

# Trust in North America: Why Do Mexicans Distrust Their Continental Neighbors?

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## ABSTRACT

This article analyzes individual-level factors that help explain why some Mexicans trust Americans and why many more distrust them. The author develops a statistical model based on survey data that explains the determinants of Mexicans' trust in the United States government and citizens and compare it to trust in Canadians, Mexicans living in the United States, and other Latin American national groups. The aim is to identify structural and attitudinal traits and orientations among Mexicans to help us understand their views of their North American neighbors. The results show that Mexicans' trust in Americans is distinctive and particular and has a different rationale than that of trust in other countries and nationalities. Sharing some values and ideological orientations fosters trust, whereas sticking to certain types of nationalist sentiment –not all types– undermines it. A strong and distinctive predictor of Mexicans' trust in the United States is social interconnectedness, a bridge built by immigration.

**Key words:** Mexican public opinion, trust in the United States, ideology, nationalism, social interconnectedness

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## INTRODUCTION

Public opinion studies generally show that Mexicans are ambivalent toward Americans. On the one hand, historical experiences and cultural differences have left a permanent mark on Mexico's collective consciousness, commonly activating a sense of rejection and distrust. On the other hand, most Mexicans believe that closer ties to the United States benefits them, providing evidence that their attitudes and opinions toward Americans are as driven by self-interest as by national pride and historical resentment, if not more. A growing interconnection, enhanced by the creation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and by impressive migration patterns during the last decade and a half, has strengthened both commercial and societal ties between the two countries, and this has made Mexican views of the United States more favorable. A single indicator of this is increased trust by Mexicans of their American neighbors. According to World Values Survey (wvs) data gathered in Mexico, the proportion of Mexican adults who expressed trust in Americans increased from 20 percent to 36 percent between 1990 and 2005. This is a substantial change, yet the level of trust remains comparatively low. In comparison, 55 percent of Canadians interviewed in the 1990 wvs said they trusted Americans, and by 2005 that proportion had increased to 63 percent.

Despite the significant increase of trust over the last 15 years, Mexicans remain rather distrustful of the United States. What drives this? Is it an almost immutable cultural predisposition passed from generation to generation? Is it a set of ideological orientations that reject, by default, any American ideas, expressions, and interests? Or is it an ironclad nationalist sentiment that simply is not open to the idea of community and of others? I address these and other similar questions in this article. As way to look for some answers, I developed a survey-based statistical model of Mexicans' trust in Americans and other national groups. The results confirm that ideology and nationalism matter when it comes to trust or distrust but so, too, does social interconnectedness, and in very favorable ways.

As a component of public opinion, trust in other nationalities is particularly relevant to foreign policy. Former Mexican Ambassador to the United States Jesús Reyes Heróles noted, for example, that "Perceptions about other countries are important because they create the space where working together becomes possible" (Reyes Heróles, 2005: 45). Some studies have demonstrated that "citizens use generalized beliefs about how much their nation can trust other nations to form judgments about world affairs" (Brewer et al., 2004: 93), setting the foundation for mass support for international cooperation. Smith and Wertman found, for example, that most Western Europeans viewed Americans as "trustworthy" in 1990, just as the post-

Cold-War era began, leading those authors to conclude that “[a]s European policy-makers begin the process of redefining U.S.-West European relations they are not constrained by anti-American public sentiment” (Smith and Wertman, 1992: 194). Public opinion is a factor for international cooperation.

The American-led war on terrorism triggered by 9/11 has modified public opinion about the United States, not only in Western Europe but in other regions of the world as well. A poll conducted early in 2007 for the BBC World Service in 25 countries showed a deterioration of the United States’ image in the world: about 29 percent of respondents had a “mainly positive” view of the United States, 11 percentage points less than a similar study conducted in 2005; in contrast, “mainly negative” views increased from 46 percent to 52 percent in the same period. The poll was done by Globescan and the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) from November 2006 to January 2007 and included more than 26,000 interviews, about 1000 in each country. Trust in, and opinions about, the United States may correspond directly to changes in American foreign policy. Evidence from West European surveys carried out from the 1950s to the early 1980s shows that there are, in fact, important shifts in the level of favorable opinions about the United States, depending on the period and policy direction (Russett and Deluca, 1983).

If this can be translated to the North American context, changing patterns of Mexican trust in the United States may limit or expand the opportunities for bilateral cooperation in current issues like immigration, drug-trafficking, or NAFTA-related trade disputes. Moreover, understanding the current sources of trust and distrust in the region may also assist the political mobilization of support for specific policies.

In this article I analyze individual-level factors that help explain why some Mexicans trust Americans and why many more distrust them. The statistical model I developed helps explain Mexican trust and distrust in the United States government and in American citizens, separately, as well as in Canadian citizens and Mexicans living in the United States, as a way to cover the North American region as extensively as possible. My aim is to identify structural and attitudinal traits and orientations among Mexicans that serve as bases for more general favorable and unfavorable views toward their North American neighbors. Rather than relying on cultural and historical explanations, I develop an argument based on public opinion theories and concepts. I borrow from theoretical approaches that view opinions as a combination of information and predisposition influenced by elite cues (Zaller, 1992) and as a result of how principles, group references, and self-interest respond to “frames” or “interpretative structures embedded in the political discourse” (Kinder and Sanders, 1996: 164). If I am able to link certain individual predispositions and orientations of theoretical relevance to trust and distrust, I may have taken one of at least two

important steps in discovering whether trust responds to political communication. The other step, which is beyond the scope of this paper, is to describe the patterns of pro-American and anti-American discourse in Mexican politics and society during the last couple of decades.

