berger 2015). By being transparent about this and conducting extensive research on Guatemala, I hope to ameliorate these issues. I continually evaluate how my position may be affecting this project. I also hired an interpreter who lives and

[3] Approved under most recent modification IRB ID # 1716151-2, FWA No: 00004557.

works in Guatemala and speaks fluent Guatemalan Spanish, and I pay close attention to her interpretations of and reactions to the interview responses (Berger 2015). This technique helps me partially offset my own biases and identify themes that I may have missed based on my position as an outsider (Berger 2015). On the other hand, a strength of my position as an outsider is that it may give me an objective stance, meaning that interpretation of the data I collect will not be skewed by a sense of shared feeling or experience (Berger 2015). I remain sensitive to and respectful of my distance from Guatemala as I proceed. Narratives that support the causal processes I outlined will illustrate whether the theory has traction and whether it is a candidate for generalization to other states. Evidence to support alterative explanations will enable me to improve my theoretical argument.

This approach offers the opportunity for a high level of internal validity. This is a natural strength of the case study method, and the present study strives to emphasize this internal validity (Gerring 2011). It is possible that this case will identify a unique process (or non-manipulatable cause) that links social remittances to public service provision in Guatemala (Gerring 2011). If I identify a causal process unique to this case, I will strive to generalize the argument to a broader population than that of Guatemala, relying on the challenges to generalization that the evidence reveals. In fact, a strength of this approach is its capacity to shed light on flaws in our logic and enable stronger theoretical arguments (Gerring 2011). Hence, I conduct semi-structured interviews with hypotheses in mind, but I emphasize that utilizing case studies in this capacity will help challenge our logic and push debates in political science forward. Therefore, I remain open to the possibility that original interview evidence may challenge my argument.

Interview Design: I designed a semi-structured interview method during 2020, a time when travel restrictions in response to COVID-19 constrained research possibilities. In order to push research forward despite these logistical challenges, I designed an interview protocol to be implemented remotely. First, I designed semi-structured interview questions following Galletta (2013) beginning with open-ended narrative questions and moving to more specific theory-oriented questions as the interview progresses. The questions first target satisfaction with government and existing services then try to identify whether individuals ever compare the services that are available to them to those in other countries, their perspectives and motivation to act in response to these issues, and finally ask about the level and content of the social remittances they receive. I rely on prior knowledge and former work to inform strong semi-structured interview questions (Kallio et al. 2016). I informally piloted the first round of interview questions with six personal contacts (who were excluded from the formal interviews) in order to gauge the effectiveness of the questions, how individuals understood them, and the reactions that they elicited (Kallio et al. 2016). After each pilot interview, I debriefed with the respondents in order to determine whether the interview guide was targeting the topics that I intended. Following the informal pilot of the interview questions, I relied on those responses to make changes and draft the final semi-structured interview guide.[4]

Second, I contacted a small travel and language-learning company in Antigua, Guatemala in order to obtain help from a translator familiar with the local dialect and to support a local business through this project. Supporting a local business during the challenges of navigating COVID-19 restrictions aligns with my research philosophy by striving to have a positive impact through my research. In fact, the travel company had limited capacity to operate as normal based

[4] Approved under most recent modification IRB ID # 1716151-2, FWA No: 00004557.

on travel and COVID restrictions. To continue operation, the company had moved to creative language-learning programs and content online, indicating their strength in Guatemalan Spanish. I identified the company as an excellent partner to support my remote interview strategy. Third, I circulated a recruitment flyer through contacts and designed a site for user-friendly sign-ups with the option to choose either a Zoom or WhatsApp video interview format. Each interview lasts approximately 1-2 hours, and respondents receive a small monetary compensation to thank them for their time (15 USD distributed via Xoom). Respondents must be adults and cannot be people that I know personally or who have a close personal relationship with any of my contacts. Prior to beginning the interview, respondents are informed of their rights, including the ability to not answer any question or to end the interview at any time without fear of retribution or loss of monetary compensation. Respondents consent to an audio recording prior to the interview beginning. Following each interview, I review a debriefing script with respondents and share my contact information in case of any follow-up questions.

Due to the unique challenges brought on by COVID-19, recruiting interview respondents was initially challenging. In order to ensure a variety of different groups of individuals participate in the interview, I have circulated recruitment materials to many different sources across different parts of Guatemala. I sought to recruit respondents with varying levels of exposure to social remittances in order to compare their expectations, evaluations, and action. Recruiting respondents who are not in contact with a friend or family member living abroad has proven challenging in the context of Guatemala (where emigration is high) therefore the social remittance recipient group is larger than the non-recipient group. Part of the issue may be familiarity and comfort with the tools used for transnational communication (Zoom and WhatsApp). This remote interview design has the capacity to alter scholars' ability to reach

individuals in other countries and more frequently provide deep narratives that inform our theoretical arguments and move research forward.

The survey is designed to also collect data on a range of control variables including monetary remittances (money from abroad), travel experience, political efficacy, exposure to other types of information, and evaluation of democracy and the economy in Guatemala. Questions also lightly gauge the economic standing of respondents but do not directly ask about the socio-economic status in order to not offend or embarrass the respondents. The pilot interviews revealed that questions specifically targeting economic status were not well received. As the researcher, I chose to respect these reactions and only gauge socio-economic status through indirect or unsolicited responses in order to gain deeper insight on the subject matter at hand. The control variables provide leverage on alternate hypotheses, which I discuss in turn throughout the results section.

I began each interview by asking individuals to share a story relating to their experience with public services in their country. Next, I asked questions surrounding individuals' expectations, evaluation of services, and propensity to take various types of action. The next sections asked respondents to make comparisons to services and conditions in other countries. Finally, in the last section, I identified their frequency of communication (or lack of communication) with a contact living abroad and the location of their contact. This process allows me to identify the presence of my dependent variables of interest prior to obtaining information from interviewees on the key independent variable of interest (social remittances) or the causal mechanism that I aim to identify (credible yardstick comparison). Next, I present a discussion of interview narratives.

RESULTS

Here I summarize the results from the semi-structured interviews. The questions began with those surrounding preferences, evaluation, and action and next covered questions on comparisons to other countries. They conclude with questions about communication abroad. I discuss the results following each step in the causal process chart below: social remittances, credible yardsticks, expectations, evaluations, weighing whether change is needed, key considerations, and chosen course of action. I also include several paragraphs reflecting components relevant to the causal process that are not clearly delineated in the causal process chart including: location of emigrant contact, corruption, and monetary remittances.

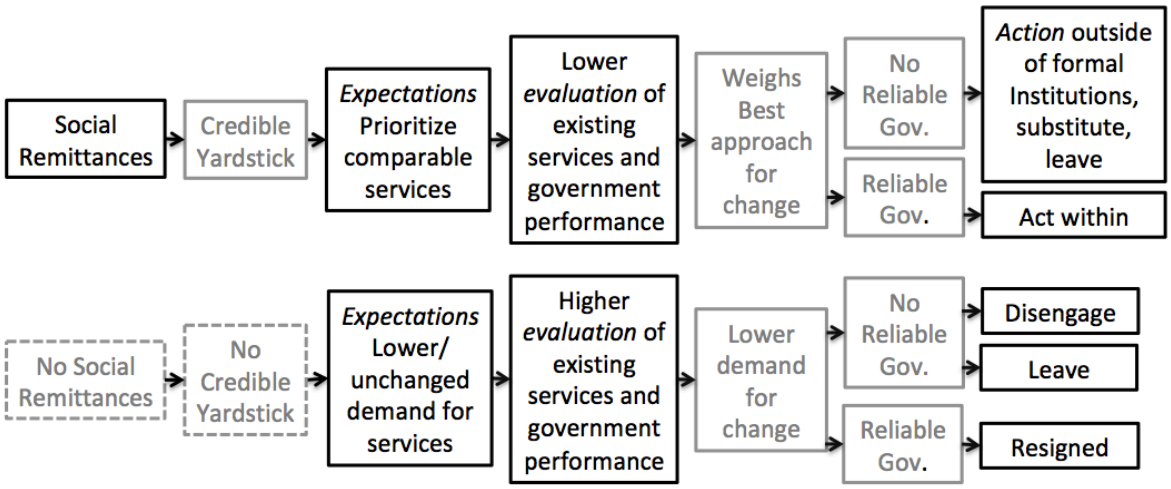

Figure 9: Causal Chart Social Remittances, Preferences, Evaluation, and Action

Original Interview Evidence: a narrative on social remittances and public services

I conducted 20 semi-structured video interviews on Zoom and WhatsApp with respondents across Guatemala. Interview responses support my argument and provide a rich narrative to deepen our understanding of how social remittances impact recipients. Overall, individuals who are frequently in contact with their family members or close friends who live

abroad express a strong desire to see improvements in virtually every public service in Guatemala, ranging from better access to water and electricity in rural areas to “true public transportation", to education, and healthcare. Additionally, these respondents were highly critical of existing services and government. Finally, in terms of action, respondents have almost unanimously expressed a concern over corruption and frustration with limited outlets to contribute to positive change, and most shared that they are taking some type of action outside of existing formal institutions in order to promote positive change within the community or at the very least for their immediate family. Respondents who are not in communication with a friend or family member living abroad have been more challenging to reach (N=6), and they seem to be less comfortable with transnational forms of communication. Overall they were less critical of their existing services and government and expressed less desire and clarity on action to improve their access to services.

Currently, the exposure of the interview population is as follows. First, fourteen respondents are social remittance recipients and six are not (though a few have a contact abroad that they do not communicate with). Three individuals indicate that they are economically well-off while eight indicate that their economic situation is precarious, with the remainder indicating that they are somewhere in-between. Ten respondents are in contact with a migrant in the US, two with a migrant in Europe, one with a migrant in China, two with a migrant in Mexico, and four with migrants in another country in Latin America. Based on my theory, I expect that recipients of social remittances from the US and Europe will express the greatest expectations gap based on the comparison between services they experience and those that their contacts experience abroad.

Social remittances: Social remittance recipients are in contact with their friends and family abroad at least every other week. Most are in contact with them multiple times every week. Communication takes many forms often including ongoing WhatsApp conversations and weekly calls. Most individuals share that they discuss family, health, jobs, and quality of life for both parties to the conversation. Conversations surrounding quality of life often cover topics such as school, safety, roads and transportation, and healthcare. Interesting difference emerge for responses surrounding healthcare, most narratives base some of their responses on the comparative COVID response of host and origin country governments.

Credible Yardstick: My argument highlights the importance of social remittances, because I expect them to be an influential source of information. Indeed, in line with my argument, nearly every respondent claimed that information from friends and family with first-hand experience abroad is more influential and/or more credible than other sources of information. I ask every respondent regardless of whether they have a friend or family member abroad whether "hearing about the experience of your friends and family impact you more strongly than information that you see in the news, hear on the radio, or come across online?" Every respondent shared that information from a friend or family member is more credible than information from other sources, which can be skewed, untrue, or exaggerated. Some representative examples include:

> "Hearing directly from the horse's mouth has a bigger impact. News is not as believable."
>
> "Information from people I know has more weight; it makes it real."
>
> "Lived experiences can confirm or negate news."
>
> "Someone you know is more believable; it's a bigger impact, and more emotional."
>
> "The impact is stronger and more real when it's someone I know."

"I give information more weight when it is directly from someone I know." Individuals without a contact abroad, also shared that information from friends is more believable, meaning that if they were in contact with someone abroad, the information that they received from them would likely be influential. One stated, "Sometimes info you see online could be false. You have more confidence in people that you know." Another respondent, who is currently studying to become a social worker, emphasized the importance of doing research to understand these topics. This question elicited narratives that support my argument; social remittances are a credible, influential, and important source of information. These responses support that social remittances are more influential than information that individuals encounter online or from the media, which can provide potentially confounding alternate hypotheses. Overall, responses to this question highlight the need to focus on what types of information the individuals we are studying likely find credible, rather then what is objectively credible. Narratives also indicated that individuals can learn how to discern credible from non-credible information, and all have some basic idea that the media may not always be the most credible source. Future research on the relationship between information and political behavior would benefit from continuing to explore the unique impact of information from trusted personal sources.

Comparisons: When asked to compare their services to those in another country and about which country their government should learn from, responses were telling. Social remittance recipients provided clear, passionate, and informed comparisons. For example, "Public services are and will continue to improve…I don't think we could ever get to the level of the U.S." Another respondent highlighted that hearing about differences from people in other countries show that it is possible to make improvements. One individual who is not a recipient of

social remittances claimed that he had no ability to make any comparison because "I am here" in Guatemala. Most individuals without communication abroad had a more difficult time drawing comparisons. Another individual who is not a recipient of social remittances relied on her school subject matter to make an informed comparison to services in Europe. Since this respondent is studying social services in her pursuit to become a social worker, her responses included informed comparisons that echoed those in the social remittance recipient group. Interestingly, this lends support to my argument that social remittances are an important and perhaps understudied credible information shortcut for recipients. Recipients of social remittances made comparisons surrounding service provision that were as informed, clear, and motivating for them as the comparisons offered by the individual who is studying social services intensively.

Contact Location: Individuals with close contacts in high-income countries responded differently than individuals with contacts in middle- or low-income countries. One respondent who receives social remittances from both the U.S. and Mexico shared that the highlight of life in the U.S. is public education, while Mexico "has no highlight reel." An individual with a friend abroad in Nicaragua highlighted that many of the public services in Guatemala exceed those in Nicaragua, causing her contact in Nicaragua to raise his expectations for the government there and making her think more highly of Guatemala. This narrative tracks with my argument, although it reflects the other side of the equation. Individuals who are in contact with friends and family abroad are comparing provision of services and measuring them against each other, regardless of which country has a higher provision of services. This is likely causing one participant within those conversations to have higher service preferences and harsher evaluations of the services that they do have access to. Another potential alternate hypothesis stems from literature that identifies a relationship between simply being a part of the migrant community and

political engagement (Córdova and Hiskey 2015). However, responses highlight that central to the impact of social remittances is where they arrive from. The narratives indicate that where social remittances are from does matter for their impact on politics.

Expectations: Individuals who are in frequent communication with a friend or family member who lives abroad in a higher-income (higher services) country assert strong statements about the types of public services that are missing in Guatemala. Every respondent in this group expressed preferences in favor of government services that would allow individuals to live a better quality of life. Most respondents expressed a preference for improved infrastructure. Many shared that busses, water, and electricity should be de-privatized or at the very least subject to a higher level of national oversight so that private companies can't exploit Guatemalans who require access to these resources to live. One stated that, "people should pay less and receive more effective services." Several were exasperated over limited access to electricity or clean water across parts of Guatemala, asserting that services which are essential should be accessible. One respondent who had personal experience travelling abroad in a high-income country shared responses that echoed those of individuals with friends and family living abroad in such locales. She stated, "I would love to see more of a European model in Guatemala," explaining how the public transportation system there enabled her to travel independently, safely, and easily around the continent, and lamenting the quality of public transportation in Guatemala, where it is inefficient and she feels so unsafe that she rides a bicycle regardless of the road conditions and weather. Many other respondents strongly emphasized preferences in favor of improvements to public transportation, and themes surrounding the need for improving the safety, efficiency, and cost of these systems were nearly universal across respondents. One stated, "Public transport could improve immensely, but we accept what we have." Most respondents (including all social

remittance recipients) shared a preference for better medical services in Guatemala, highlighting the inaccessibility of public medical services, the poor medical infrastructure, and the excessive cost of private medical services, which are often required for any type of serious treatment. Nearly every respondent wants to see improvement to the public education system in Guatemala, and most highlighted this preference with exasperation. “People here want to study and have a career but need money.” Many shared that schools lack the infrastructure and supplies that they need, and that due to these issues and outdated material, teenagers lose interest and are easy targets for criminal organizations. “There is not enough infrastructure for schools. One teacher teaches six grades, the locals make the desks.” Many also prioritize better public safety, expressing a need for the police to protect individuals, not to enable or defer to criminal organization. One woman is passionate about the need to make women more safe in Guatemala, especially indigenous women who often don’t even have the language skills or cultural comfort to file a report if they are assaulted. Respondents emphasized the women and children in particular should be more protected by the government.

Non-recipients of social remittances also expressed dissatisfaction with the government and voiced desires for change. However, the individuals who are not recipients of social remittances seemed more resigned to their existing level of services and their suggestions for improvement were not a clear (except for the individual who is studying to be a social worker).

Evaluation: Individuals who communicate with close friends and family living abroad in a higher-income country expressed a passionate level of dissatisfaction with their government and the services they are able to access. The only exception was a business owner who gave many indications that she was a part of the economic elite in Guatemala, and nonetheless still criticized several types of public services there. Virtually every respondent emphasized some

services that they find woefully inadequate, one attributing “misery” across Guatemala to “a lack of basic services”. Another stating, “I’m not satisfied. Services have always benefitted a small group. They are too expensive.” In particular, most individuals were frustrated with the public education system. “Even before the pandemic the education quality was bad. Now it’s even worse. My younger sister had a hard time last year and didn’t learn anything.” She also highlighted the access to a variety of education options and career paths available to students in the United States. One respondent claimed that schools lack even the most basic necessary infrastructure in rural areas and “barely look like a school.” Another stated “If you want something better [education], you can pay for private school, but not everyone has the resources to pay for private education. The teachers do their best with what they have available to them, but the resources that are provided to them simply aren’t enough.” Infrastructure was also a common critique, with one respondent sharing that infrastructure in the U.S. and Guatemala is almost incomparable, and that the individuals that she communicates with in the U.S. laugh at how comparatively terrible the infrastructure is in Guatemala. Every respondent finds the transportation options inadequate, and some emphasized that public transportation is non-existent in Guatemala and is instead a dangerous business scheme. One respondent called public transportation very bad and highlighted that during the pandemic they had no bio-security measures. Multiple respondents complained that there are still communities in Guatemala without access to potable water. Many expressed dissatisfaction with the poor access and inequitable cost of electricity, which over the last year added to the inaccessibility of the public education system as students attempted to learn from home. Crime is another area that solicited major dissatisfaction with existing services and government. One respondent claimed in response to a question about violence that the government is “watching out for themselves. That during

election years they pretend to care but they don't care." Most respondents criticized the government for being either to inattentive to or even involved with criminal organizations.

