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**Voting Home or Abroad?**  
**Comparing Migrants' Electoral Participation in Countries of Origin and of Residence**

Sergiu Gherghina  
Department of Political Science  
Goethe University Frankfurt

Huan-Kai Tseng  
Department of Political Science  
George Washington University

**Abstract:**

The political participation of immigrants has received increased scholarly attention over the last decades. However, comparisons between the electoral behavior of immigrants in their countries of origin and of residence are still limited. This article addresses this gap in the literature and seeks to identify the determinants of Romanian immigrants' electoral participation in the local elections of four West European countries (Germany, France, Italy, and Spain) as compared to their turnout in their home country's legislative elections. Looking through the lenses of exposure theory, we hypothesize that contact with institutions, people and values from countries of residence are likely to have different effects in the two types of elections. We test the explanatory power of five main variables - time spent in the host country, social networks, degree of involvement in local community, and the type of relationship with citizens of their host countries – to which we add a series of individual-level controls such as age, education, gender, and media exposure. To assess our claim, we employ binary logistic regression to analyze an original web survey data collected in the summer of 2013. The result supports the empirical implications of exposure theory.

**Keywords:** immigrants, voting, country of origin, country of residence, exposure, resilience.

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**Introduction**

Over the last decades increased theoretical and empirical attention has been paid to the political involvement of those individuals who became new members of the polities in which they reside. The electoral turnout of immigrants has been an intriguing topic approached from various perspectives, i.e. patterns, forms, and determinants (Jones-Correa 1998; Hirschman, Kasinitz, and DeWind 1999; Tam Cho 1999; Barreto and Munoz 2003; De Rooij 2012; Voicu and Comşa 2014). Most of the existing studies have focused on the propensity of immigrant voting in the host society. To our knowledge, little effort has been made to compare the electoral behavior of immigrants in their countries of origin and of residence.

This issue gains particular importance in the European Union (EU) where EU nationals living in another Member State are entitled to vote in local elections.

To fill this theoretical and empirical gap, our article seeks to identify the determinants of Romanian immigrants' electoral participation in the local elections of four West European countries (Germany, France, Italy, and Spain) compared to their turnout in the national elections of their country of origin (Romania). Looking through the lenses of exposure theory, we hypothesize that contact with institutions, people and values from countries of residence are likely to increase the electoral participation in the elections organized in these countries. At the same time, we expect a negative influence on the turnout in Romanian national elections (through special polling stations in the countries of residence). To this end, we seek evidence to support the existence of five main effects: time spent in the host country, social networks, degree of involvement in local community, and the type of relationship with citizens of their host countries. Apart from these variables, we also test for several individual-level controls such as age, education, gender, and media exposure. Our empirical analysis uses binary logistic regression and draws on an original web survey data collected in the summer of 2013.

The article starts with a literature review of theories explaining the different electoral participation of immigrants in their country of origin and of residence. Based on this literature we formulate testable hypotheses of five main effects. The second section describes the research design, which is followed by the section presenting our general findings. In the fourth section, we reevaluate our claim on country-level with emphasis on between-country similarities and differences. We conclude by summarizing the main findings and discussing the key implications of our analysis.

### **Theory and Empirical Expectations**

The literature on political participation has extensively argued that the decision to participate is based on individual level determinants such as beliefs, motivations, and resources. Milbrath and Goel (1977) argued that there were several instances in which individual traits are likely to affect their political participation behaviors. According to them, individual motivations gain priority when reference groups have conflicting points of view, when social roles are ambiguous and unknown, or when previous experience gets into conflict with current issues. Classic models of political participation have concluded that

resources possessed by individuals play a crucial role in determining the amount of participation. Several decades ago these resources were narrowed down to job, income and education. In their influential comparative study Verba and Nie (1972) found that people with lower socio-economic status participate less than their peers. Based on the idea of socio-economic determinants Brady et al. (1995) developed a model that accounted for several additional resources such as time and civic skills. Over time, the importance of individual resources and motivations – and the existing link between them – have been emphasized in several other studies (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Sidney Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Dalton 2008).