The idea that changes in public opinion reflect, among other things, changes in elite discourse is a generally accepted premise but proposing that social trust changes as a response to specific processes of mass communication may stand on less solid ground. Trust is generally seen as a cultural trait (Fukuyama, 1995; Inglehart, 1997; Putnam, 2000) and, even if not immutable, it is expected to change gradually. Trust may be closer to being an enduring attitude than a spontaneously formed opinion.

World Values Survey data show that the already low levels of interpersonal or social trust in Mexico decreased significantly during the last decade and a half. A standard measure of social trust included in the wvs questionnaire and in other comparative studies (see Uslaner, 2002; Brewer et al., 2004) is the percent of respondents who say that "most people can be trusted." The Mexican wvs surveys show that the proportion of social trust decreased from 33 percent in 1990 to 16 percent in 2005. The 1996 and 2000 samples showed proportions of interpersonal trust of 26 percent and 21 percent, respectively. Interpersonal trust in Mexico dropped by half in only fifteen years.

The decline of social trust in Mexico might suggest that Mexicans' distrust in Americans is simply a reflection of a growing level distrust in everyone else. According to Brewer et al., "citizens may derive their general beliefs about whether to trust other nations from even more general forms of social trust" (2004: 96). However, that does not seem to be the case. The decrease of social trust in Mexico contrasts with an increase of Mexican trust in Americans, as stated earlier. In addition, the United States does not have the same weight in Mexicans' belief systems and cannot be placed into a general package of trust or distrust in everybody. There are occasional and, sometimes, absurd manifestations of rejection toward Americans (such as the embarrassing booing of the American representative in a Miss Universe pageant held in Mexico City in May 2007) as well as strong beliefs that Mexico should be closer to the United States than to any other country. A national poll by the daily newspaper *Reforma* of 1,515 adults in May 2007 showed, for example, that 65 percent of respondents said that Mexico should have "much closer" or "somewhat closer" relations with the United States, while 28 percent said that Mexico should be "much more" or "somewhat more" distant from it.

Judging from the polling data that Jorge Castañeda, in his collaborative work with Robert Pastor (1989) quoted, Mexicans today are much more favorable to the United States than they were two decades ago: according to that poll, 6 out of 10

Mexicans interviewed in 1986 thought of the United States as “dislikable and bothersome,” and “enemies” (Castañeda and Pastor, 1989: 60-61). No anti-Americanism of that magnitude is observed in national polls today. Half the respondents to a 2006 Comexi-CIDE poll about Mexicans’ views on foreign policy considered that having the U.S. as neighbors brings more advantages than problems (as opposed to 39 percent who think the opposite), and expressed more favorable opinions about the U.S. and Canada than about other countries (González and Minushkin, 2006: 17).

Finding particular characteristics of Mexican public opinion about the United States different from people’s opinions about Americans in other countries is a great challenge. The United States generates mixed feelings in a variety of countries, whether allies or foes, and it seems that anti-Americanism has endured, if not deepened, in the recent age of globalization. In a paper published in 1992, Smith and Wertman stated that “[t]he United States is the most powerful country in the world and now its only superpower; American policies, culture, and economy affect every part of the world. American popular culture, including its films, television programs, songs, styles, and fads, influence lifestyles throughout the world. Because of this pervasive, multi-faceted role on the world stage, most foreigners have an interest in and attitudes about the United States (whether these attitudes are well-informed or not)” (Smith and Wertman, 1992: 188). The war against terrorism has most likely expanded the scope and meaningfulness of opinions about the U.S. throughout the world. Pro- and anti-American feelings are a central aspect of today’s world affairs, not only expressed as support or rejection of American foreign policy (in particular war policy), but also as “an unfocused and largely irrational, often visceral aversion toward the United States,” as Paul Hollander (1992) succinctly put it (quoted in Smith and Wertman, 1992: 189).

In previous research, I have explored the ambivalence of Mexicans’ attitudes toward Americans (Moreno, 2002a), as well as the specific weight of self-interest (Moreno, 2002b), values (Moreno, 2005), ideology, and a set of contradicting predispositions (Moreno, 2006) in Mexican’s opinions about the United States and NAFTA. In this article I develop a more comprehensive model of Mexicans’ trust and distrust in the North American “community,” including the U.S. government, American citizens, Mexicans living in the United States, and Canadians. It is a comprehensive model not just because it focuses on more national groups and the U.S. government, but because it includes multiple explanatory variables that tap four general areas of theoretical relevance: structural variables, ideological orientations, nationalist sentiments, and exposure to information. Each one of these general areas involves specific indicators that reflect diverse hypotheses about how Mexicans view their northern neighbors. I also test the model by analyzing Mexicans’ trust and distrust

in Argentineans, Brazilians, Colombians, and Cubans, as a way to see whether Mexicans' trust in people from North America has its own particularities or whether it is a reflection of general trust in other nationalities. I do, in fact, find some particularities that will be discussed in the rest of the paper, but before getting to them, I will briefly describe the data I used for the analysis.