Most individuals who are not social remittance recipient responded with lighter critique of existing government and services. A few called many of them "adequate" and shared that they were mostly satisfied. However, the individual who is studying to be a social worker was incredibly critical of the system that she is trying to improve. This provides insight into another alternate hypothesis: access to credible information is incredibly influential, whether it arrives from a family or friend living abroad or whether it is obtained through extensive study and education on a topic. Social remittances seem to be an influential information shortcut, eliciting political responses such as harsher critiques of services that might only otherwise be the results of extensive education and study.

Corruption: The semi-structured interview questions did not contain a question on corruption. However, it was a dominant theme present in nearly every interview. In response to questions surrounding preferences, evaluation, and action, corruption came up as a common consideration for every social remittance recipient. Most respondents referred to corruption as part of the explanation for poor provision of services. Several claimed that politicians don't care about providing services but care more about their own needs. Many echoed false campaign promises for improvements to services that are left unfulfilled after politicians are elected. One individual even shared that they once worked for a government entity and chose to leave due to frustration with the dominance of corrupt practices. Even the interview respondent who indicated that she was quite wealthy claimed that corruption is a problem. Respondents made it clear that corruption often impacts the types of action that they are willing to take in order to improve their lives, evidence that aligns with my argument. Individuals who are not in contact with a friend or

family member abroad had a lower emphasis on corruption, with three neglecting to mention it entirely.

Political Behavior: The majority of social remittance recipients shared a form of action that they are taking outside of existing formal institutions in order to improve access to services in some other way. Several attend local community discussions or reach out to local leaders with their concerns, but most echo a shared frustration with politicians. A few are involved extensively in major aid efforts outside of formal institutions and a few in protest and political campaigns to try and better hold politicians accountable or to remove corrupt officials. One individual serves as a volunteer firefighter in order to help her community. Another stated, "I have been involved in some groups, you could maybe call them activism groups, that are working to improve access to education." A respondent who plans to open a community medical and education aid center once she can obtain enough funding is also in the process of becoming a social worker. One woman has led efforts to ensure that cultural norms are respected when indigenous women seek help after a violent assault. Many shared that they pay for private services in the absence of public services for their families, or try to, and many proudly stated their history of participation in protests. Others shared that they support protests against corrupt government officials through social media efforts but haven't attended protests in-person lately due to the pandemic. One respondent shared that he wants to help more but stated, "it feels like my hands are tied." Despite the interview script not containing a question about corruption, almost every respondent thus far has claimed that the extreme and persistent level of corruption in Guatemala justifies why they do not pursue change through existing formal institutions and in some cases do not even vote seriously (but abstain on their ballot in protest). Many other

examples of a variety of actions taken outside of formal state institutions highlight individuals' motivation to experience positive change in Guatemala:

> "I've adapted. It's hard to change. If I could make a change, I would remove the government because they wouldn't listen…At my age [78] it is hard to participate. I was taught to keep my head down. I think change is possible with constitutional change and I write articles to elicit support for modifying the constitution, not destroying it."

> "We put together a movement during COVID-19. The government wasn't doing anything. They were only helping people within a political party. We were able to help feed 2,000 families. We walked two hours to help a man with no food left. We got a lot of donations… we helped a family with five kids battling hunger with hot water and one meal a day. We did things personally because we could not trust the government."

These narratives support my contention that when individuals do not believe that they can influence meaningful change through existing formal institutions, they will attempt to make an impact outside of those institutions. In terms of non-recipients of social remittances, again the aspiring social worker's responses echoed those of social remittance recipients. However, individuals who are neither an aspiring social worker nor a recipient of social remittances offered very little in terms of action taken or goals. A few shared that they showed up at a couple of protests in their lives, but most expressed limited intent to pursue any type of actions for change.

Monetary remittances: Monetary remittances are a key alternative explanation for how migrants impact political behavior in their country of origin. My semi-structure interview included a question on which is more influential, "communication abroad or monetary remittances, if you receive them?" Universally, respondents shared that communication with friends and family abroad is more impactful than money sent from abroad.

Thus far, the semi-structured remote interviews have provided a rich narrative that illuminates the potential causal process chain linking social remittances to political behavior. Interview respondents emphasize how influential social remittances are because they include the personal experience of someone who is credible. They are passionate about sharing their

expectations for improved government services, are harsh evaluators of existing government and services, and are motivated by corruption to make a difference outside of formal institutions. As my research progress, I plan to recruit additional participants who are not in contact with a friend or family member abroad in order to create a stronger comparison group to individuals who are recipients of social remittances. Due to a lower level of familiarity with WhatApp and Zoom, these respondents are more difficult to recruit for remote interviews, but I am recruiting this group through outreach to local organizations. Additionally, as my research continues, I plan to expand recruitment to Mexico and potentially Cuba (safety, political conditions, and Internet access permitting) in order to better isolate how differences between home and host country may impact changing preferences, evaluations, and political behavior. In a related project, quantitative analyses complement the rich narrative that my semi-structured interviews are providing (Prince 2021 n.d.).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the narratives illustrate that the causal process chain between social remittance and political behavior may indeed include credible yardsticks, expectations, and lowered evaluations of government and services. Interviewees who are recipients of social remittances share clear, informed comparisons between services in their county and those experienced by their contacts abroad. These are contingent on where their contacts are located with one response even indicating that for contacts in lower-income countries the opposite effect may occur, with Guatemalan services representing the credible yardstick that Nicaragua should strive for. This presents interesting avenues for future research and highlights the importance of where social remittances originate. Every respondent who receives social remittances claims that

they are more influential than other types of information because they are credible. Social remittance recipients are passionate and emotional about sharing their public service expectations. They are highly critical of and often seem angry about the existing services and government. Every respondent highlighted a problem with corruption, and social remittance recipients in particular emphasized that it causes them to take action strategically, often outside of formal political institutions. Most respondents are taking a variety of actions outside of formal political institutions ranging from attending protests to developing non-profit organizations that address food insecurity in rural Guatemala.

Largely, the respondents who are not in close contact with a friend or family member abroad expressed expectations that are less clear, are more satisfied with existing services, and did not take as much action outside of formal political institutions with the occasional exception of attending a protest. Non-recipients were largely challenged by the request to compare their services to those in another country, with one unable to make a comparison and most others making local (but less-clear) comparisons to other Central American states. The exception within this group is the respondent who is studying to be a social worker, and was highly informed about public services across different countries.

Responses were both insightful and inspirational. These narratives provide rich insights on how individuals in Guatemala view their government and services. They provide evidence that both aligns with and further informs the causal processes linking social remittances to political behavior. In short, for the case of individuals who receive social remittances in Guatemala the causal process that I advance in this paper is plausible. Evidence supports my argument and provides new avenues through which to enrich my argument, including a focus on

the content of social remittances and other factors that individuals take into considering when social remittance motivate them to take action to improve their lives.

In terms of external validity, I expect that the findings in this case should generalize easily to other states with similar economic conditions and with a large number of emigrants living abroad in higher-income countries (Gerring 2011). However, I acknowledge that the findings may shed light only on the relationship between social remittance-fueled demand for service provision and political behavior in Guatemala. I strive to identify evidence that indicates that these mechanisms are particular to this case in order to rule out the possibility that the theory only applies to Guatemala. As my research progresses, I hope to conduct similar interviews in other high-emigration countries such as the Cuba, China, or the Philippines.

Transnational issues often require transnational solutions. The unfortunate research circumstances brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 led me to implement a remote interview strategy. The strategy has been incredibly helpful and offers the potential to deeply enrich our understanding and move research forward on a variety of topics. I plan to implement similar strategies in other countries as my research progresses. Additionally, I plan to utilize emerging technology to continue to reach populations that are difficult to study. In particular, I plan to implement a field experiment utilizing WhatsApp and treating individuals to a higher level of communication with their friends and family who live abroad. This will potential provide a causal test and bolster the evidence for my argument.

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-CHAPTER 2-

Social Remittances, Expectations, and Evaluations: How do social remittances alter expectations and evaluation of existing services and government?

Abstract

Why don't individuals expect better services when provision is low? In countries with historically low provision of services, expectations should be low. Information with the capacity to alter expectations is important to understanding expectations for services, and by extension individuals' motives to hold government officials accountable. This paper explores the first link in this argument, the relationship between social remittances, expectations, and evaluation of existing government and services. I argue that social remittances (information and ideas sent home to contacts in migrants' countries of origin) cause individuals to measure their service experience against *credible yardsticks* based on the service that they hear about from abroad. Hence, social remittances from countries with better service provision abroad will motivate a change in recipient expectations for better service provision in their own country. These social remittances will also cause a lower evaluation of the home country government and existing services for monetary remittance recipients, as they resent spending received money to replace absent government services. Utilizing individual-level public opinion data from the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), I identify evidence in support of this argument with some caveats. Understanding how social remittances impact expectations and evaluation of existing government and services has implications for scholars, development practitioners, and policy makers.

INTRODUCTION

Why do individuals not demand better provision of services from their government when provision of government services is inadequate? Given how essential services are for development, livelihood, and contribution to society (WDR 1997;WDR 2004; WDR 2018), individuals should demand that their governments provide them. Yet, in some cases they lack the expectations necessary to hold their government accountable. This paper explores social remittances as relevant information, arguing that they have the capacity to raise expectations, potentially leading to demand for better provision of services.

Social remittances include the information and ideas that migrants send home from abroad. They are a key, influential, yet understudied form of information with implications for political behavior. They have the capacity to alter individuals' expectations, evaluation of government, and by extension political behavior. This paper contributes to the literature by providing the novel argument that social remittances cause individuals to form *credible yardsticks*. I define credible yardsticks as reference points against which individuals compare the services their government provides, thus raising their expectations and altering their satisfaction with their existing government and services. Through this mechanism, social remittances have the capacity to motivate individuals to hold their governments accountable. A proposition I hope to test in future work. Here I strive to identify whether social remittances provide the motivation for individuals to seek improved services.

My theory articulates how social remittances impact politics by passing on information about tangible first-hand experiences through sources that individuals find credible. I argue that social remittances sent home from migrants experiencing better access to public services abroad lead to the formation of credible yardsticks that social remittance recipients compare to their own

experience, prompting comparisons that cast their existing services and government in a harsher light. These comparisons yield higher expectations, lower evaluations of government and services, and by extension should motivate individuals to take action to improve their own living conditions. This argument paints a more complete picture of how social remittances impact politics and may help explain the variation across findings on monetary remittances. I build on recent work that has advanced our understanding of social remittances.

Do social remittances explain the varied evidence on monetary remittances?

The underexplored link between social remittances and political behavior likely helps explain contradictory findings on the impact of monetary remittances on origin countries. Monetary remittances (the money that migrants send back to family and friends in their origin country) have become a topic of interest in both academia and policy arenas over the last two decades as the amount sent home has surged, reaching $529 billion in 2018 alone (World Bank 2018). Vast literature exists on the impact of monetary remittances, indicating mixed findings for their impact on origin countries (Yang and Choi 2007; Chami et al. 2008; Tyburski 2012; Adida and Girod 2011; Abdih et al. 2012; Ahmed 2012; Doyle 2015; Escribà-Folch et al. 2015; Easton and Montinola 2017; Bearce 2019; Ley et al. 2019; Garcia and Maydom 2019; Bastiaens and Tirone 2019; Cordova and Hiskey 2019). Econometric models illustrate that monetary remittances free governments from the demands of citizens, because monetary remittance recipients have the ability to pay to substitute for missing government services and thus do not need to demand more from their government (Abdih et al. 2012). In fact, there is some evidence that across Latin America that monetary remittances lower demand for social security and welfare spending, since remittances improve economic security (Doyle 2015). There is evidence that Mexican states allocate funds away from monetary remittance-receiving municipalities

(Ambrosius 2019). On the contrary, some find that monetary remittances free individuals to hold governments more accountable (Tyburski 2012). There is also evidence that monetary remittances have a positive impact on government revenue (Abdih et al. 2012b) and enhance government spending (Singer 2012). Finally, democratic countries are more likely to respond to monetary remittances by increasing social spending on health and education (Easton and Montinola 2016). In the presence of political competition (democracy), remittance recipients are more willing to provide taxes for public services (Easton and Montinola 2016). Part of the observed heterogeneity in the effects of monetary remittances is likely explained by other, more challenging to measure modes of influence such as social remittances.

Social remittances, or the transmission of ideas, knowledge, values, social capital and norms from abroad (Levitt 1998, 2001), may have a major impact on recipients. Existing work supports that social remittances are influential. Interviews with individuals in Mexico focused on U.S. migration indicate that non-migrants in communication with emigrants care more about being informed than those not in contact with emigrants, and that the majority of emigrants pass information on about the importance of rule of law, institutions, civic responsibility, and human rights (Pérez-Armendáriz 2014). There is evidence that both individual and community-level social remittances (such as community projects with migrant support) impact the community and have implications for governance (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2010). Miller and Peters (2018) find that when citizens disproportionately migrate to democracies, this increases the likelihood of democratization for home country autocracies. They argue that this illustrates support for democratic diffusion (as migrants become more in favor of democracy and pass social capital home), but there is a lot of room to assess the intervening variables between emigrant location and democratization, as Miller and Peters do not evaluate the underlying causal mechanisms. I

emphasize that changes to policy preferences for improved services, evaluation of existing services, and willingness to take action all likely precede any moves towards democratization, illuminating the mechanisms through which it becomes more likely.

I build on the growing evidence that social remittances affect politics, and I extend the theory on how they affect political participation by exploring their relationship to expectations and evaluation of existing services. Scholars have shown that social remittances influence the beliefs of recipients. In Mexico, migrant communication led to greater social tolerance, increased non-electoral participation, and more critical assessments of political institutions and rights (Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow 2010). Jiménez (2008) found evidence that social remittances transferred from communication abroad and through migrant return positively impacted tolerance in Mexico. Meseguer et al. (2016) explore the impact of social versus monetary remittances on preferences surrounding the role of the state in the economy and promoting citizens' well-being, conditional on remittance dependence. Building on Meseguer et al. (2016), I take into account the contexts in which social remittances are received, the issues that social remittance recipients prioritize, and how social remittances incentivize political behavior.

Thus far, existing evidence does support a correlation between emigration and some types of political behavior. Goodman and Hiskey (2008) provide evidence that high levels of emigration from Mexican communities may lead to disengagement with the political system within the origin country, while related work illustrates how the quality of democracy affects the likelihood of emigration (Hiskey, Montalvo, and Orcés 2014). Cordova and Hiskey (2015) find evidence that social remittances from the U.S. do impact political behavior across six high - migration Latin American states. In the 2012 Senegalese Presidential election, diaspora played an essential role through social remittances, especially for non-migrants dependent on economic

remittances (Vari-Lavoisier 2016). For Polish immigrants to the UK, Ahmadov and Sasse (2016) find that integration within the host country is correlated to non-electoral engagement in the home country, while a non-permanent, short-term stay in the host country is correlated to electoral engagement in the home country. This study also indicates that communication with migrants increased awareness about conditions in the host country for family members at home (Ahmadov and Sasse 2016). Hence, non-migrants who communicate with a migrant should have a better understanding of life abroad than non-migrants who do not. The present project extends these findings with an argument that generalizes across states and highlights the context in which social remittance recipients live.

The prior work on social remittances has dramatically advanced our understanding of their role despite data limitations. However, there is room to provide added insight on how social remittances influence expectations, evaluation of government, and by extension political behavior. I take into account the contexts in which social remittances are received, the issues that social remittance recipients prioritize, and emphasize that social remittances may help explain why prior work has obtained varied results on monetary remittance recipients. Here I investigate the link between social remittances and key factors that should impact political behavior: expectations and evaluations. Next, I explain how social remittances from countries with better provision of services impact political behavior by altering expectations in favor of needed government services and lowering evaluation of government and existing services.

THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

Government-provided services are essential in enabling individuals to be productive members of society and are central to individual-level wellbeing and a country's development

(WDR 1997;WDR 2004; WDR 2018). So, when government provided services are inadequate, especially in democracies, why don't citizens demand more?

Citizens' expectations may be too low to elicit demand for services. Expectations are shaped by experience and the exposure to information. If individuals and their contacts have only ever experienced poor or limited government services, then they may have low expectations and be satisfied by very minor service provision. Gottlieb (2016) also identifies the source of expectations as an understudied phenomenon, highlighting that the moral hazard model of voter accountability often falsely assumes that voters have a reasonable reference point by which they can judge the performance of their elected officials. Particularly in relatively new or low-income democracies, there is little evidence to expect that this is true. Gottlieb (2016) finds evidence that a civics course administered in Mali raised expectations and improved sanctioning of poorly performing politicians, a promising finding for advancing democratic accountability. Yet, many citizens across democracies likely lack such a social reference point by which to hold their representatives accountable. Evidence that any gap between expectations and provision of services decreases level of satisfaction illustrates that individuals with low expectations should be easily satisfied (Van Ryzin 2006; Roch and Poister 2006; James 2009). This leaves room for politicians to perform poorly without facing any electoral consequences. Svolik (2013) argues that low or "pessimistic expectations" can lead to democratic breakdown as citizens fail to hold politicians accountable. What types of existing phenomenon might have the capacity to raise expectations and by extension bolster accountability?

Outside of individuals' own life experiences, information has the capacity to shape expectations. Information shortcuts enable individuals to make "informed decisions" without

expending money or time to inform themselves (Downs 1957; Lupia and McCubbins 1998).[5] There is evidence indicating that information from certain sources can be incredibly influential. Information from individuals within one's social network is especially persuasive (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Druckman, Levendusky, and McLain 2018). Information linked to a source that individuals know and trust is salient (Boas and Hidalgo 2019; Dionne 2018). Credibility also leads information to be more influential (Banerjee, Kumar, Pande, and Su 2011; Humphreys and Weinstein 2012; Dunning et al. 2019). "Comparative yardsticks" were promoted by Salmon (1987) as a tool that individuals should use to meaningfully compare their government services to that of others. He highlighted that these yardsticks would enable individuals to better hold politicians accountable (Salmon 1987). Indeed, yardsticks or "social reference points" have been shown in more recent work to help voters evaluate policy (Linos 2011; Kayser and Peress 2012; Hansen, Olsen and Beck 2015, Gottlieb 2016).