In the case of immigrants' individual level traits and resources appear to be linked with groups and residence environments. On the one hand, the formation of group identity based on common traits can influence political participation. In his study about Australia Bilodeau (2009) showed that residential segregation was positively associated with participation: individuals with non-English-speaking background being politically more active than others. On the other hand, social learning theories point in the direction of cultural influences to which immigrants are subjected, i.e. the interaction with various types of groups. According to this perspective, the participatory behavior is a function of values with which citizens are socialized (McAllister and Makkai 1992). In the particular case of immigrants, the socialization process can take place either in their countries of origin (Eckstein 1988) or in their countries of residence (Voicu and Comşa 2014). At the same time, the two environments of socialization are connected: McAllister and Makkai (1992) showed that experiences and values from the country of origin can influence the values acquired in the country of residence.

The political socialization of immigrants has been commonly explained through three different theories: exposure, resistance, and transferability. According to the exposure theory, immigrants change their behaviors at contact with institutions and values of countries of residence. The main thrust is the adaptation to a new political and social context: although immigrants possessed values formed during their life in the countries of origin, such forms were replaced as soon as they moved to a new country, i.e. a process of re-socialization (White et al. 2008). The resistance theory claims that, to the contrary, immigrants are unlikely to change their behavior in contact with institutions from the new country of residence, following the values internalized during their life in their countries of

origin. The transferability theory occupies the middle ground by claiming that immigrants use their pre-migration values and experiences to adapt to the new political environment where they also use them (Bueker 2005; Wals 2011).

This article adopts the approach of exposure theory to investigate the extent to which the voting behavior of Romanian immigrants in four West European countries is shaped by contact with institutions and values from their new environments of residence. The reasons to adopt this perspective lie in the particular profile of the migration system from Eastern to Western Europe. Favell (2008) argues that many immigrants from Eastern Europe made an effort to live in a Western European country mainly through filling in low end niches in the labor market. Since many of them accept jobs below their level of education, they can accumulate frustration against the host society and react against it. However, and this is the theoretical argument on which this paper builds, in spite of such potential reactions, many immigrants made efforts for better integration (e.g. language), hoping for a better future for themselves and their families. The compromises made when accepting downward mobility in terms of qualifications may reflect, on the one hand, an attitude in which institutions from the country of residence shape immigrants behavior, implicitly in political terms. On the other hand, that initial decision regarding the job could be seen as part of a long-term plan to integrate into a new society.

In particular we focus on five main determinants: length of stay, planned stay, social network of co-nationals, involvement in local communities, relations with locals. To begin with, the length of stay is a crucial component in the process of socialization with the values of the country of residence. The length of time immigrants are exposed to the political system of their country of residence is likely to increase their political integration and participation (Togeby 1999; 2004; van Londen, Phalet, and Hagendoorn 2007). In essence, individuals who live for a longer period of time in a new community develop stronger social, economic or political interests; such interests can become immediate drivers for political participation. In addition, the time spent in the country of residence allows immigrants to understand and acquire knowledge about the functioning of the system, to get accustomed to it, and to learn about possibilities of getting involved. In light of these mechanisms, immigrants with longer period of stay are more likely to vote in the elections organized in countries of residence compared to immigrants with shorter / temporary period of stay (H1a). At the same time, the adaptation process and the involvement – through voting and

other types of political participation – of immigrants in the political life of a new country is likely to produce alienation towards the old political system. In this sense, we expect those immigrants with a longer period of stay in their countries of residence to be less likely to vote in the national elections of their home country (H1b).

Following a similar logic, the willingness of immigrants to spend a longer period of time in their host country may lead to increased interest towards the issues of their adoptive society and to the partial neglect of the events in their country of origin. Differences may occur in the voting behavior of immigrants according to their planned duration of stay in the country of residence. Those immigrants who do not plan to change their place of residence in the near future are more prone to politically integrate into the political system. Their integration into a new society involves a great deal of resources that may lead to a trade-off in which some distance is taken from the politics in the country of origin. For example, immigrants may lack enough time to carefully track down on the politics of their countries of origin and current countries of residence to make an informed decision about their vote. Under these circumstances, priority may be given to the political system from the country of residence, leaving on a secondary place – if not completely aside – politics from the country of origin. Accordingly, a longer period of planned stay is expected to have a positive effect on the proclivity to vote in the elections organized in the country of residence (H2a) and a negative effect on the proclivity to vote in elections in the country of origin (H2b).