## DATA OVERVIEW

The primary evidence for the analysis in this article is a survey conducted in both Mexico and the United States (including an oversample of Mexican-Americans) in 2003. This study followed the structure of the World Values Survey questionnaire, and included additional items tapping specific cultural differences between Mexicans, Americans, and Mexican-Americans. I used only the Mexican data, derived from a national representative sample of 2380 face-to-face interviews. In particular, this survey asked the level of trust that Mexicans have in people of other nationalities, including those of North America. The survey was sponsored by Banamex and is fully described in a report about the values and beliefs of Mexicans in both countries (see Moreno, 2005).

In addition to this survey, I also show trends and indicators of Mexican public opinion derived from national face-to-face quarterly polls sponsored and conducted by the newspaper *Reforma* between 2003 and 2007. Unless otherwise indicated, *Reforma* national polls are based on 1500 interviews with Mexican adults. The *Reforma* national quarterly polls offer an almost unique time series of Mexican opinions about the United States and the U.S. government, some of which are shown here.

Finally, as already noted, I continuously refer to the World Values Survey in this article, especially to the four sets of Mexican samples collected between 1990 and 2005. Those samples average slightly over 1500 face-to-face interviews each, available at the WVS web page ([www.worldvaluessurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org)), in addition to other printed forms of reference (see Inglehart et al., 1998; Inglehart et al., 2004; and Halman et al., forthcoming).

## MEXICANS' TRUST IN NORTH AMERICA

As mentioned earlier, World Values Survey data show an increase of Mexicans' trust in Americans during the last 15 years. Nonetheless, the level of trust remains comparatively low. The 2003 Banamex survey of values confirms this. About 25

percent of Mexicans said they trust American citizens “a great deal” or “quite a lot,” whereas 75 percent said they don’t trust them very much or at all. Proportions in reference to the U.S. government are quite similar: 23 percent expressed trust, and 77 percent distrust. The level of trust in Canadians is slightly lower: 20 percent of Mexicans said they trust Canadians, and 80 percent said they do not. Familiarity with Canada is, of course, lower in Mexico than familiarity with the United States. These data are displayed in Table 1.

	<b>A great deal</b> %	<b>Quite a lot</b> %	<b>Not very much</b> %	<b>None at all</b> %
U.S. Government	4	19	34	43
U.S. Citizens	5	20	33	42
Mexicans living in the U.S.	17	34	24	22
Canadians	4	16	32	48
Argentineans	2	13	30	55
Brazilians	2	14	31	53
Colombians	2	12	31	55
Cubans	3	13	31	53

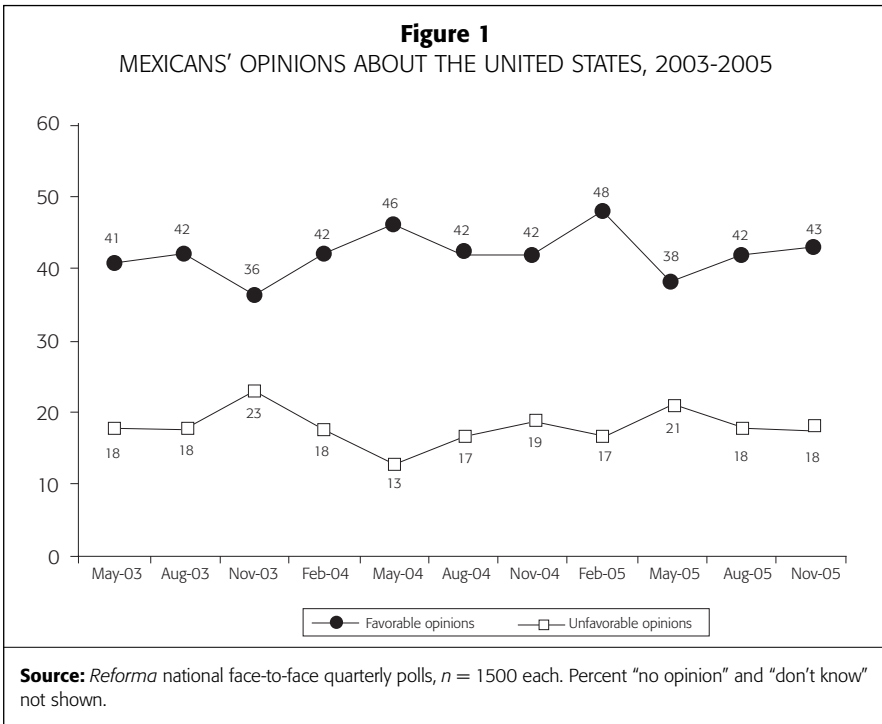
**Source:** Banamex Survey of Values in Mexico and the U.S., 2003; n = 2 380 in the Mexican sample.

The survey also shows that most Mexicans trust their compatriots who live in the United States. About 51 percent of respondents said that they trust Mexicans living in that country and 49 percent said they do not. This is, by far, the highest level of trust Mexicans expressed in the survey in reference to specific national groups. That finding contrasts with the low level of interpersonal trust recorded by the same survey (16 percent), which leads us to question whether the standard measure of social trust and the measure of trust in other nationalities actually tap the same underlying dimension or a different one. For example, the level of trust in Mexicans living in the United States cannot be a reflection of Mexican’ general social trust, which is rather low. One explanation is that, although Mexicans are generally distrustful of people, they posit a great deal of trust in their family members, and this includes those who live in the United States. National polls conducted by *Reforma* during the last few years indicate that slightly over 50 percent of respondents

say that they have a relative living in the United States, and in the 2003 Banamex survey of values, 47 percent said the same.