Individuals often perpetuate cognitive biases due to shared geographic, social, and political factors (Van de Walle, 2007; Ichino and Nathan 2013; Horowitz and Long 2016). These biases might work against demanding better provision of services if low provision is the norm and expectation. In areas of low provision, where a resident's social and geographic groups have always paid privately for private garbage removal, then continuing to pay will likely be the collective expectation. However, hearing from a trusted source abroad about tangible experiences with better access to services, like garbage removal, has the potential to counter these cognitive biases.

Evidence from political and social psychology highlights how I expect individuals to process such information. Individuals have affective (emotional) reactions to a range of issues

[5] Note that there is a vast literature on other types of political communication (such as communication from the media or a public authority figures), but that debate is outside the scope of this argument.

(or stimuli) (Betsch et al., 2001). As Kim (2011) highlights, repeated activations of affect reactions cause concepts to be positively or negatively charged. The strength and positive or negative connotation that affective reactions elicit impact how individuals remember a concept (Lodge and Taber, 2005). Affect has a powerful impact on how individuals process information, with emotional reactions entering the decision-making process before other type of information (Zajonc, 1984). I expect individuals who hear about their friends and family experiencing better access to services and quality of life abroad will have a negative affective reaction to such information because they are jealous. This reaction should get stronger as exposure increases and be easily recalled into memory in response to related stimuli.

Because social remittances provide an informational shortcut, are persuasive, have the potential to counteract cognitive biases, are perceived as credible, address salient issues, and elicit affective reactions, I argue that social remittances cause recipients to form *credible yardsticks*. Building on Salmon's (1987) "comparative yardstick" and evidence that comparisons help voters evaluate government policy (Linos 2011; Kayer and Peress 2012, Gottlieb 2016), I conceptualize the "credible yardstick". I define the credible yardstick as a reference point that individuals believe is real and to which they compare their own service provision. I highlight that social remittances are a naturally occurring, influential source of information that cause individuals to form credible yardsticks, because recipients receive information from a source that they find credible. Experimental evidence from political science supports this argument, finding evidence that cross-national yardstick comparisons (or social reference points) to Sweden strongly influence voters in Denmark, especially when Denmark is cast in a negative light relative to Sweden (Hansen, Olsen and Beck 2015). Evidence from the public administration literature also shows that comparison to public services in other locales impacts evaluation of

government performance (Charbonneau and Van Ryzin 2015; Olsens 2017). Satisfaction with government provision of services is a function of the difference between the actual performance of the government and the individual's expectations (Van Ryzin 2006; Roch and Poister 2006; James 2009). Hence, if expectations increase but performance remains the same, satisfaction with services (and by extension the government) should go down. In contrast, those without a credible yardstick are likely to remain neutral or have a more favorable view of their government and services, especially for individuals who receive monetary remittances but no social remittances.

I expect the credible yardsticks formed by social remittances to raise expectations for comparable service provision. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate how I expect this process to occur when services are inadequate or absent compared to a credible yardstick generated based on knowledge of services experienced abroad. In both figures, the lower yardstick represents the services that individuals are hearing about from their emigrant contacts abroad and the credible yardstick that they form as a result. The upper yardstick represents comparatively inadequate services (Figure 1) or the absence of comparable services (Figure 2) that individuals have access to at home. Both comparing this credible yardstick to a service that is completely absent at home or a service that is comparably inadequate at home should cause an expectations gap that motivates individuals to have higher expectations and become harsher evaluators of their existing services.

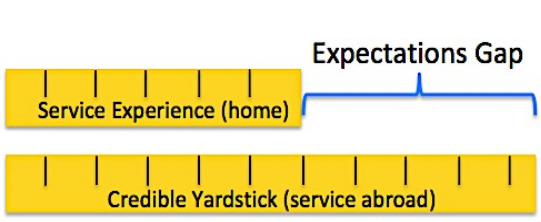

Figure 5: Lower Service vs. Credible Yardstick

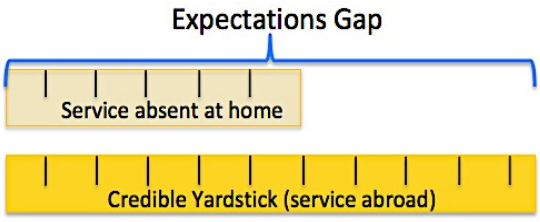

Figure 6: No Service vs. Credible Yardstick

The credible yardstick generated by social remittances provides a new reference point to measure existing service provisions (or lack thereof) against. I expect recipients to change their expectations in favor of services that would raise their quality of life or lower the gap between their own service provision and the experience of their friends and family members living abroad. For example, if social remittance recipients live in a municipality with challenges in accessing safe reliable water and they hear about easy access to safe reliable water from their friends and family abroad, their expectations that the government provide access to potable water should increase. Hence I argue that,

Hypothesis 1: Social remittances should be associated with a higher expectation for government policies that promote citizens' well-being.

A) As monetary remittance recipients' exposure to social remittances increases, I expect this to be positively associated with expectations for government.

As the expectations gap between the credible yardstick and service provision increases, I expect individuals to be more critical evaluators of their existing government and services. When social remittances generate credible yardsticks, this should yield higher expectations for services and lower evaluation of existing services.

I expect these reactions to be conditioned by the circumstances in which individuals live. Maslow's (1962) idea that the most basic of human needs (food) must be met in order for alternate needs (such as personal achievement) to become motivating provides a helpful framework for understanding how I anticipate the expectations gap to yield varied priorities for government services based on the quality of life of individual respondents. For example, an individual without access to adequate food would likely prioritize malnutrition as a major issue,

while an individual who has access to enough food will have concerns about another policy such as education. Both reflect a higher prioritization of government services, and I expect social remittances to elicit support for prioritizing those issues despite different circumstances across various countries.

On the contrary, without a credible yardstick to which to compare their services, I expect individuals to have lower expectations that the government should promote citizen well-being or livelihood. Without a credible yardstick to compare their own service provision to, they do not form an expectations gap. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate that without the credible yardstick comparison, individuals likely compare their services (whether government-provided or private) to what they already know and experience. In the absence of a credible yardstick, the strongest reference point for individuals is their prior personal experience and the norms of service experience within their local social network (Salmons 1987). As illustrated by Figure 3, these yardsticks likely are not as clear to individuals as those that they hear about from a friend or family member who is intentionally comparing new service experiences to those that they are familiar with. If poor public transit has been a shared, lifelong, and multi-generational experience, then individuals may accept it as the norm without question and likely hear about it regularly and anecdotally. I expect a similar phenomenon for individuals who are used to substituting for absent services, such as an absolute absence of public transportation options. I expect that individuals who are not exposed to social remittances do not form credible yardsticks or the expectations gap that recipients form. This means that they should be more satisfied than social remittance recipients with existing services.

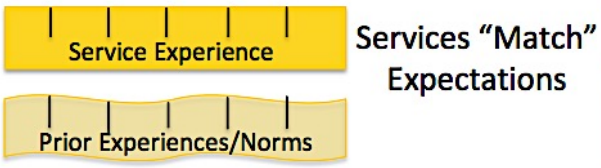

Figure 7: No Substitution, yardstick unclear/ based on local norms

Figure 8: Substitution, yardstick as experience and local norms

Additionally, monetary remittances in the absence of social remittances should not alter expectations (because they lack a credible yardstick) but should enable an increase in private spending (including on substitution for services). For example, individuals with enough resources can pay for private education to improve their living conditions in substitution for missing government-provided services. Indeed, this point may help explain why some scholars link monetary remittances to stronger accountability for government officials, while others link it to weaker accountability. Monetary remittances may empower political involvement (Tyburski 2012; Escribà-Folch et al. 2015) not lead to disengagement (Abdih et al. 2012; Ahmed 2012, 2013) dependent on regime type (Easton and Montinola 2017). I emphasize that social remittances may help shed light on whether migrants are good or bad for political accountability in origin countries (Abdih et al. 2012; Doyle 2015). In short, I expect monetary remittance recipients who are not exposed to social remittances to have a lower expectations gap and a higher evaluation of existing services and government (potentially leading to service substitution and disengagement) than those exposed to social remittances. As exposure to social remittances increases, I expect that monetary remittance recipients should have higher expectations and a lower evaluation of their existing government and services, increasing the likelihood that they will not be content to substitute and/or disengage. This could potentially motivate individuals to hold their government officials accountable.

I argue that as social remittances increase in the presence of monetary remittances, this will correlate to a lower evaluation of government by the remittance recipients. The contrast between the credible yardstick that social remittances generate and government services in the recipients' countries should be highly motivating. For individuals who receive monetary remittances and want the freedom to spend them as they choose rather than feeling that they must spend them to replace inadequate or absent government services (such as education), this effect should be especially strong. As Figure 5 shows, individuals who "spend monetary remittances" in the absence of social remittance should not form an expectations gap, and I expect these individuals to be comparatively satisfied. However individuals that use monetary remittances to substitute for poor or missing government provision of services, and receive social remittances, will have an expectations gap and resent the need to spend their monetary remittances on private services. For example, if individuals must spend the majority of their monetary remittances on their children's education and at the same time, regularly hear about the excellent free education that their nieces are getting abroad, this should motivate action. I expect credible yardsticks to be impactful regardless of whether individuals are paying to substitute for missing services or not.

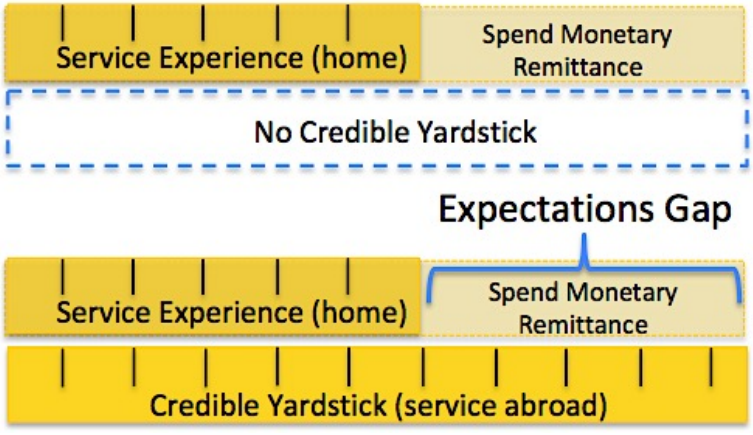

Figure 9

Despite the ability to substitute for services that often accompanies monetary remittances, individuals will not want to spend their money on substitution when they have formed a credible yardstick and will have lower evaluations of their existing government and the services that it provides. Therefore, I hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 2: Social remittance should be negatively associated with evaluation of government and existing services.

a) As monetary remittance recipients' exposure to social remittances increases, this should be negatively associated with evaluation of government and services.

Next, I present a research design to test my hypotheses.

RESEARCH DESIGN

I use observational data from the Latin American public opinion project (AmericasBarometer) to identify whether receiving social remittances correlates to specific policy expectations and a lower evaluation of government and existing services. Latin America is an ideal location to test whether social remittances from a country with a higher level of public services impact political behavior, because the vast majority of emigrants move to developed countries (United Nations 2010).

At the time of this writing, the most comprehensive cross-national dataset that includes a measure of communication with a migrant abroad (social remittances) is the AmericasBarometer Latin American Public Opinion Project data from 2008-2010.[6] Hence, I utilize the 2008 and 2010 waves of the AmericasBarometer public opinion project to empirically evaluate my

[6]I am grateful to the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) and its major supporters (the United States Agency for International Development, the Inter-American Development Bank, and Vanderbilt University) for making the data available.
Accessed at: https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/about-americasbarometer.php.

argument and operationalize most of the variables as follows. The unit of observation is the individual, and the number of observations range from approximately 21,000 to 59,000 depending on the model. To my knowledge, this dataset includes one of the only existing cross-national measures of frequency of communication with a migrant abroad. I utilize this question to operationalize the key independent variable of interest: whether an individual is a recipient of social remittances. I operationalize this variable in three ways: the first includes a dichotomous variable indicating whether or not an individual communicates with a close contact abroad (0/1). The second is a categorical variable representing frequency of communication (from never to daily 0-3) and the third rescales it from 0-4. The other main independent variable of interest is monetary remittances. I expect that monetary remittances will condition evaluation of government and existing services.

To test hypothesis 1 (expectations), I utilize questions about what the government should be responsible for, including jobs, the well-being of citizens, and limiting inequality (following a similar strategy as Meseguer et al. 2016). Each variable is a categorical response variable ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). I expect receipt of social remittances to be positively correlated to expectations of the government.

To test hypothesis 2 (evaluation of government and services), I rely on a measure of government efficacy that combines individuals' ratings of how their government fights poverty and unemployment and promotes citizen security. I construct the government efficacy index again based on a approach used by Meseguer et al. (2016), aggregating individuals' ratings of how their government fights poverty, unemployment, and promotes citizen security. Though Meseguer et al. (2016) found social remittances to be positively associated with government

efficacy, I expect that their interactive effect on perceptions of government efficacy will be negative.

Additionally, I construct an index of satisfaction with specific local services, including dichotomous variables for whether individuals are satisfied with public transport, streets, local education, local air, local water, local healthcare, local housing, general area, traffic, sidewalks, parks, and facilities. Based on my argument, I expect that more frequent communication with a close contact abroad in the presence of monetary remittances will be negatively correlated to evaluation of local services. I treat these indices as continuous estimates and use a standard OLS regression (clustered by country).

Finally, I utilize a question on evaluating the services that the municipality is providing. The AmericasBarometer question gauges responses from (1) very good, to (5) very bad. I utilize these responses to construct a measure that allows more intuitive interpretation of the results, rating municipal services from (0) very bad to (4) very good. I expect more frequent social remittances will be negatively correlated to evaluation of municipal services for monetary remittance recipients. As the key independent variable, I utilize social remittance frequency categories ranging from 0 (never) to 3 (every day). I expect that individuals who receive monetary remittances will have lower evaluations of municipal services as social remittances increase.

I treat all of the independent variable indices as continuous estimates and employ a standard OLS regression with interaction terms when appropriate. I utilize the svyset command in Stata to weight the data properly based on survey design considerations. I also employ country and year fixed effects in order to account for within-country and within-year variation. A Table listing the operationalization of all variables is listed in Appendix 6.

Throughout the empirical analyses, I employ a standard set of control variables based on the political behavior literature. They include: political interest, national economy, personal economy, a control for living in an urban area (vs. rural), age (and age squared), female, years of education, and a socio-economic index comprised of their responses to having access to different household items (such as a television). The socio-economic index is used to avoid the potential bias of self-reported income and capture access to media sources.

Individuals with a higher-level of political interest should be more aware of the success of particular policies. It may reflect level of engagement with the existing policies and institutions. It could also serve as an intervening variable between social remittances, which may raise political interest, and evaluation (Pérez-Armendáriz 2014). To account for this, I employ a scale ranging from 0 (no interest) to 4 (a high level of interest). Controlling for perception of national and personal economy addresses the likely correlation between economic growth and standard of living. As perception of national and personal economies rise, I expect them to be positively correlated to evaluation of existing government and services.

Next, I provide the results of my analyses and discuss the implications for my argument.

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1: Expectations

The baseline models on individual expectations show that social remittances are positively associated to expecting the government to be responsible for jobs, well-being of citizens, and mitigating inequality (Table 1). Contrary to Meseguer et al. (2016), I also find evidence of a negative association between monetary remittances and expectations for government, leaving room for the possibility of disengagement for monetary remittance

recipients. It is possible that the differences in our findings are due to my use of the svyset weighting scheme, which was specified in a recent research note as essential to ensuring the accuracy of results when utilizing AmericasBarometer data (Castorena 2021). These findings are robust to alternate operationalization for frequency of communication and to utilizing monetary remittance dependence instead of receipt of monetary remittances.

Table 1: Social Remittances and Government Expectations

VARIABLES	Government responsible for creating jobs	Government responsible for well-being	Government should reduce inequality
Social remittance freq.	0.045***	0.041***	0.023**
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Monetary remittances	-0.071***	-0.102***	-0.074***
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.028)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Countries	22	22	22
Observations	55,724	55,501	55,335
R-squared	0.081	0.059	0.062

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

For the interaction model, I break out the categories of "social remittance frequency" (ranging from 0-4) following the approach of Meseguer at al. (2017). This allows us to observe the interaction coefficient for each category of communication. Contrary to my expectations, the results of the interaction models show a negative and statistically significant correlation between social remittances and expectations for government for monetary remittance recipients at lower levels of communication (Table 2). Figure 6 based on the model for government addressing inequality shows that as social remittances increase receipt of monetary remittances is negatively

associated with expecting the government to reduce inequality. However, as Figure 6 shows, for individuals who score a 3 on the frequency of social remittances scale, the association between social remittances and expectations is positive for monetary remittance recipients. This is in line with my theoretical expectations, but the results leave room for further exploration. Graphs on the marginal effects of monetary remittances as social remittances increase are nearly identical for each expectation. Results are robust to alternate operationalization for frequency of communication (0-3) and assuming that the variable in continuous.