The contact with institutions from the country of residence should be higher for those immigrants who are actively involved in the life of their local community. The local level is the primary locus of interaction between citizens and political institutions and also the place where problems encountered are transformed into policy issues. Moreover, as Togeby (1999) claims, local elections produce results with immediate impact on the life of the citizens. In light of these arguments, the involvement of immigrants is both a reflection of their willingness to further integrate and a possibility to learn more about the political and social dynamic in the country of residence. The logic behind these opportunities underlines a mechanism by which immigrants with a high level of involvement in their local community vote in the elections from the country of residence (H3a). Accordingly, such immigrants are likely to perceive the country of residence as their new environment to practice electoral participation and may be less inclined to vote in the elections of their country of origin (H3b).

Complementary to the involvement in local communities, relationships developed by immigrants with locals may also foster voting in elections for the country of residence (H4a) and make voting in elections in the country of origin less likely (H4b). The logic behind our hypotheses is straightforward: better social connections with people from the local community and subsequent interactions expose immigrants to varied and greater supplies of information regarding the political system from the country of residence. This information facilitates the understanding of politics, access to political information from the surrounding environment, and enhances the possibilities to get involved (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995). In addition, good relationships with locals can also reflect the degree to which immigrants are willing to get integrated into the host society.

Finally, the contact with individuals belonging to the country of origin forms the basis of our final hypothesis regarding immigrants' voting behavior. An extensive social network of co-nationals is likely to orient immigrants towards the political processes of both the country of residence and that of origin. To begin with the country of residence, networks of immigrants may include individuals with a long period of stay, i.e. older immigrants, who are familiar with the political processes in their new country and more oriented towards political involvement (see H1 above). The presence of such persons in social networks may enhance the political participation of immigrants, including the new ones. Broader social networks are conducive to higher levels of political participation as the contact with peer immigrants with similar ethnic background – for the ease of communication – leads to an information updating regarding the situation in the country of origin and to debates regarding that situation. Also, through communication, such social networks facilitate access to opportunities for political participation in the country of origin, e.g. immigrants can find out via social networks about voting polls or learn about campaign topics. Consequently, we expect an extensive social network of co-nationals to have a positive effect on the electoral participation in both the country of residence (H5a) and the country of origin (H5b).

In addition to these five main effects, we control for education, age, and media exposure. Previous studies have revealed that the variables associated to the socio-economic status (SES) are drivers for political participation (Milbrath and Goel 1977; Conway 1991; Sidney Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry 1996). Among these, education has been explicitly emphasized as the most important component of SES (Peterson 1990; Conway 1991; Leighley 1995; Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry 1996). High levels

of education foster a better understanding of politics (i.e. higher analytical skills), makes people more aware about ways to promote their interests, and stimulate citizens' interests in politics. Similarly, earlier research has revealed the importance of gender in structuring political participation (Verba 1978; Inglehart and Catterberg 2002; Inglehart and Norris 2003).<sup>1</sup> The logic underlying these hypotheses made references to the importance of information for political participation. Information is crucial for participation because it reduces the transaction costs – a key factor in deciding whether to get involved or not. Media is the primary source for information in general and for political information in particular. The role of media can become a prominent and easily accessible source of information during electoral campaigns when voters need to know about the political programs, ideologies, and issues promoted by various candidates. So far, an extensive body of literature has shown an impact of media use on political knowledge (Drew and Weaver 1998; 2006; Scheufele 2002). Knowledge influences involvement: empirical evidence has shown that individuals who closely follow the development of the public affairs are more involved in comparison to the rest of the citizens (McLeod, Scheufele, and Moy 1999).