As a way to compare Mexicans' trust in national groups from North America, Table 1 also shows Mexicans' levels of trust in other national groups from Latin America. The first noteworthy fact in these data is that Mexicans tend to distrust other Latin American nationalities more than they distrust their North American neighbors. About 85 percent of respondents said they distrust Argentines, and a similar proportion said the same about Brazilians, Colombians, and Cubans. The level of trust in those nationalities averages 15 percent, 10 percentage points lower than trust in Americans recorded in the same survey. Thus, a second noteworthy fact is that the levels of trust (or distrust) expressed in these national groups from Latin America varies little.

The survey shows that Mexicans expressed similar levels of trust and distrust in Americans and in the United States government and this similarity might suggest that Mexicans do not clearly differentiate among them. However, that is not the case. Mexicans actually make a clear differentiation between Americans and their government and this can be demonstrated by looking at opinion trends about both. As shown in Figure 1, Mexicans had relatively stable views about the United States



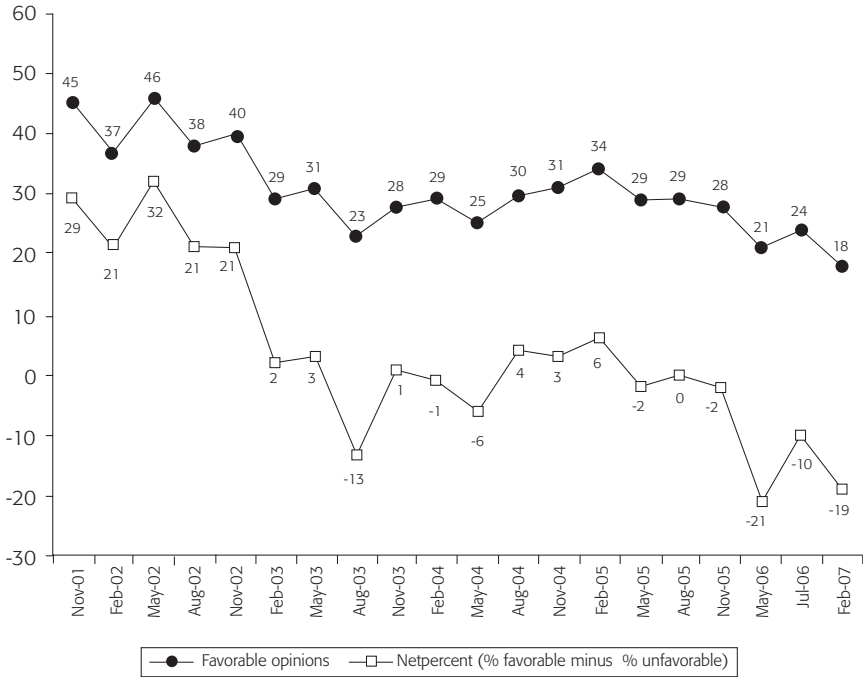


from 2003 to 2005. During that period, an average of 42 percent of Mexicans expressed a favorable opinion about the United States with a low point of 36 percent in November 2003, and a high point of 48 percent in February 2005. This figure also shows that, during those years, favorable opinions about the United States exceeded, by at least a 2 to 1 ratio, the proportion of unfavorable opinions, and this is not particular to those specific years. Earlier polls conducted by the *The New York Times* in 1986 and by *Los Angeles Times* in 1989, 1991, and 1996 (the latter in collaboration with *Reforma*) recorded very similar proportions of favorable and unfavorable opinions in Mexico about the United States (see Moreno, 2006). We can safely conclude that Mexicans have had a predominantly favorable opinion about the United States during the last two decades and that anti-American sentiment has been a minority view. Likewise, survey data gathered in the United States in 2003 and reported in an article by Jesús Reyes Heróles show very similar proportions of favorable and unfavorable opinions about Mexicans: 45 percent of Americans expressed favorable opinions about their southern neighbors, whereas 24 percent expressed unfavorable opinions. (Reyes Heróles, 2005: 47).

Things are different if we consider the U.S. government or, more specifically, the U.S. president, as a reference for Mexican public opinion. Figure 2 shows Mexicans' opinions about President George W. Bush from late 2001 to early 2007. The trend shows that Bush's image among Mexicans deteriorated significantly during that period. After enjoying over 40 percent of favorable opinions in some of the first few measurements, Bush's favorability rating in Mexico went down to less than 20 percent in some of the last polls. Evidence of the deterioration of Bush's image started in 2003, when the proportion of unfavorable opinions actually surpassed that of favorable ones by 13 percentage points—remember that opinions about the United States remained stable. At that time, Mexico had voted against the war in Iraq in the UN Security Council, which means that the Mexican political discourse justifying that decision was not favorable to the U.S. president. In November 2003, Mexico's ambassador to the UN, the late Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, publicly stated that the U.S. viewed Mexico as a "backyard," an accusation that had some resonance in the Mexican media.