Table 2: Interaction Models and Government Expectations

VARIABLES	Government responsible for creating jobs	Government responsible for well-being	Government should reduce inequality
Social Remittance Freq. (1)	0.045	0.036	0.033
	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.033)
Social Remittance Freq. (2)	0.090**	0.085**	0.022
	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.038)
Social Remittance Freq. (3)	0.093**	0.093**	-0.021
	(0.042)	(0.045)	(0.043)
Social Remittance Freq. (4)	0.052	0.148	0.211**
	(0.106)	(0.099)	(0.092)
Monetary Remittances	0.005	-0.031	0.034
	(0.043)	(0.044)	(0.045)
Social Remittance Freq. (1)	-0.311***	-0.256***	-0.384***
X Monetary	(0.088)	(0.090)	(0.089)
Social Remittance Freq. (2)	-0.157**	-0.132*	-0.205***
X Monetary	(0.070)	(0.073)	(0.074)
Social Remittance Freq. (3)	0.029	0.033	0.088
X Monetary	(0.065)	(0.068)	(0.068)
Social Remittance Freq. (4)	0.151	-0.086	-0.183
X Monetary	(0.127)	(0.127)	(0.122)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Countries	22	22	22
Observations	55,478	55,256	55,098
R-squared	0.082	0.060	0.064

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

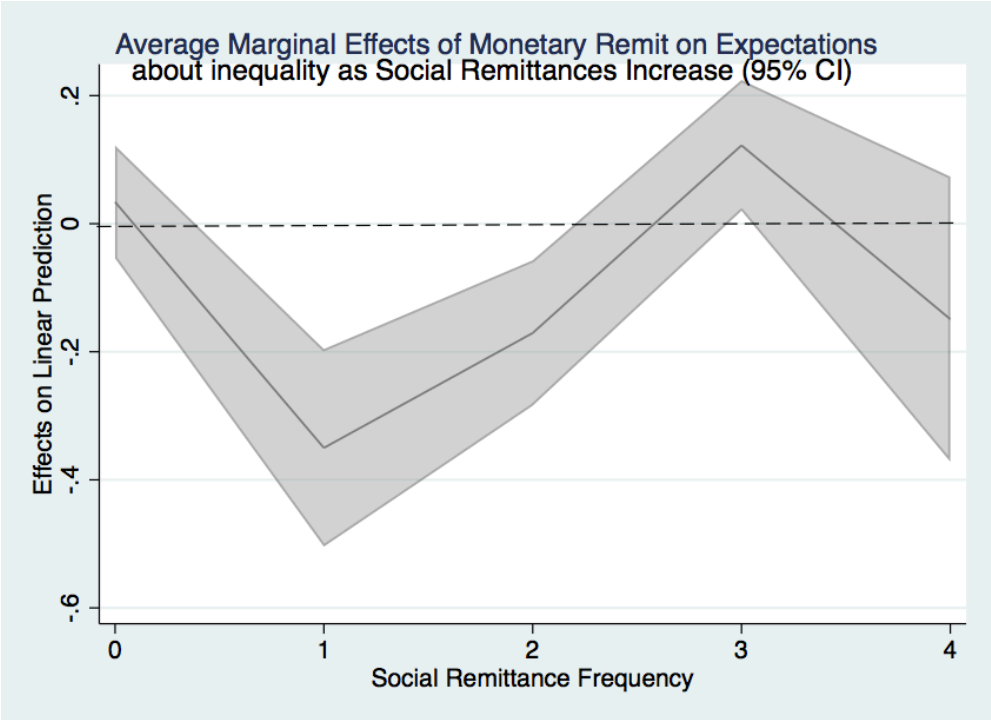

Figure 6

Next, I utilize a measure of high household dependence on monetary remittances to identify whether there is a potential income effect masking the relationship in the prior models. Individuals who have higher incomes likely have more freedom to spend their monetary remittances as they wish. Utilizing high dependence on monetary remittances as opposed to receipt of monetary remittances will focus the analysis on the group of monetary remittance recipients who need that money in order for their households to function. This indicates that they likely have little freedom to spend monetary remittances as they choose. Table 3 illustrates that the interaction term for monetary remittance dependence and the frequency for social remittances (3) is significant and positively correlated to expecting the government to be responsible for creating jobs and for the well-being of citizens.

Table 3: Monetary Dependence, Social Remittances, and Government Expectations

VARIABLES	Government responsible for creating jobs	Government responsible for well-being	Government should reduce inequality
Social Remittance Freq. (1)	-0.018	-0.025	-0.031
	(0.031)	(0.033)	(0.031)
Social Remittance Freq. (2)	0.054*	0.025	-0.037
	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.030)
Social Remittance Freq. (3)	0.061*	0.055*	0.021
	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.031)
Social Remittance Freq. (4)	0.113*	0.067	0.140**
	(0.067)	(0.069)	(0.062)
Monetary Remittance	-0.101	-0.064	0.170*
Dependence high (1)	(0.093)	(0.098)	(0.092)
Social Remittance Freq. (1)	-0.133	-0.051	-0.583**
X Monetary	(0.194)	(0.185)	(0.272)
Social Remittance Freq. (2)	-0.147	-0.017	-0.299**
X Monetary	(0.123)	(0.123)	(0.130)
Social Remittance Freq. (3)	0.359***	0.275**	0.030
X Monetary	(0.113)	(0.111)	(0.114)
Social Remittance Freq. (4)	0.246*	0.074	-0.245
	(0.148)	(0.159)	(0.154)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	55,389	55,168	55,011
R-squared	0.082	0.060	0.063

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

A similar pattern emerges in Figure 7, illustrating that at lower levels of frequency of social remittances, there is some evidence of a negative association between social remittances and expectations for monetary remittance recipients. However, as frequency of contact rises, dependence on monetary remittances is positively associated to expectations for government. The marginal effects for the other dependent variables are nearly identical.

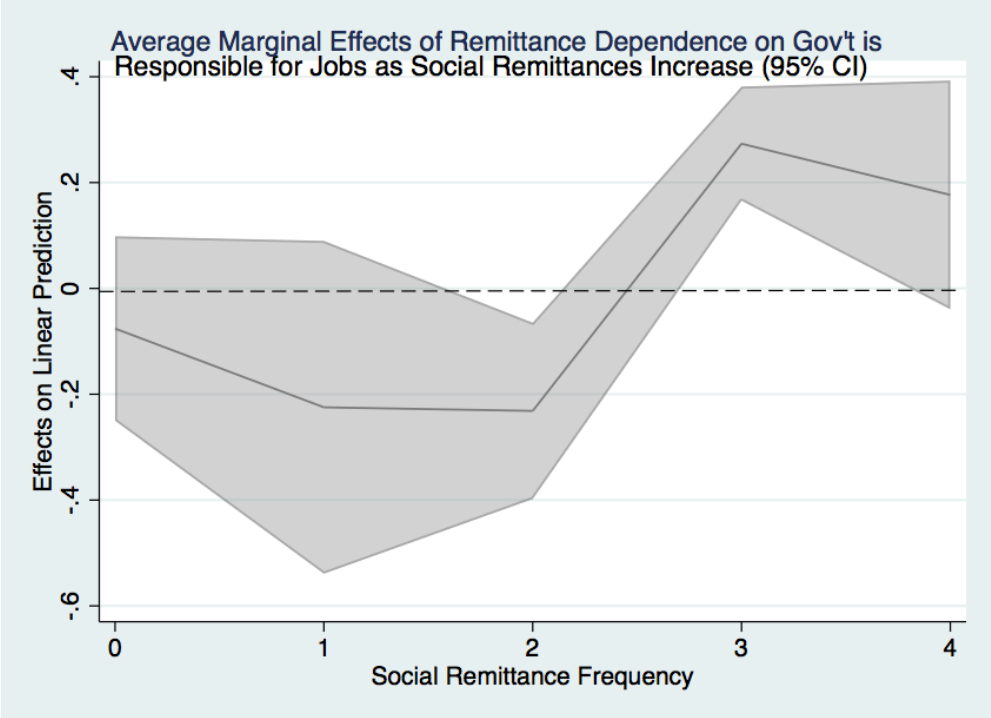

Figure 7

Taken together, these findings provide some support for a positive association between social remittances and expectations for government. However, they also leave room to further analyses that focus on the conditions under which monetary remittance recipients have either higher or lower expectations for their governments. Future research on this topic may help shed light on whether social remittances influence the expectations of monetary remittance recipients for their government officials.

Hypothesis 2: Evaluation of Government and Services

Table 4 includes individual perceptions of government efficacy as the dependent variable of interest. I expect that as social remittances increase, this should be associated with lower evaluations of government for monetary remittance recipients. Without social remittances, monetary remittances are positively associated to evaluation of government, but I argue that

monetary remittance recipients will have a harsher evaluation of government as social remittances increase.

Table 4: Government Efficacy

VARIABLES	Government Efficacy	Government Efficacy
Social Remittances-1	0.0628**	0.0723**
(*Reference category 0*)	(0.0268)	(0.0287)
Social Remittances-2	0.00267	0.0835**
	(0.0283)	(0.0356)
Social Remittances-3	0.0303	0.0584
	(0.0296)	(0.0402)
Monetary Remittances	0.0282	0.175***
(*reference 0*)	(0.0252)	(0.0416)
Social Remit 1*Monetary		-0.161**
		(0.0669)
Social Remit 2*Monetary		-0.304***
		(0.0640)
Social Remit 3*Monetary		-0.180***
		(0.0618)
Intercept	3.149***	3.146***
	(0.0720)	(0.0719)
Controls	Yes	Yes
Observations	54,796	54,796
R-squared	0.199	0.199

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The results in Table 4 support my argument. Increases in social remittances are negatively correlated to evaluation of government for individuals who receive monetary remittances. Separately, monetary remittances and social remittances are positively associated with evaluation of government. Figure 8 illustrates diverging linear predictions for monetary remittance recipients and non-recipients as social remittances increase. Monetary remittance recipients have a lower evaluation of government than non-recipients as social remittances

increase. The average marginal effects in Figure 9 indicate that for those who receive monetary remittances, this association between social remittances and evaluation of government is negative and significant at levels 1 and 2 of the categorical response variable. The effect is not statistically significant at the highest level of social remittances, potentially because of the smaller number of observations. These findings support Hypothesis 2, that as social remittances increase, monetary remittance recipients will have a lower evaluation of government. A robustness check utilizing monetary remittance dependence yields nearly identical results with a negative statistically significant relationship between the interaction terms (for remittance dependence and social remittances) and evaluation of government (Appendix 2).

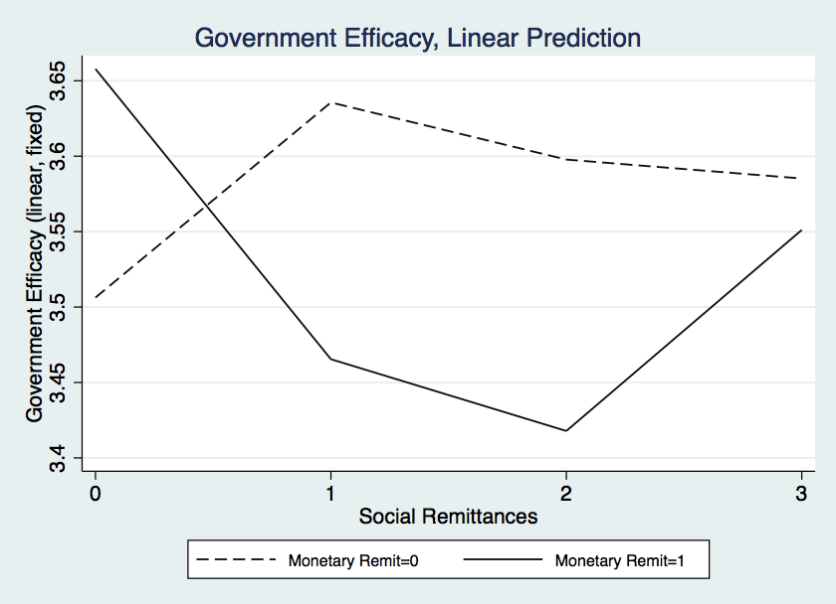

Figure 8

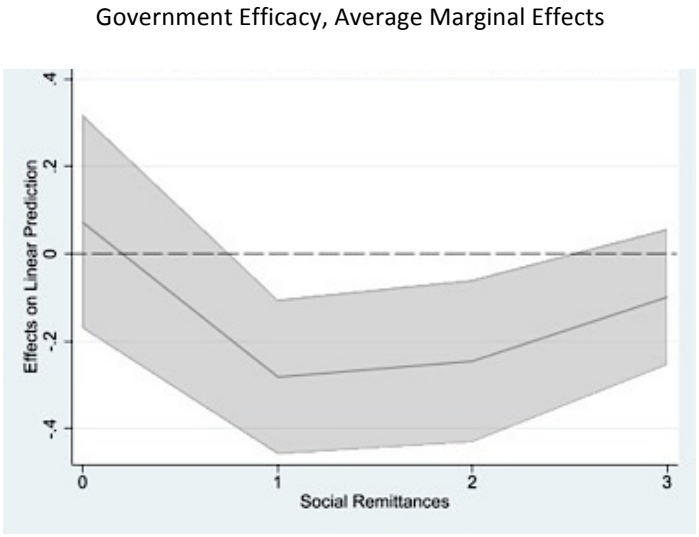

Figure 9

Indeed, exposure to social remittances is correlated to lower evaluation of government and existing services for recipients of monetary remittances. This supports the overall argument that social remittances yield credible yardsticks that cause individuals to more critically evaluate their government when monetary remittances offer them some ability to substitute for poor services. Next, I present the model on satisfaction with local services.

Table 5 provides support for my argument by illustrating a similar relationship between receipt of social remittances and evaluation of local services for monetary remittance recipients. In the absence of social remittances, monetary remittances are not a statistically significant predictor for evaluation of local services. However, as social remittances increase for monetary remittance recipients, there is a significant negative correlation to evaluation of local services. Indeed, the interaction term for the second category of receipt of social remittance is highly significant and negative for recipients of monetary remittances.

Table 5: Local Services

VARIABLES	Evaluation of Local Services	Evaluation of Local Services
Social Remittances-1	-0.0706	0.160*
(*Reference category 0*)	(0.0964)	(0.0910)
Social Remittances-2	0.0265	0.382***
	(0.101)	(0.112)
Social Remittances-3	-0.0890	-0.0627
	(0.105)	(0.131)
Monetary Remittances	-0.00271	0.224
	(0.0871)	(0.159)
Social Remit 1*Monetary		-0.378
		(0.270)
Social Remit 2*Monetary		-0.724***
		(0.232)
Social Remit 3*Monetary		-0.0131
		(0.217)
Constant	6.614***	6.032***
	(0.252)	(0.173)
Controls	Yes	Yes
Observations	25,271	21,271
R-squared	0.104	0.039

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The following graphs illustrate this relationship. The linear predications for monetary remittance recipients and non-recipients diverge (Figure 10). Figure 11 illustrates that social remittances at the categorical frequency of 2 are negatively and significantly correlated to individuals' evaluation of their local services. These findings provide additional support for hypothesis 2.

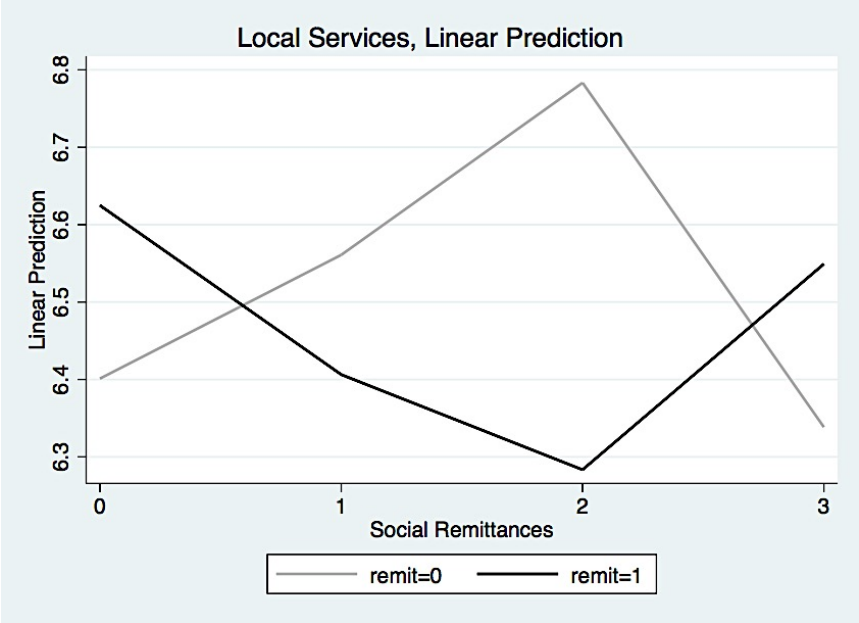

Figure 10

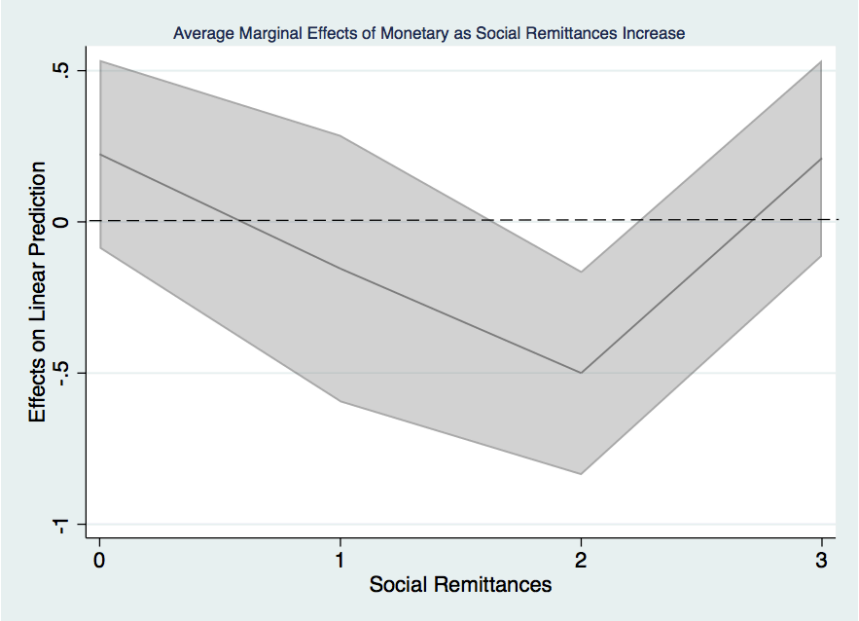

Figure 11: Local Services

Next, I present results for evaluation of how the municipality is providing services (Table 6). I expect that as exposure to social remittances increases, this should negatively correlate to evaluation of municipal services for monetary remittance recipients.

Table 6: Municipal Services

VARIABLES	Municipal Services	Municipal Services
Social Remittances-1	-0.0203	-0.02
(*Reference category 0*)	(0.0170)	(0.02)
Social Remittances-2	0.0484***	0.07***
	(0.0176)	(0.02)
Social Remittances-3	0.00521	-0.03
	(0.0187)	(0.03)
Monetary Remittances	0.00623	0.02
	(0.0162)	(0.03)
Social Remit 1*Monetary		-0.09**
		(0.04)
Social Remit 2*Monetary		-0.12***
		(0.04)
Social Remit 3*Monetary		0.03
		(0.04)
Constant	1.545***	1.63***
	(0.0392)	(0.03)
Controls	Yes	Yes
Observations	52,312	52,312
Countries	22	22
R-squared	0.092	0.07

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

The results from this model lend additional support to my argument. As exposure to social remittances increases, monetary remittance recipients have a lower evaluation of existing services for the scores of 1 and 2 on the social remittances index. Interestingly, social remittances in the absence of monetary remittances are significant and positively associated with evaluation of municipal services when frequency of social remittances =2. This is likely due to a difference in quality of life (and/or income) between monetary remittance recipients and non-recipients, as is supported by prior work.