### **Data, Variables, and Methodology**

Data for hypothesis testing comes from a web survey conducted among the Romanian immigrants in the summer of 2013 (June-August). Romanian immigrants are the subject of this study due to their significant presence in several European countries. Earlier research focused primarily on their patterns of migration, identity, and profile (Anghel 2013) with only isolated attempts to explain the political participation or attitudes of immigrants (Careja and Emmenegger 2012). To partly fill this void in the literature our study aims to comparatively assess the political participation of Romanian immigrants and thus the web survey focused on the immigrants from the most popular Western destinations: France, Germany, Italy and Spain (Anghel 2013; Trandafoiu 2013). From a methodological perspective the selection of these four countries is adequate for two reasons. First, there is great variation in the respondents' profiles, their distribution being different both across the independent variables of this study and in terms of socio-demographic variables (e.g. age, education,

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<sup>1</sup> The study has also tested for other SES factors (e.g. occupation, interaction effects between age, education and occupation) and knowledge of the language in the country of residence. They were not reported since they had no strong or significant effect.



gender, occupation, area of residence and of origin, and experience of migration). Such variation corresponds to the broad brush reports presented in the Romanian media about migrant workers in Western Europe; they often emphasized differences in socio-economic status (e.g. occupation, education). The absence of official statistics regarding the Romanian immigrants abroad does not allow for testing the profile of the respondents in the web survey sample against the entire universe.<sup>2</sup> Second, the selected countries are fairly similar with respect to their levels of political development (i.e. established democracies) and to the provision of extensive opportunities for popular political participation. The political opportunity structure for immigrants' participation (Koopmans 2004) is relatively constant across the four countries; they all provide fairly similar environments that foster voting turnout. All four West European countries have provided for many years voting rights to immigrants in local and European elections.

The survey had no probability representative sampling and the respondents were neither pre-selected nor part of a pool of available individuals, (i.e. the so-called „convenient sample”). Instead, three channels were used to maximize the number of answers to the questionnaire: 1) messages on Facebook groups and discussion forums of Romanians abroad; 2) e-mails sent to representatives of Romanian associations and organizations formed in the countries of residence and 3) e-mails sent to individuals recommended by respondents (which are commonly known as snowball samples in survey methodology). Consequently, the analyses and findings presented in this paper are limited to the respondents covered in the web survey.

In total, there were 1,358 respondents who started the web survey. Out of these 831 (61%) answered all the questions. Although the survey had no age limit – due to a more general interest in the situation in schools – there were only three respondents under the age of 18. The abandonment rate is random without any particular question leading to defection. The distribution of complete answers across the four countries was the following (in brackets is the percentage reported to the number of initial respondents who accessed the survey in that particular country): 303 in France (62%), 206 in Germany (56%), 138 in Italy (63%) and 184 in Spain (65%). Out of the total number of collected responses 77%

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<sup>2</sup> There are several studies that provide estimates regarding the profile of Romanian immigrants to some of the four countries investigated here. In the absence of precise official data, we preferred not to rely on estimates because this could further distort the interpretation of results.

resulted from the ads posted on Facebook groups and discussion forums and 23% were generated via the e-mails sent from the web survey platform.

### *Variable Operationalization*

This subsection briefly describes the coding rules for the survey questions that form the basis of the variables that will be examined statistically in the following section. First, we define our dependent variable: whether Romanian immigrants have voted in host countries' and Romanian national legislative elections (through special voting polls in their country of residence). Surveyed respondents were asked how often they have voted in local (host countries') and Romanian national legislative elections, respondents who answered "never" were assigned with numerical value 0 and all other answers (e.g. "once," "several times," "often," and "always") with 1, thereby forming two binary response variables indicating whether respondents have voted.<sup>3</sup> While local and national elections bear different meanings for voters of the same country (and thus their turnouts vary between elections), the comparison of these two types of elections becomes meaningful in the case of immigrants. There are two reasons for this. First, the involvement of individuals in politics can be compared at these layers: voting in the elections of the community in which immigrants get integrated (local politics of host country) and voting in the national elections of the country of residence (since they are no longer allowed to vote in local elections due to residence issues). At the same time, the political participation of immigrants in local elections is regulated: they are eligible to vote in local elections when they satisfy residency requirement stipulated by their host countries. Second, immigrants are allowed to vote only in local and European elections unless they become citizens of their "new" country. European elections are held at different intervals and they are mainly about supra-national issues not directly relevant to immigrants' daily concerns. That is why they are not appropriate units of comparison. Consequently, local elections in the host country remain the empirical term of comparison for national elections in the country of residence.

Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents according to their voting in elections both in the country of origin and of residence. Apart from the large variation in voting

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<sup>3</sup> We have run models with voting as ordinal variable, corresponding to all possible answers. The results were fairly similar to those in the binary logistic regression and these are reported here for a more straightforward interpretation.

turnout across countries and elections, the percentages indicate that more immigrants tend to vote in elections organized in their country of origin than in their country of residence. Among the selected countries Spain is the only one where the gap between the two types of voting is quite small; at the other extreme Romanian immigrants in France exhibit a clear tendency of greater turnout in the Romanian national elections than in the French local elections.

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents according to the Voting Behavior**

	Vote in country of residence (%)		Vote in country of origin (%)		N
	yes	no	yes	no	
France	16	84	48	52	310
Germany	26	74	41	59	211
Italy	39	61	42	58	144
Spain	43	57	49	51	190
General	28	72	46	54	855

We now move to define a list of person attribute variables for each respondent, which will serve as explanatory variables in our regression models. The length of stay is measured on a five-point ordinal scale that has as extremes “less than 6 months” and “more than 6 years”. The planned length of stay is measured on a four-point ordinal scale having as extremes “short term (1-12 months)” and “permanently”. The respondents’ involvement in local community is measured on a five-point ordinal scale ranging from very little to very high, i.e. little, medium and high as intermediary categories. Relationships with locals are measured on a similar ordinal scale with “very poor”, “poor”, “neither good nor bad”, “good”, “very good” relationships. The social network variable is an ordinal six-point scale based on the answers to the question “What is the approximate number of Romanians you know in (host country)?”. Available answers (coded ascending) were: “none”, “one to 20”, “21 to 50”, “51 to 100”, “101 to 200” and “more than 200”.

Personal-level control variables were coded as follows: age is measured as number of years at the moment of survey; gender is a dummy variable (0 = female); education is a seven-point ordinal scale with extreme values primary schools and graduate studies; media exposure is an index of four items reflecting the frequency of access to newspapers, TV,

radio, and Internet in the country of residence. The available answers were coded on a six-point ordinal scale (and then cumulated) that corresponds to “never”, “once a month”, “two-three times a month”, “once a week”, “two-three times a week” and “daily or almost daily”. We look at media exposure in the country of residence and of origin depending on the type of voting, i.e. exposure to media in the country of origin for voting in Romanian elections.

### General findings

To test the formulated hypotheses we estimate a series of logistic regression models using the binary measure of respondents’ self-reported voting records {voted = 1, did not vote = 0} as dependent variables. The four sets of logistic models in Table 2 include the five main explanatory variables and respondents’ personal attribute variables for elections in the country of residence and of origin. To facilitate interpretation of estimated logistic coefficients, we use odds-ratios for all our regression models.<sup>4</sup>

As the results in Table 2 show length of stay, involvement in local community, and relationship with local people turn out to be significant determinants of Romanian immigrants’ voting decisions in local (country of residence) and/or their home country’s legislative elections. We now compare and interpret these coefficients and their implications for our hypotheses more substantively. First, for the variable *length of stay*, the odds that surveyed Romanian immigrants have voted in previous local elections is, on average, about 2.24 times the odds that they have not voted in those elections as the *length of stay* in the host countries increases by one measurement unit, holding other variables constant. However, for the same variable, the odds-ratio of that surveyed Romanian immigrants have voted in previous Romanian national legislative elections via absentee ballots is only about 1.13. The same pattern holds even after we included personal-level control variables (the odds-ratio becomes 2.13 and 1.26 for local and Romanian national legislative election, respectively). The results clearly privilege Hypothesis H1a over H1b, suggesting that longer *length of stay* does increase immigrants’ political participation in the host countries (H1a),

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<sup>4</sup> Here, odds-ratio is defined as the ratio of the probability of  $Y = 1$  relative to the probability of  $Y = 0$ . More substantively, in our models, odds-ratio  $\beta_k \equiv \frac{Pr(voted)}{Pr(didn'tvote)}$ , so that coefficient estimate for variable  $k$  having odds-ratio  $\beta_k > 1$  means that, other things equal, the odds that respondents voted in a given election is  $\beta_k$  time large larger than the odds for not voted

and this adaptation process also seems to generate some sort of alienation effect on their attitudes toward political participating in elections in their countries of origin.