In 2006 and 2007, unfavorable opinions about the American president were about 20 percentage points higher than favorable views. The deterioration of Bush's image in those latter years appears to be linked to the border fence issue. In January 2006, President Bush announced his intentions to build a fence along the U.S.–Mexico border to counter illegal immigration. Mexican public opinion reacted harshly towards the American president for that. The percent of negative opinions about President Bush in 2006 and 2007 are the highest that an American President has had

**Figure 2**  
MEXICANS' OPINIONS ABOUT U.S. PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH, 2001-2007



**Source:** *Reforma* national face-to-face quarterly polls,  $n = 1500$  each. Percent "no opinion" and "don't know" not shown.

in Mexico since Ronald Reagan in 1986 (see Moreno, 2006). Whatever the domestic reasons President Bush had to raise the fence issue, he certainly cultivated a growing opposition south of the border.

## A STATISTICAL MODEL OF MEXICANS' TRUST IN NORTH AMERICA

In this section I develop a statistical model that includes several individual-level determinants of why Mexicans trust or distrust other national groups. The model is based on the Banamex survey of values conducted in 2003. Trust in each one of the national groups shown in Table 1 is used as a dependent variable. Because the scale of trust used in those variables is ordinal ("a great deal," "quite a lot," "not very much," and "not at all"), I employed ordered probit estimates. The inclusion of in-

dependent variables in the model responds to theoretical expectations based mostly on why Mexicans trust or distrust the United States. Thus, it is an American-centric model. Rather than being a serious limitation, this is a way to assess how certain factors that explain trust in Americans may not matter when it comes to explaining trust in other national groups.

The independent variables in the model have been grouped in four general conceptual areas: structural variables, ideological orientations, nationalist sentiments, and information variables. Structural variables represent socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of Mexicans, such as age, education, urban-rural residence, and region, as well as two measures of interconnection with the United States: whether the respondent has close relatives living there (47 percent), and whether he or she receives money from them (14 percent). The model also includes a variable of household financial satisfaction. Theoretical expectations about variables referring to having relatives in the U.S. and receiving money from them are straightforward: a higher degree of interconnection should positively relate to trust. Hypotheses corresponding to the rest of the structural variables follow a general argument based on a modernization approach: trust in strangers should be higher among the more modern segments of society. Thus, more educated, urban Mexicans living in industrial regions should express higher levels of trust not only in Americans but also in other national groups. The model originally included the respondents' gender but the variable was dropped after showing no statistical significance and lacking a theoretical expectation with regard to views towards Americans and other national groups.

Ideological orientations are expected to be strongly linked to views about the United States. Under this classification, I have included a number of measures that tap general ideological predispositions, as well as some more specific ones: views on foreign investment, world trade and globalization, economic individualism, left-right self-placement, subjective belonging to the middle class, and a measure of regional cultural identity. Let me briefly describe each of these variables and state a corresponding theoretical expectation justifying their inclusion in the model.

Views on foreign investment, world trade, and economic individualism tap a relatively similar economic dimension and are measured in a way that favorable views on trade, investment, and economic freedom are clearly differentiated from unfavorable views on those issues, which are common American worldviews. Sharing those views means sharing core beliefs of American political culture, such as economic individualism, a central component of the so-called "American ethos" (McClosky and Zaller, 1984). Hence, the hypothesis tied to these variables is that individuals who share these common American views should express more trust in

the United States. Likewise, Mexicans who reject these economic views and preferences should be more likely to distrust the way U.S. foreign investment was measured using a 10-point scale of how important the respondent considers foreign investment to be for the country, from “very important” to “not important at all.” A collapsed version of the scale shows that 10 percent placed themselves in categories 1 to 4, 17 percent in categories 5 and 6, and 73 percent in categories 7 to 10. I grouped these categories for illustration purposes, but the variable was included in the model using its original scale.

Views on world trade rely on a question about whether the respondent feels that globalization is good or bad. This question had a preceding framing that helps us understand responses in more than just a moral dimension of good versus bad:

I'd like to ask you about world trade and globalization: people who favor world trade think that it's good because it fosters economic growth, jobs, more competitive companies, technological development, and prosperity. People who oppose world trade think that it brings unfairly balanced economic growth, it creates more dependence of poor countries on the rich, and it deepens social inequalities, environmental problems, and loss of national sovereignty. Do you personally think that world trade is good or bad?

Responses to this question were distributed as follows: 78 percent thought it was good, 14 percent thought it was bad, and the rest had no opinion. So far, the data show that most Mexicans are favorable to foreign investment and world trade, and a minority opposes them.

Economic individualism is a composite index based on two sets of questions replicated from the World Values Survey questionnaire: “Incomes should be made more equal” versus “We need larger income differences as incentives for individual effort” and “The government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for” versus “People should take more responsibility to provide for themselves.” Both variables used a 10-point scale for responses. The economic-individualism resulting variable combines them into a newer 19-point scale (reliability analysis resulted in a Chronbach's  $\alpha$  of 0.53). Those who scored on categories 1 to 9 (income equality and state responsibility) represent 34 percent, whereas those who scored on categories 11 to 19 (individual incentives and individual responsibility) represent 52 percent. This indicator summarizes a state-versus-market value dimension.