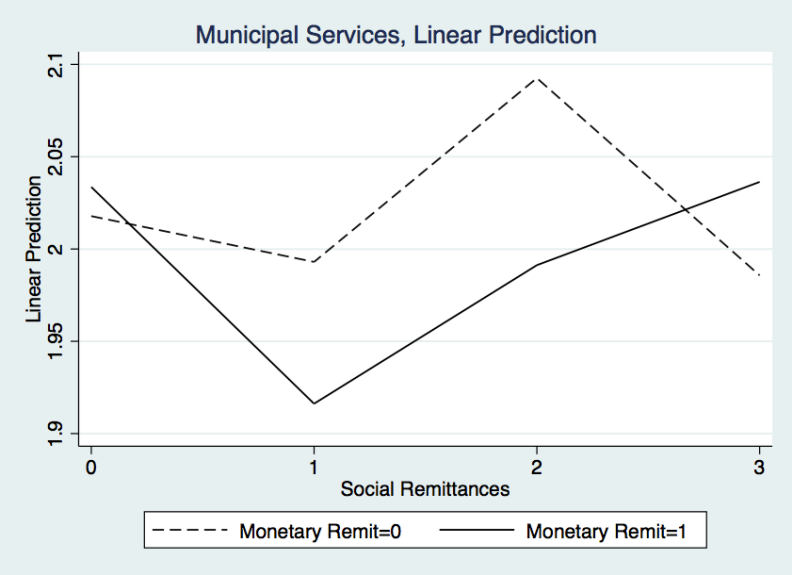

Figure 12

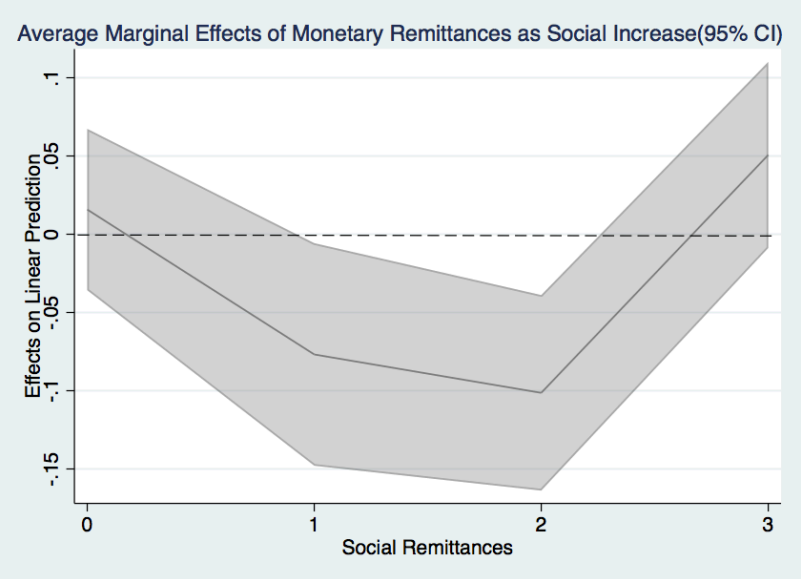

Figure 13

The results are even more persuasive in the model utilizing dependence on monetary remittances and a model utilizing a 5-category variable for frequency of social remittances (Appendix 4). While the 5-category variable serves as a robustness check on operationalization, the model utilizing remittance dependence instead of receipt of remittances bolsters the support

for my argument. When individuals need monetary remittances and receive social remittances, combined these variables are strongly negatively correlated to evaluation of municipal services. I argue that this reflects a response to the credible yardstick comparison between the services that they have access to (where inadequacies may require them to pay for substitution, and/or need monetary remittances) and the services that their contacts experience abroad.

Interestingly, basic OLS models without an interaction term provide some evidence that independently, social remittances may be positively associated to evaluation of government and existing services. It is possible that this reflects a better socio-economic position for individuals who are in frequent communication with a contact abroad but do not need to receive monetary remittances from them. Additionally, it could reflect social network benefits gained from joining a community of individuals who are in contact with a relative abroad. Especially for individuals who do not need monetary remittances from their contact abroad, joining this community could yield major life benefits (such as shared community and group project that are often linked to emigrants abroad). This relationship demands further evaluation, which I hope to address in future work.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

I argue that social remittances should cause recipients to form credible yardsticks, raising their expectations for government provided services and lowering their evaluations of existing government and services. These findings offer support for my argument, with some caveats: social remittances are positively correlated to expectations for government, but not for all monetary remittance recipients. I do provide extensive support that monetary remittance recipients (especially those who are dependent on monetary remittances) become increasingly

critical of existing government and services as exposure to social remittances increases. Taken together, these findings suggest that social remittances cause credible yardsticks that impact expectations and evaluation of government and services. However, for recipients of monetary remittances, my evidence is not strong enough to rule out the possibility that they prefer substitution or private services rather than expecting more from their government. I hope to gain further leverage on this question by employing an experiment in future work.

Models 1 through 3 (Table 1) illustrate a strong positive correlation between social remittances and expectations for government and a strong negative one for monetary remittances. The interaction terms in table 2 show that receiving monetary remittances is negatively associated with expectations for government even at the lower levels of social remittances. Only the second highest score for frequency of social remittances is the interaction term positively associated with government expectations for monetary remittance recipients. Though the evidence suggests that my argument is plausible, the relationship between social remittances and expectations demands further evaluation.

The models on Government Efficacy (Table 4), Local Services (Table 5), and Municipal Services (Table 6) support Hypothesis 2, indicating that for individuals who are monetary remittance recipients, social remittances are negatively associated with evaluation of government and existing services. In addition to evaluation of government, social remittances are negatively correlated to lower evaluation of local services and lower evaluation of how well the municipality is providing services. The support is even stronger for several of the models when utilizing remittance dependence instead of remittance recipient (Appendix). This provides additional support for my argument, that because as individuals are more dependent on monetary remittances (reflecting poorer living conditions), the credible yardstick generated by social

remittances will cause them to be harsher evaluators of existing government and services. This is contrary to some prior findings within the debate and supports my argument that social remittance recipients compare their situation to the *credible yardstick* provided by their contact abroad and view their government services more harshly. If social remittance recipients are generating *credible yardsticks* to compare their situation to, then it follows that they should have lower evaluations of government and services when their own situation is not ideal.

I have provided strong correlational evidence in support of my argument which illuminates how social remittances impact whether monetary remittance recipients become more critical of their existing government and services. However, I have not provided support of a causal relationship social remittances and expectations or evaluation in this paper. In future work, I plan to evaluate whether social remittances have a causal effect on political behavior. To move this research agenda forward, I am currently planning to implement a survey experiment in WhatsApp utilizing the automated chat application survey methodology of Fei et al. (2020) in order to identify whether social remittances have a causal impact on preferences and political behavior. This portion of my research agenda has the capacity to yield the largest cross-national survey experiment on social remittances to date. The experiment will be a major contribution to the literature and policymakers' understanding of how transnational communication impacts politics.

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APPENDIX 1

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Public Services	259803	.033	.179	0	1
Basic Services	226629	.205	.404	0	1
Gov efficacy	184676	2.581	1.62	.333	7
Acting out	222019	.983	.8	0	6
Social Remittance	89611	.232	.422	0	1
Social Remit Freq	89611	.473	.948	0	3
Monetary Remit	202455	.147	.354	0	1
High Monetary Remit	188305	.022	.148	0	1
Interest	201698	1.062	.978	0	3
National Economy	151083	1.537	.944	0	4
Personal Economy	139517	1.902	.845	0	4
Victim	92451	.163	.37	0	1
Safe	226629	1.66	.984	0	3
Employed	168095	.526	.499	0	1
Age	225958	39.063	15.746	16	112
Age sq	225958	1773.834	1424.22	256	12544
Female	226623	.509	.5	0	1
Education	222818	9.135	4.433	0	18
Married	148633	.581	.493	0	1
White	197482	.21	.408	0	1
SEStotal	226486	.536	.265	0	3
Control Corruption	226629	39.518	20.178	6.796	91.22
Gov Effectivness	226629	42.113	19.671	.962	86.058
HDI	159838	.698	.077	.455	.836
GDPgr	159838	2.218	3.432	-6.88	12.511

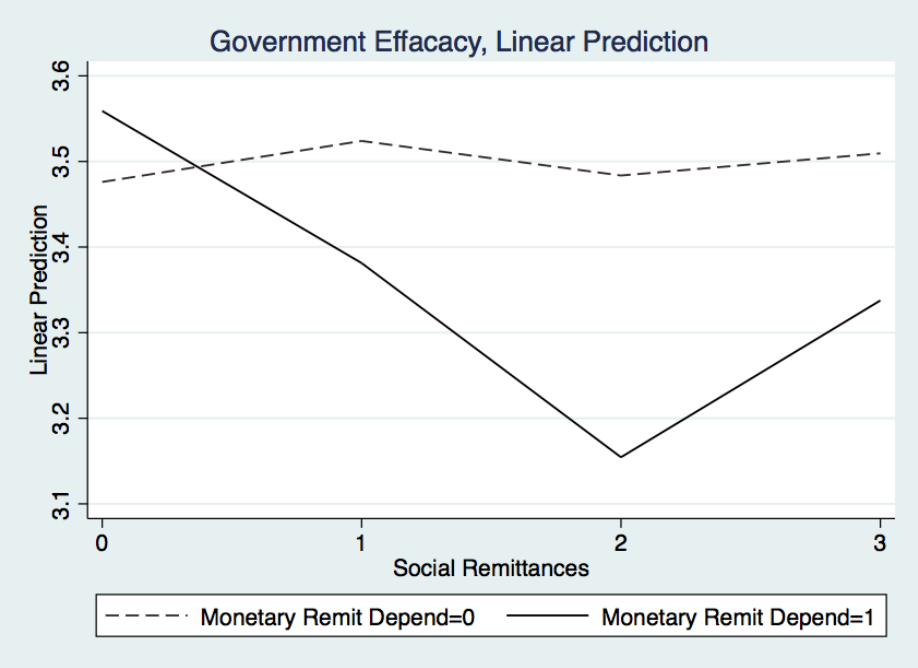
APPENDIX 2

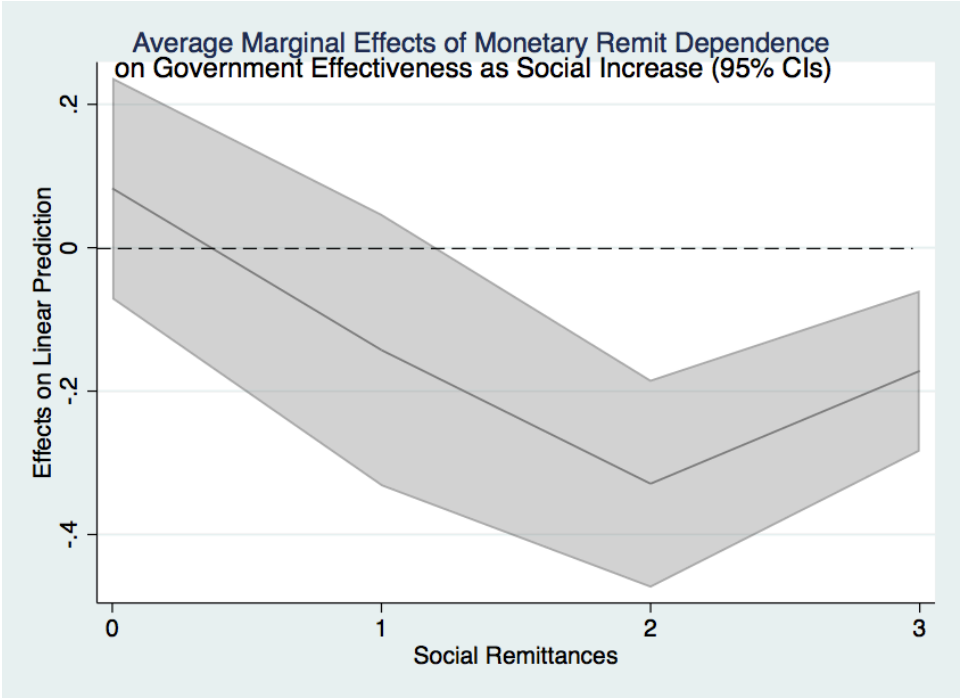
Monetary Dependence on Government Efficacy as Social Remittances Increase:

VARIABLES	Government Efficacy
Social Remittances-1	0.05*
(*Reference category 0*)	(0.03)
Social Remittances-2	0.01
	(0.03)
Social Remittances-3	0.03
	(0.03)
Monetary Remit Dependence	0.08

	(0.08)
Social Remit 1*Monetary Depend	-0.23*
	(0.12)
Social Remit 2*Monetary Depend	-0.41***
	(0.11)
Social Remit 3*Monetary Depend	-0.25***
	(0.10)
Constant	2.70***
	(0.06)
Controls	Yes
Observations	57,974
Countries	22
R-squared	0.13

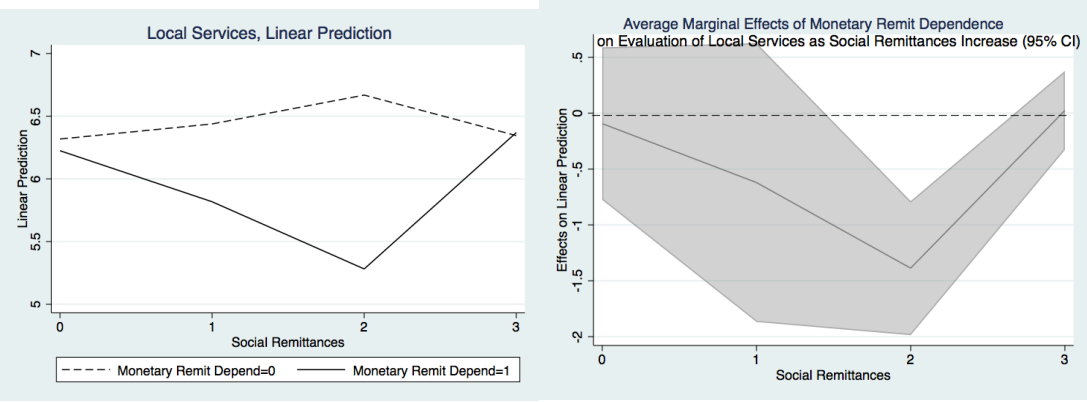
Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10





APPENDIX 3

Evaluation of local services by **monetary dependence** as social remittances increase:

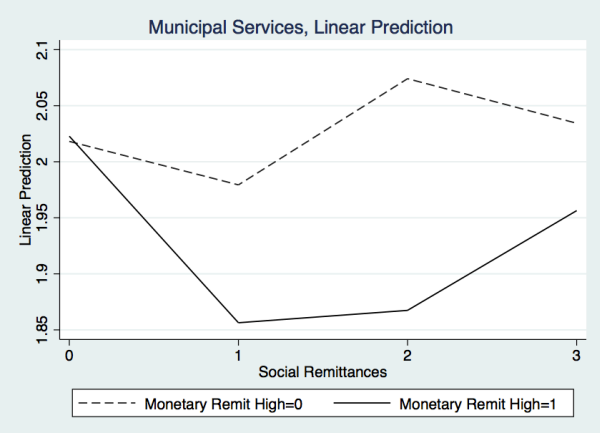


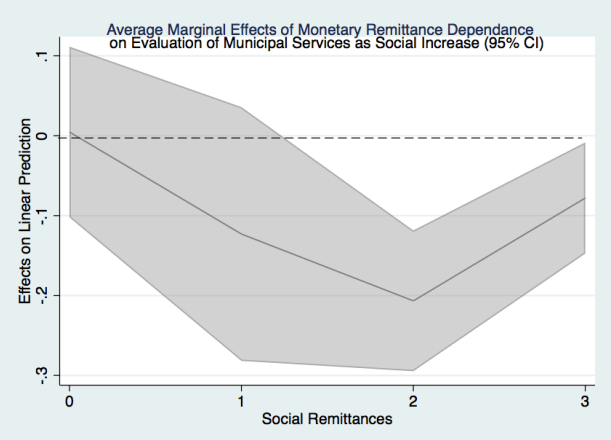
APPENDIX 4

Evaluation of Municipal Services by **Monetary Remittance Dependence** as Social Remittances Increase:

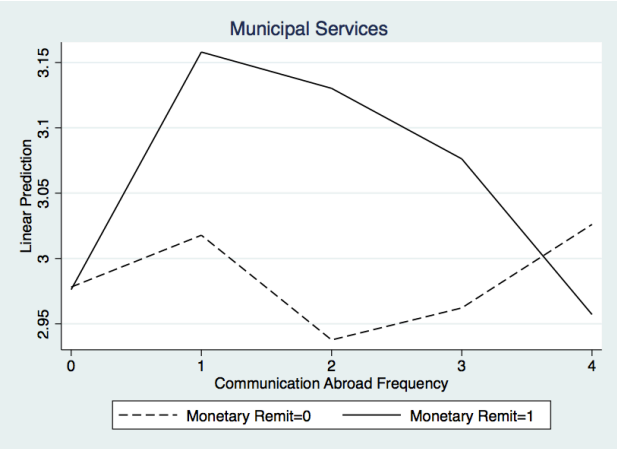
VARIABLES	Municipal Services
Social Remittances-1	-0.04**
(*Reference category 0*)	(0.02)
Social Remittances-2	0.06***
	(0.02)
Social Remittances-3	0.02
	(0.02)
Monetary Remit Dependence	0.00
	(0.05)
Social Remit 1*Monetary Depend	-0.13
	(0.09)
Social Remit 2*Monetary Depend	-0.21***
	(0.07)
Social Remit 3*Monetary Depend	-0.08
	(0.06)
Constant	1.64***
	(0.03)
Controls	Yes
Observations	55,355
Countries	22
R-squared	0.07