**Table 2: Logistic Regression for Voting in the Country of Residence and of Origin**

	Vote in country of residence		Vote in country of origin	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	2.24***	2.13***	1.13*	1.26***
Length of stay	(0.26)	(0.28)	(0.08)	(0.11)
	0.96	0.88	0.84	0.82
Planned stay	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.11)	(0.12)
	1.78***	1.71***	1.40***	1.35***
Involvement	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.09)	(0.10)
	1.38***	1.26*	1.17*	1.07
Relations with locals	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.01)	(0.11)
	1.09	1.10	1.17***	1.18***
Social network	(0.68)	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.08)
		1.06***		1.01
Age		(0.13)		(0.01)
		1.29***		1.53***
Education		(0.10)		(0.10)
		1.19		1.33
Gender		(0.25)		(0.23)
		1.01		1.04*
Media exposure		(0.03)		(0.02)
Constant	0.01	0.01	0.12	0.01
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.21	0.27	0.06	0.11
LR $\chi^2$	198.64	222.63	69.97	109.39
N	787	696	787	698

Note: Reported coefficients are odds-ratios, standard errors in brackets.

\*\*\* p > 0.01; \*\*p > 0.05; \* p > 0.1

Second, we look at the effect of *involvement in local community*. The effect of involvement in local community seems to slightly increase Romanian immigrants' odds of voting in local

elections (1.78) relative to their home country's legislative elections (1.40), and these estimated did not change much after controlling for personal-level attributes (they become 1.71 and 1.35, respectively). Hence, hypothesis H3a receives more support from this associational evidence, while hypothesis H3b fails to gain any traction.