A standard 10-point left-right self-placement scale was also added into the model. Previous works have shown that leftist Mexicans tend to be less pro-American than rightist ones (Moreno, 2006), in accordance with a general theoretical ex-

pectation about this relationship. The left is usually more critical of the United States than the right. Nineteen percent of respondents placed themselves in categories 1 to 4 (left), whereas those on the right (categories 7 to 10) add up to 44 percent. The two center categories concentrated 28 percent of respondents. Along with left-right identities, I also included a measurement of subjective social class. This is a dichotomous variable that represents respondents who consider themselves middle and upper-middle class (18 percent). My theoretical expectation is based on the idea that middle-class Mexicans are the primary consumers of American culture and lifestyles through the mass media and the ones who adopt more American values at home and the workplace. However, increasing patterns of migration from both the cities and the countryside to the United States could challenge this idea, as direct contact with the U.S. mixes among several socioeconomic segments.

As a final indicator in this set of ideological variables I have included a measurement of regional cultural identity, which refers to the continental region to which the respondent believes Mexico culturally belongs: North America or Latin America. About 26 percent said Mexico belongs culturally to North America but 59 percent pointed to Latin America and 6 percent to both. Interestingly, the percentage of Mexicans who say that Mexico belongs geographically to North America is slightly higher (32 percent), whereas about 53 percent place Mexico as a geographic part of Latin America. This variable reveals how limited the sense of North Americanism is among Mexican society, despite 13 years of NAFTA. Most Mexicans think that their country is not geographically or culturally attached to North America. The theoretical expectation in this case is also straightforward: a stronger sense of cultural identity with North America should translate into a higher sense of trust in North American national groups, whereas a stronger Latin American identity should reduce that possibility.

Some people may argue that nationalism is another form of ideology (Smith, 2001: 21-42). However, given its relevance to analyzing trust in other nationalities, I decided to group the variables that tap nationalist sentiments as a separate set. The variables in this group include national pride, the importance that respondents give to national sovereignty, a sense of local identification referred to as parochialism, the priority that Mexicans give to their own nationality when jobs are scarce, and a particular calculation of admiration of Mexican and American companies that was included in the 2003 Banamex survey of values, which I interpret as a measure of anti-American consumer sentiment. A general theoretical expectation applies to this group of variables: stronger nationalist sentiments, especially those that see national identity as a factor of existential security, translate into distrust in strangers or in people of other nationalities.

Specific measurements of these variables are as follows: national pride was measured using the wvs question, "How proud are you of being Mexican?" Responses do not allow for much variance, though: 87 percent said they were "very proud," 10 said they were "quite proud" and the remaining 3 percent was "not very proud" or "not at all proud." The question of how important national sovereignty is for the respondent used a 10-point scale, in which 43 percent of respondents placed themselves on 10 (meaning "very important"). About 12 percent chose categories 1 to 5 (representing less importance) and 46 percent chose categories 6 to 9. This and the other variables hitherto described were included in the statistical model using the expanded version of the scale, not the collapsed version I am using for illustration purposes. Parochialism is a dichotomous variable that groups respondents who said they have a sense of belonging to the town or city where they live (22 percent), as opposed to the country, the continent, or the world as a whole. Prioritizing Mexicans when jobs are scarce also is a wvs question: "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'When jobs are scarce, employers should give priority to Mexicans over foreigners?'" About 82 percent of respondents agreed, 10 percent disagreed, and the rest had no opinion.

Finally, an original measurement of admiration for companies included in the Banamex survey allowed me to construct a variable that taps pro-Mexican and pro-American positions. After initial factor analyses of opinions that included Mexican public and private companies such as Pemex (the state-run oil company), Telmex (Mexico's major private telephone company), and Aeroméxico (one of the country's two major airlines), as well as American global corporations such as Coca Cola, Wal-Mart, and Ford Motor Company, I decided to construct the company admiration index using only Pemex and Ford Motor Company. Since the original variables were measured using a 10-point scale (where 10 represents a lot of admiration, and 1 no admiration at all), the resulting variable ranges from -9 (total admiration of Ford and no admiration for Pemex) to +9 (the other way around). About 44 percent of respondents scored 0, which means that they equally admired both companies. Thirteen percent scored below 0 (preferring Ford over Pemex), and 43 percent above 0 (preferring Pemex over Ford).

The final set of two variables refers to exposure to information. The first is a composite index of exposure to news media, including television, radio, and newspapers. Since the original question used a 4-point scale (the respondent followed news in the specific medium a great deal, somewhat, not very much and not at all), the composite index ranges from 3 to 12. Thirty-eight percent of respondents scored 10 or higher; categories 7 to 9 concentrated 42 percent of them, and 6 or lower represented 20 percent. The other variable is a dichotomous indicator of whether the

**Table 2**  
MEXICANS' TRUST IN NORTH AMERICANS: INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL DETERMINANTS  
(ORDERED PROBIT MODEL)