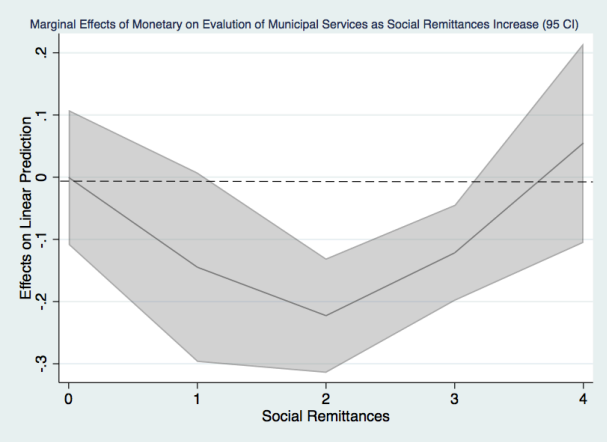
Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10





Evaluation of Municipal Services by Monetary Remittances as Social Remittance Increase (5 categories of Social Remittances):





APPENDIX 5

VARIABLES	Government Efficacy	Municipal Services
Social Remittances (1)	0.063**	-0.020
	(0.027)	(0.017)
Social Remittances (2)	0.003	0.048***
	(0.028)	(0.018)
Social Remittances (3)	0.030	0.005
	(0.030)	(0.019)
Monetary Remittances	0.028	0.006
	(0.025)	(0.016)
Controls	Yes	Yes
Countries	22	22
Observations	54,796	52,312
R-squared	0.199	0.092

APPENDIX 6

Variable	Operationalization	Source
Government responsible for creating jobs	The government should be responsible for jobs: Strongly disagree (1) to agree (7).	Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP). https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/docs/2008_Core_Questionnaire_English.pdf Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP). https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/docs/2010_Core_Questionnaire_English.pdf
Government responsible for well-being	The government should be responsible for the well-being of citizens: Strongly disagree (1) to agree (7).	
Government responsible for limiting inequality	The government should be responsible for limiting inequality: Strongly disagree (1) to agree (7).	
Government Efficacy	I construct the government efficacy index again based on a approach used by Meseguer et al. (2016), aggregating individuals' ratings of how their government fights poverty, unemployment, and promotes citizen security (each scored 0-7) then dividing by 3.	
Local Services	An aggregate index on whether individuals are satisfied with public transport, streets, local education, local air, local water, local healthcare, local housing, general area, traffic, sidewalks, parks, and facilities (0-12) from the 2008 data only.	
Municipal Services	What is the quality of municipal services from (0) very bad to (4) very good?	
Social Remittances	How often do you communicate with them? (contact abroad) From never (0) to once or twice a week or more (3).	
Social Remittance Frequency	How often do you communicate with them? (contact abroad) From never (0) to everyday (4).	
Monetary Remittances	Does individual receive money from migrant living abroad, dichotomous (yes=1)	
Monetary Dependence	To what extent does the income of this household depend on remittances from abroad? (A lot =1)	
Political interest	How much interest do you have in politics: a lot, some, little or none? (3-0)	
Political efficacy	Whether the government is interested in what "people like me think," ranging from no efficacy--the government doesn't care what people think (1) to high efficacy--the government really cares what people think (7)	
National economy	How would you rate your countries overall economic situation? From (0) very bad to (4) very good).	
Personal economy	How would you rate your personal economic situation? From (0) very bad to (4) very good).	
Age	Age & age squared	

Gender	Identify as female = 1	
Education	Years of education (0-18)	
Marital status	Married=1	
Urban versus rural	Urban=1	
Employment status	Employed=1	
Whether the individual identifies as white	White=1	
Socio-economic status	A scale of (0-3) based on the Cronbach's alpha statistic for whether individual households possess 1-14 household objects associated with economic states (television, refrigerator, **c**onventional telephone (not cellular), cellular telephone, vehicle, washing machine, microwave oven, motorcycle, indoor plumbing, **i**ndoor bathroom, computer)	

-CHAPTER 3-

Social Remittances, Credible Yardsticks, Institutionalized and Non-institutionalized Action

Abstract

How do social remittances (communication from contacts abroad) affect the political behavior of their contacts at home? I argue that social remittances are an influential yet understudied source of naturally occurring information that causes individuals to form *credible yardsticks*. I define *yardstick* as a reference point that allows individuals to compare the provision of services in their country with service provision elsewhere. Individuals find the yardstick *credible,* because it is informed by a trusted source. When social remittances come from a higher-income country, I expect recipients to utilize that information to raise their expectations for service provision, lower their evaluation of existing government services in their home country, and act to improve their lives dependent on their circumstances. I only expect individuals to take action within formal institutions when those institutions are reliable. Utilizing individual-level public-opinion data from the AmericasBarometer project, I identify support for my argument. Social remittances motivate action, and individuals respond by acting within institutions when they can rely on their governments but outside of them when they cannot. Additionally, social remittance recipients are less likely than non-recipients to respond to unreliable institutions by disengaging. These findings illuminate how social remittances are motivating for political participation and important to political behavior.

INTRODUCTION

How do social remittances, or the information that migrants send home from abroad, impact political behavior? Extensive debate exists on how migrants impact their countries of origin. The relationship between social remittances and political behavior is a recent topic of study. I emphasize that social remittances are an influential yet understudied form of information for political behavior, because they arrive from trusted contacts within individuals' social networks.

Evidence on how migrants impact their countries of origin via the money that they send home (monetary remittances) is contradictory (Yang and Choi 2007; Chami et al. 2008; Tyburski 2012; Adida and Girod 2011; Abdih et al. 2012; Ahmed 2012; Doyle 2015; Escribà-Folch et al. 2015; Easton and Montinola 2017; Bearce and Park 2019; Ley et al. 2019; Garcia and Maydom 2019; Bastiaens and Tirone 2019; Cordova and Hiskey 2019). There is evidence that monetary remittance recipients do not hold government officials accountable (Abdih et al. 2012), while other work identifies a positive impact on government accountability (Tyburski 2012). This project highlights that social remittances may be a key factor in how emigrants impact their origin countries.

Social remittances, or the social capital, knowledge, information, and ideas sent home from abroad (Levitt 1998), are likely relevant to how migrants impact their countries of origin. Interviews with individuals in Mexico contain information about institutions, civic responsibility, the rule of law and more in the emigrants' host countries (Pérez-Armendáriz 2014). A related project including interviews with Guatemalans shows that social remittances include topics surrounding quality of life and government services abroad (Prince n.d.). Cross-nationally, there is some evidence that social remittances from migrants living in democracies may increase the

likelihood of democratization (Miller and Peters 2018). In terms of expectations, there is evidence that social remittances are positively correlated to a higher demand for the state to protect the economy and individuals (Meseguer et al. 2016).

Prior work does link social remittances to political behavior. There is evidence that across six high migration states in Latin America, social remittances from the U.S. impact participation in local politics and engagement with political parties (Cordova and Hiskey 2015). Cordova and Hiskey (2015) argue that this is due to the diffusion of ideas and norms surrounding political participation, increased civic engagement from involvement with migrant-related projects, and higher levels of political interest and efficacy. Contrary to their argument, I argue that the mechanism through which social remittances impact political participation is one of expectations for service delivery and quality of life comparisons, themes that dominate interview responses from Guatemala in a related project (Prince n.d.). I also highlight that this mechanism likely leads individuals to take a variety of actions in an effort to improve their lives. Cordova and Hiskey (2019) find that "cross-border ties" (social remittances) serve as a mediating variable between receipt of monetary remittances and political participation. They argue that monetary remittances increase cross-border ties (including communication), subsequently increasing community participation and leading to higher political engagement. Here, I argue that social remittances should motivate individuals to have higher service expectations, leading them to take action to improve their living conditions in context-specific ways. There is also subnational evidence from Senegal (Vari-Lavoisier 2016) and Poland (Ahmadov and Sasse 2016) that social remittances impact political participation. This study also indicates that communication with migrants increased awareness about conditions in the host country for family members at home (Ahmadov and Sasse 2016). There remains room to improve our understanding of how social

remittances impact political behavior and why social remittances motivate individuals to choose certain types of action (political or extra-political). Evaluating multiple forms of action are central to furthering our understanding of the relationship between social remittances and political behavior.

So how might social remittance motivate political behavior? Prior evidence supports that comparing one's government services to those that others have access to helps voters to evaluate policy (Linos 2011; Kayer and Peress 2012; Hansen, Olsen and Beck 2015). In fact, Salmon (1987) advocated for the use of "comparative yardsticks" in order to help individuals make comparisons and hold their government accountable. I argue that as individuals learn about the higher provision of services that their friends and family are experiencing abroad, they form a heuristic (or credible yardstick) by which to measure their own services. When their access to service measures up short in comparison, this causes higher service expectations and motivates them to take action to improve their lives. In short, they are motivated by a quality of life comparison rather than a desire for democratic institutions or norms of democratic participation, as prior work suggests. I argue that the type of action individuals take in order to improve their lives will be conditional on the quality of their existing formal institutions.

This paper contributes to the literature in the following ways: (1) It provides a novel theory on how social remittances incentivize political behavior by providing a heuristic (or a credible yardstick) by which to evaluate existing services, causing an expectations gap. (2) It shows that social remittances from higher–income countries should universally motivate individuals to act in context-dependent ways to improve their circumstances. (3) It provides new insights on how migrants impact political behavior in their country of origin.

THEORY

Government services are central to development and individual livelihoods (WDR 1997;WDR 2004; WDR 2018), so why don't citizens, especially in democracies, act to improve their access to government services when those services are inadequate?

I argue that citizens are not motivated to act to improve their access to services because their expectations are low. There is evidence that satisfaction with government services is derived by whether service provision matches up to expectations (Van Ryzin 2006; Roch and Poister 2006; James 2009). It follows that individuals with low expectations for provision of government services will be easily satisfied by a low provision of services and not be incentivized to improve their access to services. If individuals have only experienced a low level of services, then in the absence of exposure to information or an experience that raises their expectations, their expectations should be low.

Information has the capacity to alter individuals' expectations. There is evidence that information shortcuts allow individuals to make informed decisions with little time or effort spent informing themselves (Downs 1957; Lupia and McCubbins 1998).[7] Information received from within an individual's social network is especially impactful (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Druckman, Levendusky, and McLain 2018). When individuals have a personal connection to information, it is more salient to them (Boas and Hidalgo 2019; Dionne 2018), and whether information is credible also influences its impact (Banerjee, Kumar, Pande, and Su 2011; Humphreys and Weinstein 2012; Dunning et al. 2019). By extension, social remittances should be easy information shortcuts that are impactful, salient, and perceived as credible, because they arrive from a trusted source within an individual's social network.

[7] Note that there is a vast literature on other types of political communication (such as communication from the media or a public authority figures), but that debate is outside the scope of this argument.

Due to shared geography and social and political factors, individuals can perpetuate cognitive biases through their interactions (Van de Walle 2007; Ichino and Nathan 2013; Horowitz and Long 2016). If part of this bias includes norms of circumventing or disengaging from government services, then it could work to maintain low expectations for government. However, if an individual who is a trusted and credible member of a social network is exposed to better access to government services as a migrant abroad and shares this information with their contacts at home, then this has the capacity to counter such biases. I argue that through this mechanism, social remittances should raise individual-level expectations.

In our rich information environment, what information should be influential? I stipulate that social remittances should be incredibly influential, because they arrive from within shared social networks from sources that individuals find credible. I expect social remittances to cause individuals to form comparative yardsticks that they find credible, or "credible yardsticks."

When individuals hear from their friend or family member about better access to services abroad, I argue that they form a credible yardstick to which they compare to their own access to services as illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. Figure 1 illustrates an individual comparing the credible yardstick based on a government service abroad to a service that is absent at home. Figure 2 illustrates an individual comparing a government service abroad to one at home that is inadequate by comparison. In both scenarios, I anticipate that individuals will respond to the credible yardstick by forming higher expectations (dashed line) for comparable provision of services. These comparisons will lead to an expectations gap.

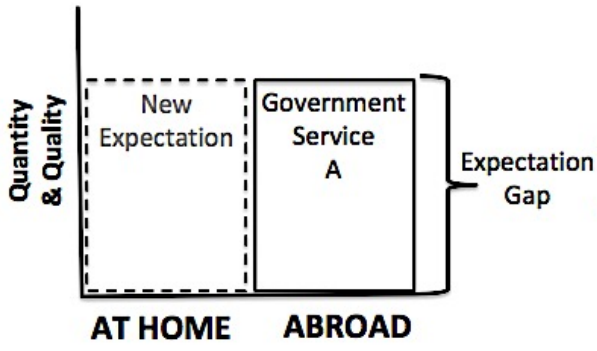


Figure 14: No Service vs. Credible Yardstick

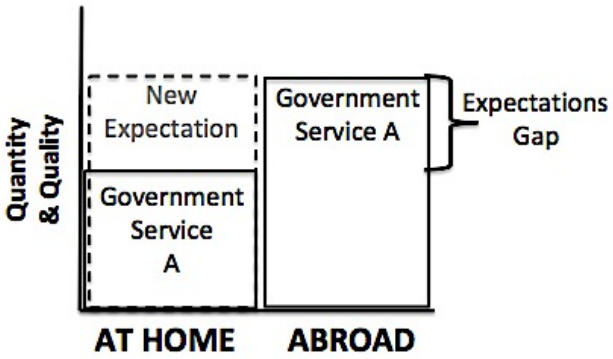


Figure 15: Lower Service vs. Credible Yardstick

In the absence of the credible yardstick that social remittances inspire, individuals should not have a comparable expectations gap, as illustrated by Figures 3 & 4. I expect this regardless of whether they are paying to substitute for absent government services or not. Even those who are paying for private education or garbage removal may not be aware of the level of access that governments abroad provide to these services. Hence, they should have lower expectations and higher evaluations than social remittances recipients. Therefore, I expect that non-recipients of social remittances will be much less motivated to act to improve their access to services.

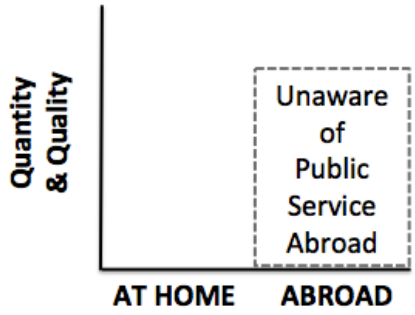


Figure 16: No Substitution, no credible yardstick

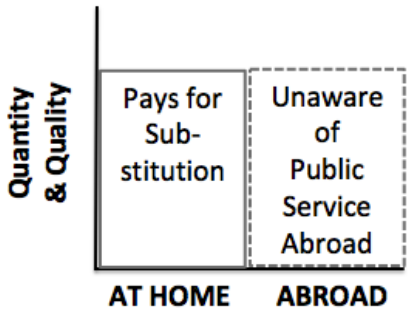


Figure 17: Substitution, no credible yardstick

Social remittance recipients should have higher expectations and, by extension, be harsher evaluators of their existing government and services. Indeed, I find empirical support for this proposition using AmericasBarometer data. Utilizing OLS regression and socio-economic, political interest, and monetary remittances control variables, I find that social remittances are positively correlated to individuals expecting that the government is responsible for jobs, well-being, and reducing inequality (Prince n.d.). This expectations gap should motivate individuals to act to improve their access to services, impacting political behavior. The types of action that they choose to take should be influenced by the types of action that they deem are potentially effective approaches to pursue change.

Table 1: Social Remittances and Government Expectations

VARIABLES	Government responsible for creating jobs	Government responsible for well-being	Government should reduce inequality
Social remittance freq.	0.045***	0.041***	0.023**
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Monetary remittances	-0.071***	-0.102***	-0.074***
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.028)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Countries	22	22	22
Observations	55,724	55,501	55,335
R-squared	0.081	0.059	0.062

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

How do individuals decide which strategies to employ or which types of action to take? Prior work indicates that socio-economic status is relevant to political behavior. Some argue that increasing income should lead to disengagement (Lau 1985), as individuals are more

complacent, a relationship that is supported by some of the evidence on monetary remittances (Germano 2013; Ahmed 2017). Alternately, a higher income may lead to higher political engagement (Campbell et al. 1960) and increased political efficacy (Verba et al. 1978; Brady et al. 1995). Evidence on monetary remittances also yields support for this argument (Cordova and Hiskey 2019). Cordova and Hiskey (2019) argue that level of development is key to understanding the different ways in which monetary remittances can impact political behavior. I argue that the quality of formal political institutions within an individual's country's condition the types of action that social remittances inspire.

I argue that social remittances should increase political participation across countries, but that individuals will choose to participate differently depending on the context in which they live. I expect that a key factor in how individuals respond to social remittances is whether or not corruption is common across their country.

There is evidence that the opportunities available are relevant to political behavior. Political opportunity structures, or the opportunities for influence that state structures allow, influence how individuals mobilize (Meyer and Minkoff 2004) and whether they support violence (Dyrstad and Hillesund 2020). If opportunities to pursue change through existing formal institutions exist, social remittances recipients should be more likely than non-recipients to pursue them. However, in the absence of such opportunities, I expect social remittance recipients to still pursue change, but through alternate modes of influence.

I argue that a key determinant in how individuals choose to act is the quality of the formal institutions that they are familiar with. If social remittances yield increased expectations for provision of services but individuals have a history of negative interactions with formal political institutions, they are likely to pursue improvement through alternate channels. If

individuals' past experiences with formal institutions have been positive, then I expect social remittances to increase the likelihood that they pursue change there. I anticipate that this effect will be magnified by the experiences of other individuals within their community. If individuals hear from neighbors that formal institutions are corrupt or if this leads to norms of avoiding them, this should lower their opinion of such institutions as a meaningful avenue for change. Existing evidence on corruption and political behavior lends support to my argument. Indeed, evidence supports a negative relationship between corruption, political efficacy (Kostadinova 2009), and voter turnout (Stockemer et al. 2013). Despite extensive evidence supporting the positive relationship between education and political participation (Persson 2015), recent work indicates that at high levels of corruption, the positive relationship between education and engagement with formal political institutions is mitigated, or even reversed (Agerberg 2019). Similarly, I expect that as social remittances are used as a heuristic to generate credible yardsticks and individuals learn about the provision of services that other governments achieve, their response will be conditioned by the effectiveness or corruption of the formal institutions within their country and community.