	Trust in U.S. Government		Trust in U.S. Citizens		Trust in Mexicans living in the U.S.		Trust in Canadians	
	b	sig	b	sig	b	sig	b	sig
<b>Structural variables</b>								
Age	-0.034		0.017		-0.032		-0.035	
Education	-0.072		-0.017		0.046		0.094	*
Urban	0.010		0.130	*	0.049		0.079	
Northern region	0.130	*	0.143	*	0.053		0.032	
Relatives in the U.S.	0.204	**	0.138	*	0.188	**	0.048	
Money from relatives	0.088		0.072		0.096		-0.017	
Financial satisfaction	0.012		0.005		-0.002		0.010	
<b>Ideological variables</b>								
Views on foreign investment	0.025	*	0.020		0.015		0.018	
Views on world trade	0.107		0.123	*	0.134	*	0.047	
Economic individualism	0.017	**	0.024	**	0.015	**	0.022	**
Left-right self-placement	0.013		0.002		-0.012		-0.004	
Subjective middle class	0.134	*	0.119		0.033		0.133	
Cultural identity (Latin vs. North American)	0.046		0.059	*	0.003		0.079	*
<b>Nationalism variables</b>								
National sovereignty	0.016		0.033	*	0.028	*	0.057	**
National pride	0.062		-0.082		-0.072		-0.100	
Parroquialism	-0.146	*	-0.138	*	-0.009		-0.056	
Scarce jobs for Mexicans	-0.040		-0.111	**	-0.030		-0.089	*
Company admiration (Ford. vs. Pemex)	-0.036	**	-0.043	**	-0.003		-0.048	**
<b>Information variables</b>								
Exposure to news media	0.079	**	0.078	**	0.044	**	0.076	**
Internet user	0.165	*	0.227	**	0.063		0.214	**
Pseudo R –Square	0.097		0.119		0.046		0.121	
Significance	0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000	

**Source:** Banamex Survey of Values in Mexico and the U.S., 2003;  $n = 2380$  in the Mexican sample.  
Author's calculations.  $b$  = coefficient, sig = level of statistical significance: \*  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ .

respondent is an Internet user (only 16 percent of Mexican adults). My expectation for these two variables breaks down into two explanations. The first is a continuation of the modernization theory approach referred earlier: mass-media use is more common among modern segments of society, which, in turn, are more likely to trust others. The second has to do with public-opinion theory, in which information plays

a crucial role in forming opinions. Since frequent news media followers and Internet users are more exposed to information, the weight of specific predispositions, such as nationalism or anti-American sentiments, may be reduced.

	<b>Trust in Argentines</b>	<b>Trust in Brazilians</b>	<b>Trust in Colombians</b>	<b>Trust in Cubans</b>
<b>Structural variables</b>				
Age	-0.086 *	-0.091 *	-0.100 *	-0.117 **
Education	0.121 **	0.141 **	0.108 *	0.107 *
Urban	0.136 *	0.158 *	0.147 *	0.196 **
Northern region	0.014	0.015	0.064	0.008
Relatives in the U.S.	-0.016	-0.005	-0.010	0.012
Money from relatives	-0.004	0.023	-0.012	-0.050
Financial satisfaction	0.023	0.017	0.023	0.024
<b>Ideological variables</b>				
Views on foreign investment	0.014	0.022	0.004	0.008
Views on world trade	0.022	0.016	0.048	-0.016
Economic individualism	0.027 **	0.023 **	0.024 **	0.020 **
Left-right self-placement	-0.005	-0.012	-0.003	-0.001
Subjective middle class	0.078	0.103	0.100	0.054
Cultural identity (Latin vs. North American)	0.076 *	0.083 **	0.079 *	0.071 *
<b>Nationalism variables</b>				
National sovereignty	0.055 **	0.064 **	0.060 **	0.061 **
National pride	-0.065	-0.119	-0.034	-0.077
Parroquialism	-0.083	-0.043	-0.071	-0.075
Scarce jobs for Mexicans	-0.138 **	-0.132 **	-0.133 **	-0.127 **
Company admiration (Ford vs. Pemex)	-0.065 **	-0.061 **	-0.058 **	-0.063 **
<b>Information variables</b>				
Exposure to news media	0.065 **	0.073 **	0.080 **	0.082 **
Internet user	0.281 **	0.307 **	0.260 **	0.316 **
Pseudo R –Square	0.144	0.155	0.143	0.154
Significance	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
<b>Source:</b> Banamex Survey of Values in Mexico and the U.S., 2003; $n = 2380$ in the Mexican sample. Author's calculations. $b$ = coefficient, sig = level of statistical significance: * $p < = 0.05$ ; ** $p < = 0.01$ .				



## RESULTS

Tables 2 and 3 show the results of the statistical model just described. Table 2 displays ordered probit coefficients and their levels of significance corresponding to Mexicans' trust in North American groups. Table 3 does the same for trust in Latin American national groups.

As shown, ideological variables have a significant impact on Mexicans' trust in the United States but some of them have differentiated effects depending upon the object of trust, whether American citizens or the U.S. government. Economic individualism is, as expected, a significant predictor of trust in both. In fact, economic individualism relates positively and significantly to trust in every group from North America and from Latin America, which means that this general economic orientation fosters generalized trust. In contrast, views on foreign investment and on world trade have more American-oriented effects. Favorable views toward foreign investment explain trust in the U.S. government, and favorable views on world trade relate more strongly to trust in American citizens, as well as in Mexicans living in the United States. Neither one of these two variables relates significantly to trust in Canadians or any Latin American group included in the analysis, which provides a first piece of evidence that Mexicans' trust in the United States and its citizens has different bases than their trust in other countries and national groups.