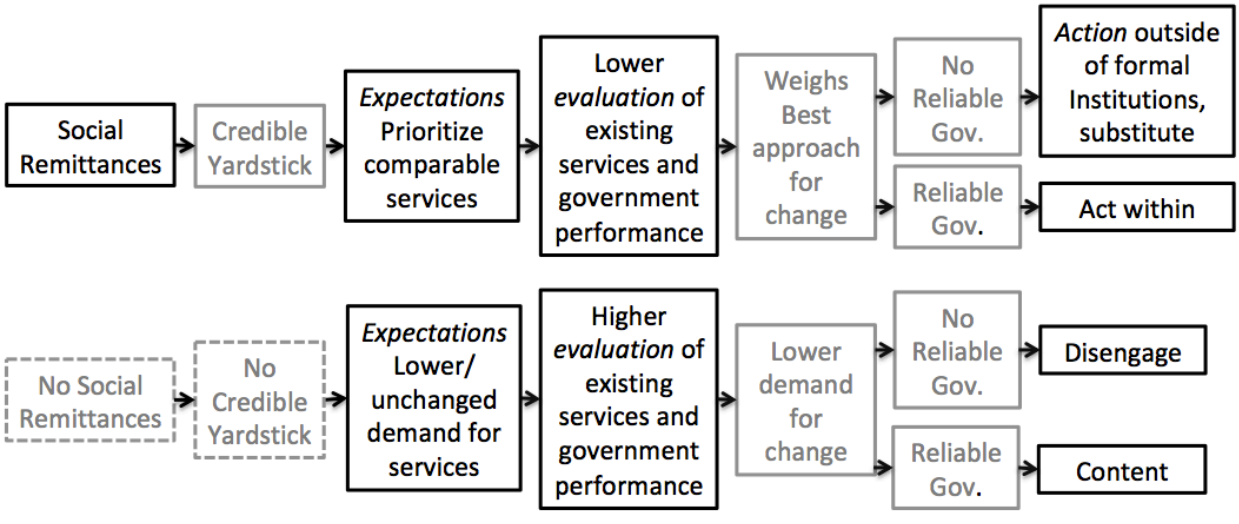


Figure 5: Credible Yardsticks lead to Action Dependent on Institutions

Figure 5 illustrates my argument. When institutions are reliable, I expect social remittance recipients to strive to improve their lives through formal institutions. However, when institutions are not reliable, I expect the same mechanism to lead them to act outside of existing institutions. A central contribution of my work is that these individuals may take action outside of the typical framework from which we analyze political behavior (largely the focus of prior work). Because of problems with the formal institutions that they have been exposed to, I expect social remittance recipients to act to improve their lives through the approach they deem most promising. For example, if elections have historically been deemed illegitimate, individuals are likely to pursue change through alternative channels such as joining a protest or pursuing desired change through a women's group. Indeed, interviews with Guatemalans in a related project confirm that they often utilize forums such as religious groups, non-profits, and other extra-political forums to pursue desired change (Prince n.d.). This may manifest as individuals who receive social remittances being likely to take a variety of actions outside of existing formal institutions. By not including an assessment of extra-political action, prior work has likely missed how motivational social remittances can be. When formal political institutions are not reliable, motivations that might otherwise lead to political participation within formal institutions likely motivate other types of action. Figure 5 also highlights my expectations for individuals who are not recipients of social remittances. In sum, I expect them to have a lower demand for change, to be more likely to disengage when institutions are poor, and more complacent then social remittance recipients when institutions are reliable.

I have formalized the above argument into the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Social remittances are associated with an increase in…

a) Acting within existing formal institutions when individuals can rely on existing institutions.

b) Acting outside of existing formal institutions when individuals cannot rely on existing institutions.

Hypothesis 2: Conversely, I expect social remittance recipients to be less likely to respond to an unreliable government by disengaging compared to non-recipients.

This theory clarifies how social remittances likely impact political behavior, dependent on context. Next, I review my research design.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Below, I detail my analysis for each of the above hypotheses in turn, and I utilize the same control variables for all hypotheses (Table 2). They include: receipt of monetary remittances, perceived safety, political efficacy, political interest, age, age squared, gender, level of education, marital status, urban versus rural, employment status, whether the individual identifies as white, and an index for socio-economic status. Monetary remittances are central to the impact of migrants on individuals at home; they provide added income that has been found to have a varied impact on recipients as specified in the review of prior work. They may empower individuals to become more politically active (Tyburski 2012; Escribà-Folch et al. 2015), cause them to disengage because they are free to substitute for missing services (Abdih et al. 2012; Ahmed 2012, 2013), or both (Easton and Montinola 2017). Hence, I have no clear expectations for the effect of this control variable. Prior evidence linking monetary remittances to political behavior makes it necessary to include them as a control variable for these analyses. I also

control for perceived level of individual safety, which may serve as an extraneous or confounding variable. I expect it to have the capacity to impact how comfortable individuals are taking particular types of action. Political interest has the capacity to act as either an intervening or a confounding variable, as those who have a higher level of political interest are likely more aware of what the most effective strategy to effectively promote change should be. Additionally, there is some evidence that political interest may serve as an intervening variable, as social remittances raise individuals' interest in politics (Pérez-Armendáriz 2014). Hence, it is necessary to control for individuals' level of political interest, and I utilize a scale ranging from 0 (no interest) to 4 (a high level of interest). I also control for individual level of efficacy, utilizing a measure of whether the government is interested in what "people like me think," ranging from no efficacy--the government doesn't care what people think (1) to high efficacy--the government really cares what people think (7). If individuals believe that the government has no interest in what they want, this should skew the actions that they are willing to take.

Table 2: Variables

Variable	Operationalization	Source
Government Help	An additive index on "government help" index to identify whether individuals have historically sought help or cooperation from these three formal government institutions: (1) a member of congress/parliament, (2) a local government official, or (3) a federal, state, or public institution.	Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP).https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/docs/2008_Core_Questionnaire_English.pdf Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP). https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/docs/
Act Outside of Formal Institutions	Additive "act outside state institutions" index by aggregating whether individuals attended community meetings, religious meetings, school meetings, and association meetings, and how often they participate in protests (0-6).	
Disengage	"It is not possible to have influence in order to change things, it does not matter" (yes =1)	
Social Remittances	Does an individual communicate with a migrant living abroad, dichotomous (yes=1)	

Monetary Remittances	Does individual receive money from migrant living abroad, dichotomous (yes=1)	2010_Core_Questionnaire_English.pdf
Political interest	How much interest do you have in politics: a lot, some, little or none? (3-0)	
Perceived safety	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?	
Political efficacy	Whether the government is interested in what "people like me think," ranging from no efficacy--the government doesn't care what people think (1) to high efficacy--the government really cares what people think (7)	
Age	Age & age squared	
Gender	Identify as female = 1	
Education	Years of education (0-18)	
Marital status	Married=1	
Urban versus rural	Urban=1	
Employment status	Employed=1	
Whether the individual identifies as white	White=1	
Socio-economic status	A scale of (0-3) based on the Cronbach's alpha statistic for whether individual households possess 1-14 household objects associated with economic states (television, refrigerator, **c**onventional telephone (not cellular), cellular telephone, vehicle, washing machine, microwave oven, motorcycle, indoor plumbing, **i**ndoor bathroom, computer)	

Finally, I include socio-demographic variables, including age (and age squared), gender, year of education, marital status, living in an urban or rural home, employment status, whether the individual labels themselves as white, and a measure for socio-economic status. To accurately capture socio-economic status, I follow prior literature, employing factor analysis to aggregate responses to whether individuals have eleven household items (such as a television) that improve the household and reflect income (Meseguer et al. 2016). This approach is likely to be more accurate than self-reported income and more comparable across countries, where costs

of living may differ. The data used in my analyses are from the 2008 and 2010 series of AmericasBarometer data, because they are the only waves of the survey that asked a question surrounding communication with friends or family abroad. The sample size ranges from 22,000 to 59,000 individuals. The data cover 22 states and are the largest cross-national public-opinion data to date that includes questions on social remittances. The independent variable of interest throughout the following analyses is a dichotomous variable for whether or not individuals receive social remittances from abroad (social remittance=1, no social remittance=0). This dichotomous variable is based on the question: "how often do you communicate with them", for individuals with a family member abroad, and the response options range from never (1) to every day (5). I assume that individuals who are in communication with their contact abroad will be motivated to take action to improve their lives. As Figure 6 illustrates, approximately 22% of the sample does receive social remittances, while approximately 78% do not.

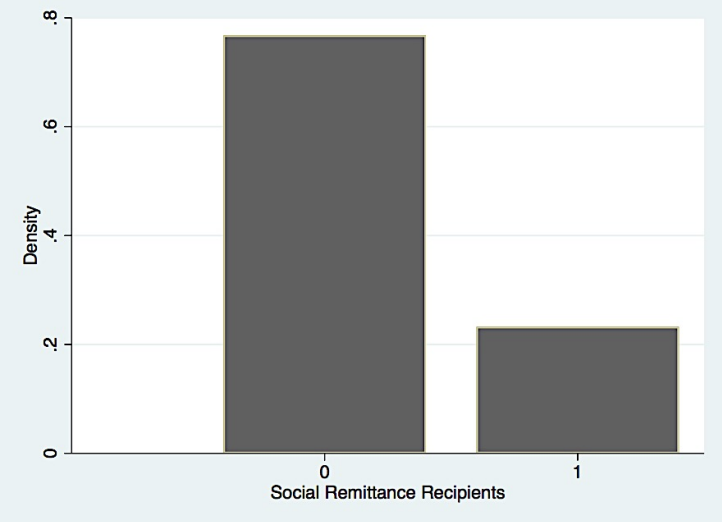


Figure 6: Sample density, receipt of social remittances = 1

Next, I detail my analysis for hypotheses 1 and 2. I discuss the implications for my argument and the literature and present ideas for future research.

I. Action within Formal Institutions

Hypothesis 1 a): To test this hypothesis, I employ the individual-level public-opinion data from AmericasBarometer. These data allow me to identify whether receipt of social remittances is correlated to a higher frequency of pursuing change through existing formal institutions for individuals. If receipt of social remittances is positively correlated to pursuing change through existing formal institutions when they are reliable, then this will provide additional support for my argument. Again, the independent variable of interest is a dichotomous variable reflecting whether individuals are recipients of social remittances (1) or not (0).

To operationalize pursuing change through existing formal institutions, I rely on a question that asks: "In order to solve your problems, have you ever sought help or cooperation from… members of congress/parliament, local public officials, or public institutions/state agencies" (AmericasBarometer). I generate an additive index on "government help" index to identify whether individuals have historically sought help or cooperation from these three formal government institutions: (1) a member of congress/parliament, (2) a local government official, or (3) a federal, state, or public institution. Each question is a yes or no response, and the aggregate index ranges from 0 to 3. If individuals feel that their formal institutions are reliable, I expect social remittances to motivate individuals to seek change through these channels. As Figure 7 shows, there is variation on this index for both social remittance recipients and non-recipients, and the distribution is quite similar. The analysis below will determine whether there is any support for a statistical correlation between social remittances and requesting help from the formal government institutions when they are reliable.

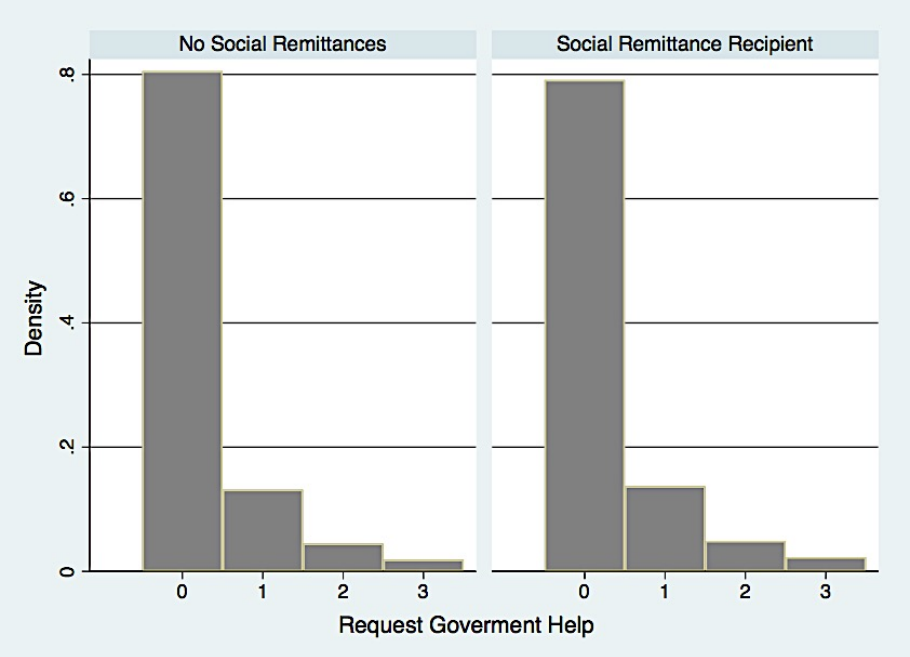


Figure 7: Have you requested help from three types of formal government institutions? (0-3)

If my theory is correct, then individuals who are recipients of social remittances will be more likely to request government help when they can rely on existing institutions. To operationalize whether individuals can rely on their governments, I utilize country-level variables on control of corruption (CCR) from the World Governance Indicators. Lower CCR scores equate to higher levels of corruption, and higher scores equate to lower levels of corruption. I expect that when corruption is more under control, individuals who are recipients of social remittance are more likely than non-recipients to take action within formal institutions to pursue change. I employ a multi-level linear model to test this hypothesis in order to account for both state and individual-level variables. I assume random effects for country-level intercepts in order to account for the nested structure of the data and mitigate the potential correlation of error terms at the individual level. I include the model without interaction effects for comparison. Table 3 shows statistical support for my argument.

Table 3: Request Government Help

VARIABLES	Government Help	Government Help
Social Remittances	0.0159*	-0.0201
	(0.00898)	(0.0164)
Control of Corruption (CCR)	0.00177***	0.00160***
	(0.000188)	(0.000196)
Social Remit X CCR		0.000885**
		(0.000366)
Monetary Remittances	0.0475***	0.0521***
	(0.0111)	(0.0113)
Controls	Yes	Yes
Intercept	-0.102***	-0.0948***
	(0.0228)	(0.0229)
Observations	54,675	54,675
Number of Countries	22	22

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Figure 8 shows that at lower corruption control, the linear prediction for individuals not receiving social remittances asking the government for help is actually higher than for social-remittance recipients. However, as Figure 9 illustrates, the social remittances are not a significant predictor of low levels of corruption control. On the other hand, at a higher level of corruption control (meaning less corruption), the linear predication for social remittance recipients requesting help from the government is actually higher than for non-recipients (Figure 8). Additionally, the prediction is significant at higher levels of corruption control (when CCR > 42) (Figure 9).

These findings support my hypothesis, indicating that receiving social remittances is positively correlated to requesting help from the government when the government is more reliable, as measured by a higher control of corruption. Additionally, as governments become less corrupt, the linear prediction in Figure 8 shows that social remittances are positively correlated to frequency of requesting help from the government.

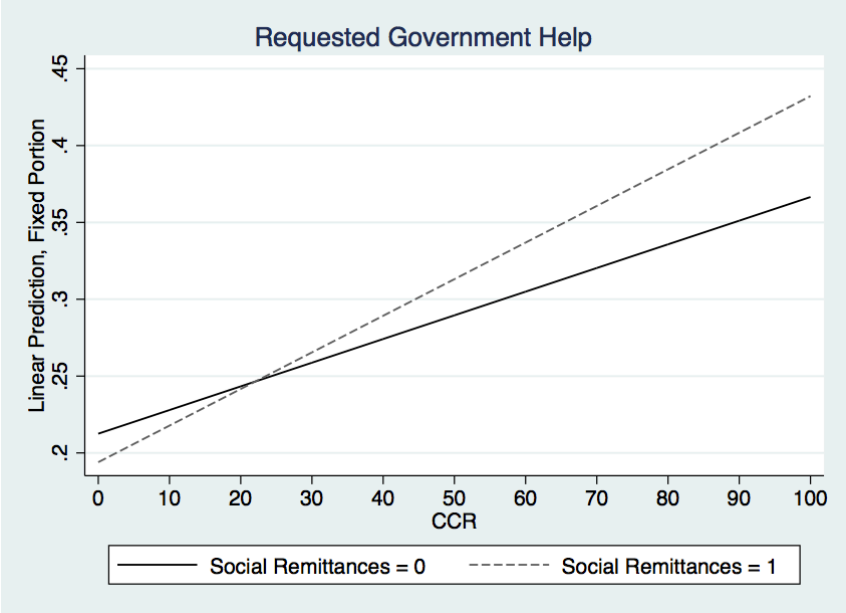


Figure 8

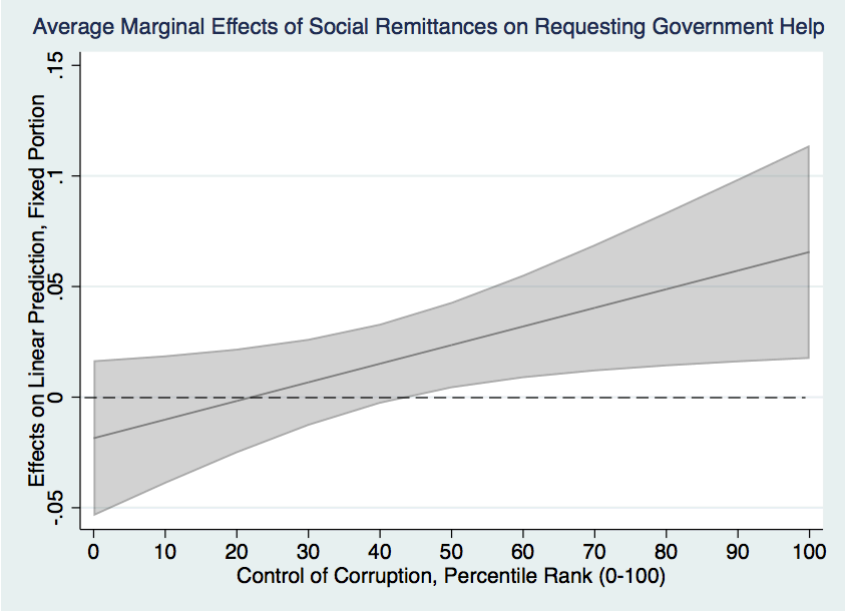


Figure 9

These results support my argument that social remittances incentivize individuals to take action to improve their circumstances. When corruption is under control, individuals should be motivated to ask government officials for help. A robustness check utilizing the World Governance Indicators measure for Government Effectiveness instead of corruption confirms

these findings. When corruption is high (low CCR score), I expect that social remittances will still be motivating, but that individuals will need to act to improve their circumstances in other ways.