The rest of the ideological variables show the following relationships: coefficients for left-right self-identification indicate that Mexicans on the right are more trusting of Americans while those on the left are less trusting of them and more trusting of Mexicans in the U.S., Canadians, and Latin Americans. However, the left-right self-placement variable does not attain statistical significance in this model. Generally, the effect of subjective middle class identification in trust is also insignificant except in one case: Mexicans who identify themselves as middle class are more likely to trust the U.S. government. Finally, regional cultural identity has some influence on trust as well: Mexicans who identify more with North America are generally more trusting, regardless of national group, whereas those who identify with Latin America are less so. Mexicans who consider that their country is culturally closer to North America, rather than Latin America, are even more likely to trust Latin Americans.

Nationalism variables have a mixed influence on trust. The importance of national sovereignty relates positively and significantly to trust in every national group, but it has no impact on trust in the U.S. government. Surprisingly, national pride has no effect on trust, partly because almost 9 out of 10 respondents said they are very proud of being Mexican, allowing very little variance in this indicator.

Parochialism, a sense of local geographic identification, contributes significantly to distrust of the U.S. government and American citizens. Finally, admiration of companies proves to be a strong correlate of trust and distrust: the more Mexicans support an iconic Mexican company (Pemex), and reject an American one (Ford), distrust in other national groups from both North America and Latin America increases. The only exception is trust in Mexicans who live in the United States, in which case company admiration has no effect. This indicator of commercial nationalism contributes significantly to distrust of other nationalities, but it does not statistically discriminate between Americans and Latin Americans. Commercial nationalism is simply a element preventing international trust among Mexicans.

Information variables appear as generally strong predictors of trust. Higher levels of exposure to media news and the use of Internet contribute significantly to trust, whereas lack of exposure to them enhances distrust. The only exception observed in Tables 2 and 3 is the lack of effect of Internet use in trust in Mexicans who live in the U.S. The rest of the dependent variables are influenced positively and significantly by both information variables.

Structural variables have interestingly contrasting effects on Mexicans' trust in other national groups. Age is negatively related to trust in Latin Americans (younger Mexicans are more likely to distrust them), but this variable has no effect on trust in North American groups, which means that younger and older Mexicans alike express similar levels of trust or distrust in the United States. Education relates positively to trust in Latin Americans and Canadians but it does not influence trust in Americans or their government. Financial satisfaction does not have any effect on trust, according to these data. Urban dwellers are more likely to trust Latin Americans, but this variable makes little difference with regard to trust in North America: urban dwellers trust American citizens more than rural ones do, but the variable has no impact on trust in the U.S. government.

Mexicans who live in the northern states are also more likely to trust Americans. This finding is consistent with the reality of the border region. According to Andrew Selee, "[n]umerous citizens of both countries have everyday contact with each other through family, neighbors, colleagues, and business associates. This closeness is, of course, greater in the north of Mexico and the southwest of the United States (and California and Chicago)" (Selee, 2005: 2). Until now, structural variables explain trust in Latin Americans relatively well, but they are rather weak predictors of trust in North America. This is another clear piece of evidence that Mexicans' trust in Americans responds to a distinctive reasoning, not to a general trusting or distrusting orientation.

The last piece of evidence that trust in North America is distinctive is shown by the impact of social interconnection. Having relatives in the United States makes

Mexicans more trusting of that country, its government, and its citizens, and this is not dependent on the economic benefit of having such relatives. The variable that represents respondents who receive money from their relatives in the U.S. has no statistical significance in trust. Having relatives in the United States increases trust in American citizens and their government, regardless of direct economic benefit, but it does not increase trust in Canadians or other Latin Americans. Social interconnectedness between Mexico and the United States fosters trust. For those who argue that Mexican immigration to the U.S. is a dangerous challenge to American values, these data suggest that it is instead an opportunity of building a trusting community. As Selee has put it, "We are no longer distant neighbors, but increasingly interdependent neighbors." Under such conditions, building a community means building trust; not limits to friendship. The data shown here indicate that that is the trend Mexicans are starting to follow.

## DISCUSSION

Mexicans' trust in the United States has increased over the last 15 years, hand in hand with NAFTA and growing social interconnectedness between the two countries. Yet, trust remains rather low when compared to the levels of trust that Canadians have in Americans. In this article, I have shown that Mexicans' trust in Americans is distinctive and particular and responds to a different rationale to trust in other countries and nationalities. Sharing some values and ideological orientations fosters trust, whereas sticking to certain types of nationalist sentiment –not all types– undermines it. A strong and distinctive predictor of Mexicans' trust in the United States is, precisely, social interconnectedness: Mexicans who have close relatives living in the U.S. are much more likely to trust American citizens and the American government. And this condition is not contingent upon the economic benefit –or lack of it– that such interconnectedness may bring. Family ties seem to be strong enough to increase the realm of trust in the region in a way that builds bridges between the countries.

After 13 years of NAFTA, most Mexicans do not feel that they are part of North America either culturally or geographically. Perhaps objective asymmetries between the countries contribute to that lack of a sense of belonging among Mexicans. The data shown in this article demonstrates that Mexicans who identify with North America are generally more trusting, not just of Americans and Canadians but of other Latin Americans as well. There are also indicators that certain nationalist sentiments relate positively to trust while others do not, especially those that find in nationalism a way to cover some existential insecurity. Mexican politicians are prone

to place nationalism and national sovereignty as barrier to international cooperation. It is important to realize that nationalism as a form of identification can be valued in our coexistence with others and not just be a weapon for our rejection of others. It is possible to be proud of being Mexican and proud to trade, work, and cooperate with others. Only then can we have a sense of community.

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