II. Action outside of existing formal institutions

To evaluate hypothesis 1 (b), I utilize the individual-level public-opinion data from the AmericasBarometer to generate an additive "act outside state institutions" index by aggregating whether individuals attended community meetings, religious meetings, school meetings, and association meetings, and how often they participate in protests. I generated this index in order to capture actions that individuals take to improve their lives outside of the formal institutions that their country has set up. Though some of these actions differ dramatically, my theoretical expectations justify their combination within one index. A problem with the studies reviewed above is that they do not aggregate various types of action into a larger index in order to gauge whether social remittances incentivize a particular type of individual action. This approach is a positive contribution to the debate, because many types of action that are measured by the AmericasBarometer actually indicate a very similar response to deficiencies in government action despite not being identical actions. I assume that many actions taken outside of formal state institutions provide evidence that individuals want to improve their livelihood and service access but are not confident in relying on formal state institutions to pursue change. Hence, aggregating action taken outside of formal state institutions is appropriate to ensure that the relationship between social remittances and action is not masked by a focus on specific actions. I treat the dependent variable "acting-outside index" as continuous and estimate a linear mixed-effects model. I expect that receiving social remittances at lower levels of control of corruption

will correlate to more actions taken outside of existing institutions. Figure 10 illustrates that there is variation in the dependent variable across both social remittance recipients (right bar graph) and non-recipients (left). Approximately 25 % of non-recipients compared to about 17 % of social remittance recipients score 0 on the act-out index. The analysis below strives to identify whether there is a statistical correlation between receipt of social remittances, and actions taken outside of formal institutions when governments are not reliable.

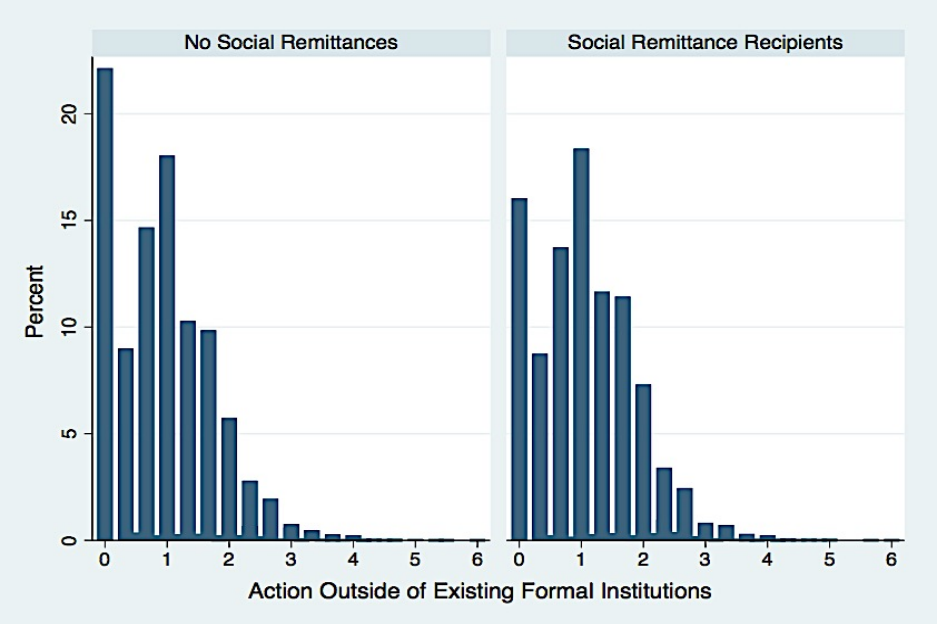


Figure 10

Again, I utilize a mixed linear model to account for the state and individual-level variables. As above, I utilize control of corruption (CCR, World Governance Indicators) to operationalize a reliable government. A lower CCR score reflects higher corruption and a less-reliable government, while a higher CCR reflects the opposite. I begin with the non-interaction model for comparison. Social remittances are positively correlated to acting outside of existing formal political institutions, but the interaction coefficient is negative. The results in Table 4 support hypothesis 1(b), indicating that when corruption is higher, the linear prediction for how often individuals participate in extra-institutional political activities is higher for social

remittance recipients than for non-recipients (Figure 11). Figure 12 illustrates that the marginal effects of social remittances on acting outside of existing institutions is statistically significant and highest when control of corruption is lowest. The marginal effect becomes smaller as control of corruption increases, becoming insignificant when the control of corruption score reaches approximately 60. A robustness check model utilizing government effectiveness instead of control of corruption confirms these results.

Table 4: Act-outside Index

VARIABLES	Act Outside of Formal Institutions	Act Outside of Formal Institutions
Social Remittances	0.0997***	0.193***
	(0.0110)	(0.0221)
Control of Corruption (CCR)	-0.00637***	-0.00592***
	(0.000278)	(0.000287)
Social Remit X CCR		-0.00230***
		(0.000471)
Monetary Remittances	0.0664***	0.05459***
	(0.0139)	(0.0140)
Controls	Yes	Yes
Intercept	0.245***	0.226***
	(0.0292)	(0.0292)
Observations	54,805	54,805
Number of Countries	22	22

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

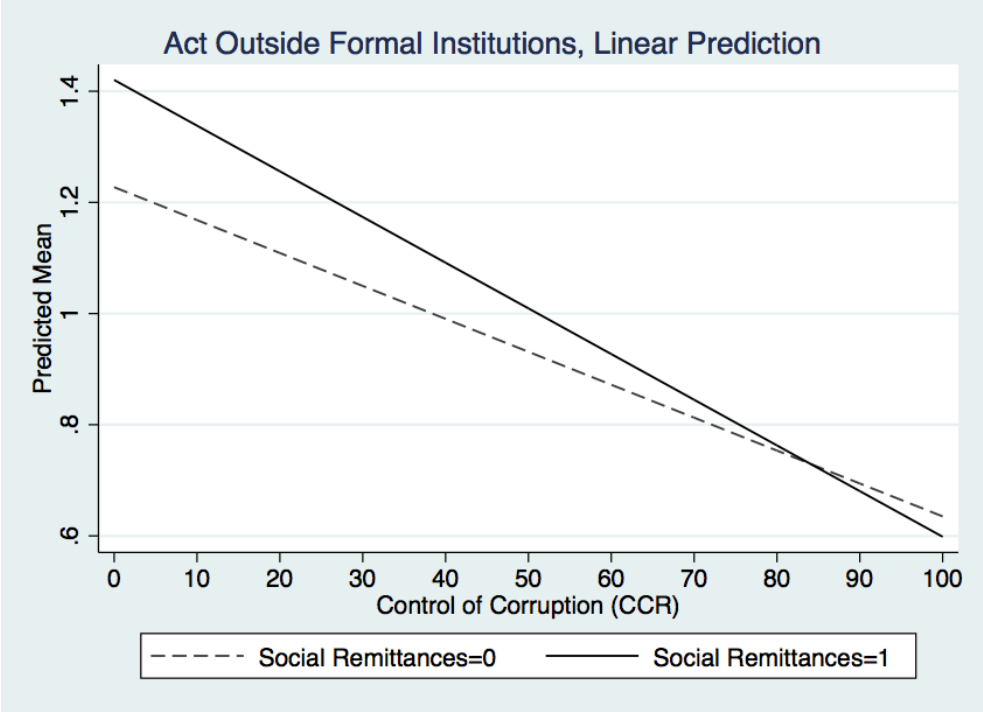


Figure 11

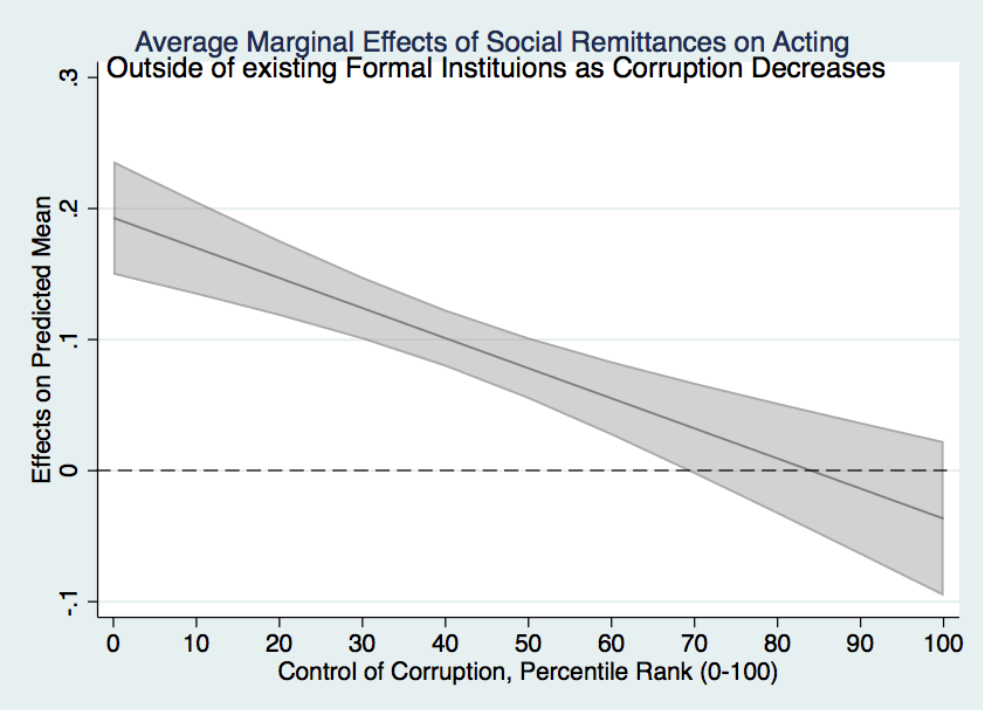


Figure 12

These findings provide support for my argument that social remittances should be positively associated with acting outside of existing institutions when corruption is high (reflected by the low CCR score). Additionally, they offer strong cross-national evidence linking

social remittances to a particular type of political behavior across Latin America. Again, a robustness check utilizing the Government Effectiveness measure confirms these findings (World Governance Indicators). In future work, I plan to assess this hypothesis in other cross-national contexts.

III. Disengagement

Hypothesis 2: My argument asserts that social remittances should motivate individuals to pursue improvement in their own lives, but that the strategies that they employ will be dependent upon the quality of the formal political institutions to which they are exposed. The fact that I find evidence that receipt of social remittances is correlated to acting within formal institutions to improve their situation and acting outside of existing formal institutions dependent on how reliable the government is provides clarification of this relationship. To add an additional test of my argument, I examine whether receiving social remittances is negatively correlated to disengagement when corruption is high (control of corruption low). Indeed, conditions within recipients' countries will impact how individuals respond to social remittances, but I expect that social remittances should be highly motivating. Another implication of this argument is that when government is not reliable, I expect social remittance recipients to be less likely than non-recipients to respond by disengaging.

To test this observable implication, I utilize the question: "What is the way that you think you can have the most influence to change things?" (AmericasBarometer) If respondents chose the response "It is not possible to have influence in order to change things, it does not matter", then they scored yes on a 0/1 variable for "disengaged." If individuals score 1, they chose inaction and do not believe that they can act to influence change. The other response options

include: voting, protesting, or taking other types of action (all of which I score as 0). Again, I utilize a mixed-level model to account for country and individual-level variables, but here I employ a likelihood model to test whether social remittance recipients are less likely than non-recipients to disengage. Table 5 shows that social remittance recipients are indeed less likely to be disengaged. However, the negative correlation between social remittances and disengagement disappears as control of corruption increases as illustrated by the figures below. These results bolster support for social remittances motivating action.

Table 5: Disengagement

VARIABLES	Disengage	Disengage
Social Remittances	-0.161***	-0.236*
	(0.0610)	(0.123)
Control of Corruption (CCR)	0.00719***	0.00695***
	(0.00110)	(0.00116)
Social Remit X CCR		0.00167
		(0.00243)
Monetary Remittances	-0.00506	0.00455
	(0.0810)	(0.0816)
Intercept	-0.560***	-0.549***
	(0.165)	(0.165)
Controls	Yes	Yes
Observations	22,731	22,731
Countries	21	21

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Indeed, as Figures 13 and 14 show, I find evidence that social remittance recipients are less likely than non-recipients to be disengaged at low control of corruption (when corruption is high). The likelihood of being "disengaged" increases as CCR increases, and social remittance recipients are significantly less likely than non-recipients to be disengaged. The prediction is

significant when CCR < 50. This evidence bolsters support for my argument, indicating that individuals who receive social remittances are less likely than non-recipients to be disengaged when they cannot rely on the government.

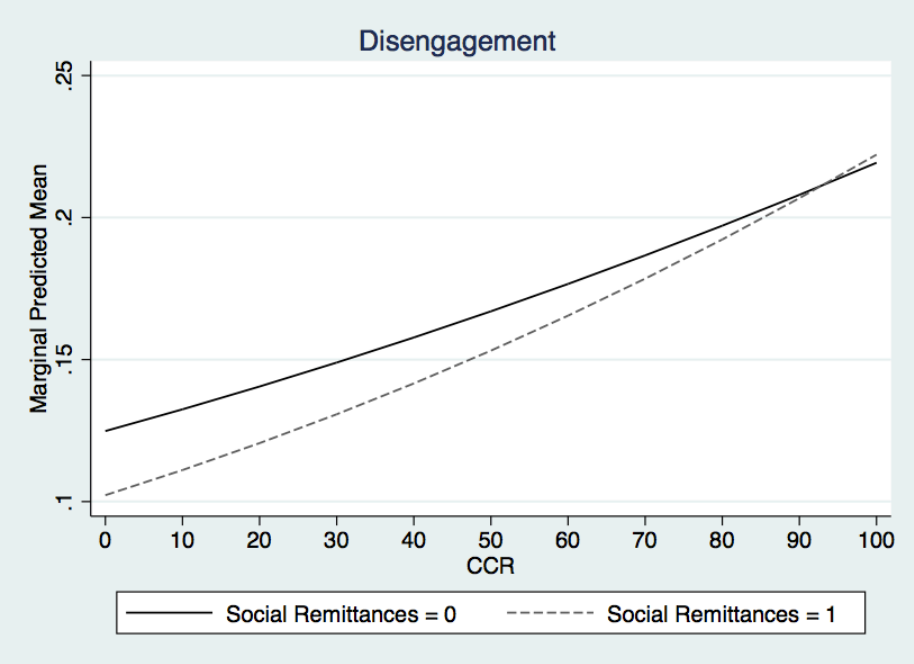


Figure 13

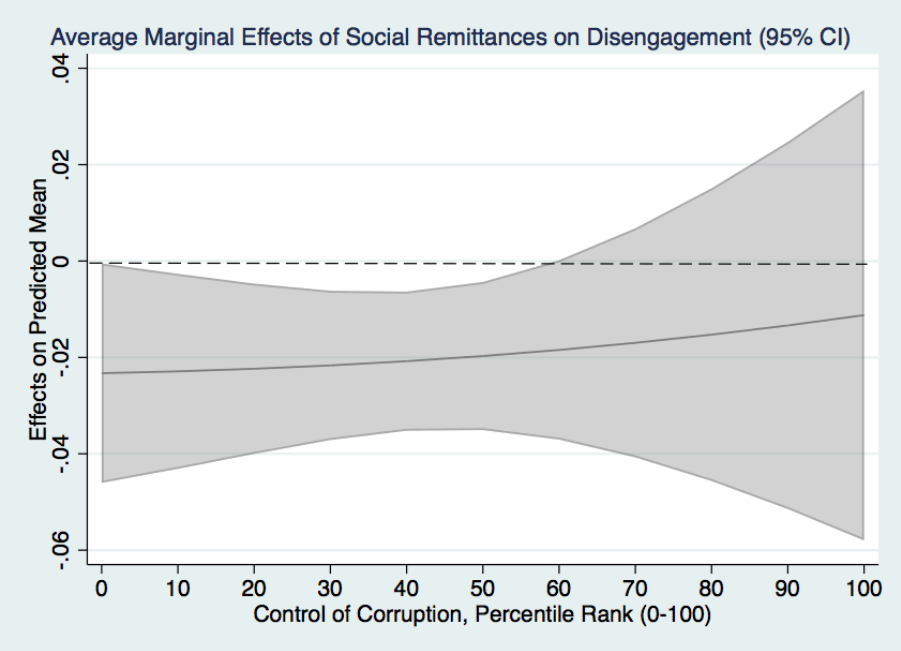


Figure 14

These results confirm my prior findings that receipt of social remittances is positively correlated to taking action outside of formal institutions when they are unreliable, or within them when they are reliable. Recipients of social remittances are less likely than non-recipients to think that they cannot influence change. A Government Effectiveness robustness check confirms these findings (World Governance Indicators).

CONCLUSION

My analysis adds to the evidence that social remittances are important to political behavior in origin countries. Social remittances are positively associated with individuals taking action within formal political institutions when corruption is low. Social remittances are positively associated with individuals taking action outside of formal political institutions when corruption is high. Finally, social remittance recipients are less likely than non-recipients to disengage when corruption is high. Taken together, this evidence suggest that social remittances motivate individuals to take action to improve their lives and that they act strategically based on the quality of the formal political institutions within their country. These findings are an important contribution to the literature, enhancing our understanding of how social remittances may impact political behavior across different contexts.

Those who receive social remittances are overall more likely to take action to improve their lives, but they take action dependent on the context in which they live. When governments are unreliable, social remittances are positively correlated to acting outside of existing institutions; when the governments are reliable, social remittances are positively correlated to requesting help from politicians in formal institutions. Overall, the empirical evidence provides strong support for the incentivizing impact of social remittances on recipients. This supports my

argument that social remittances cause individuals to form credible yardsticks, which incentivize them to take action to improve their own lives. Indeed, social remittances are also positively correlated to expectations for government.

In future work, I plan to conduct a field experiment utilizing WhatsApp (an international messaging application) in order to conduct a causal test of the impact of social remittances. I plan to treat individuals to a higher frequency of contact with their friend of family member abroad in order to test causal claims about the impact of social remittances on expectations, evaluation of government, and political behavior.

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