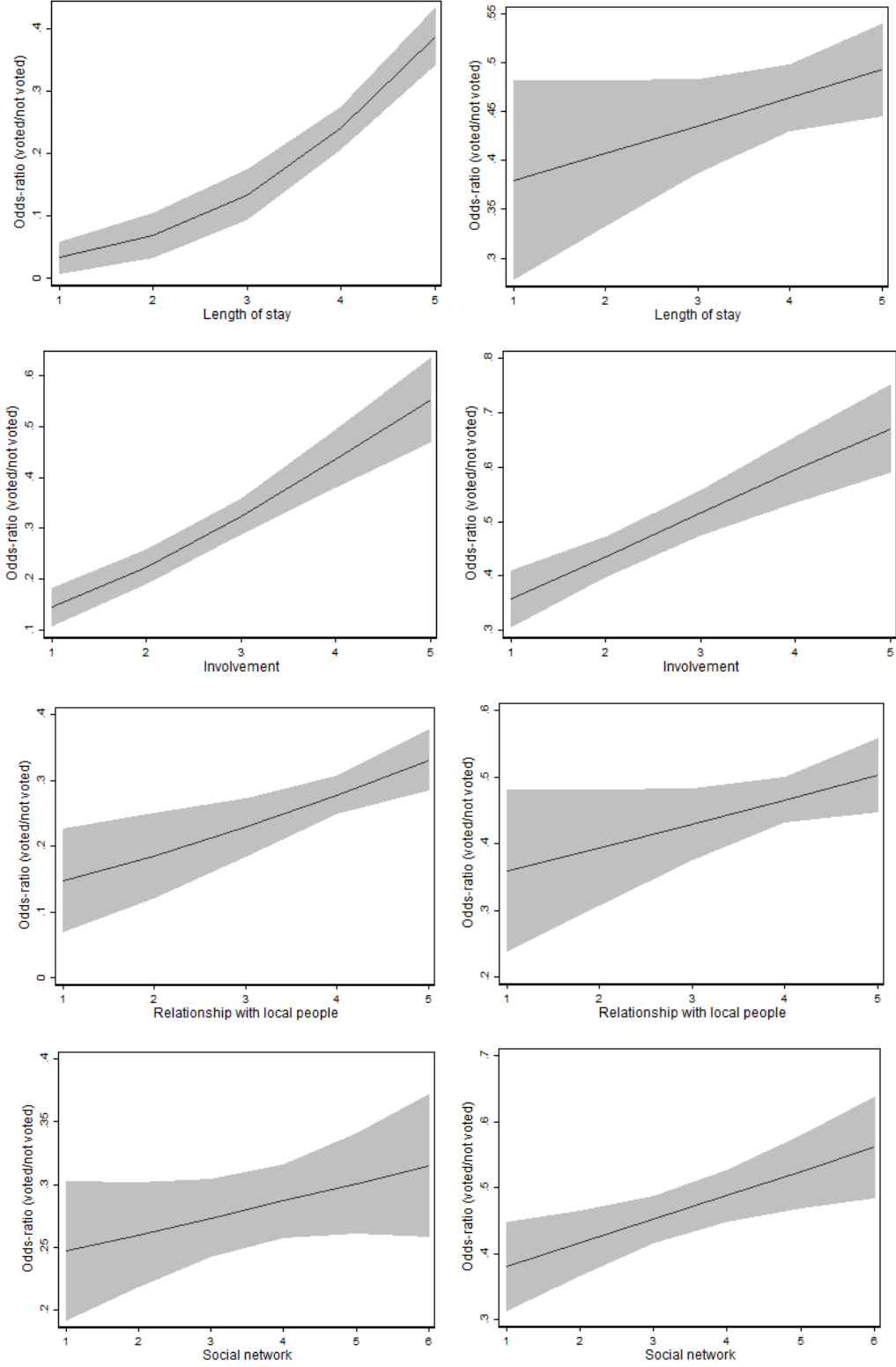
Third, the effect of *relationship with local people* on Romanian immigrants' attitudes toward political participations across these two types of elections appear to be conditioned by respondents' personal attributes. To wit, the odds-ratio that surveyed Romanian immigrants have voted in local elections relative to not having voted, subject to one measurement unit increase in *relationship with local people*, is about 1.38, and 1.17 for their home country's legislative elections. Yet, after controlling for respondents' personal attributes, these coefficient estimates are reduced to 1.26 and 1.07 respectively. These results lend direct support to Hypothesis H4a but refute Hypothesis H4b; for H4b, better *relationship with local people* seem to slightly increases Romanian immigrants' odds of having voted in their home country's legislative elections.

Finally, the effect of *social network* on Romanian immigrants' attitudes toward political participations varies across the two types of elections. Social network is not statistically significant in models testing the odds of voting in local elections, but for one measurement unit increase in *social network*, the odds of surveyed Romanian immigrants having voted in previous Romanian national legislative elections is about 1.17 times the odds of not having voted (or 1.18 times after accounting for respondents' personal attributes). The results thus support both H5a and H5b with weaker empirical evidence for H5a due to the lack of statistically significant relationship between *social network* and Romanian immigrants' voting in their host countries' elections. In addition, in all four models, *planned stay* did not exhibit any significant relationship with the dependent variables, thereby rejecting both hypotheses H2a and H2b.

To facilitate visual comparison of the effects of the above mentioned statistically significant variables (length of stay, involvement in local community, relationship with local people, and social network), we used the models with personal-level control variables, set other variables to their mean values, and plotted the marginal effects of these four variables by the two types of elections in Figure 1, where the grey areas are 95% confidence intervals. From these graphs, readers can compare the relative magnitude of odds-ratio of a particular

variable across the two types of elections and evaluate the range within which the estimated odds-ratio of a particular variable is most significant and valid.

**Figure 1: Marginal Effects of Variables by Type of Elections**  
 Marginal effects on Local elections      Marginal effects on Romanian elections



### **Patterns of electoral participations across countries of residence**

In order to better evaluate the effects of our theoretical variables on Romanian immigrants' voting decisions with each of the four host countries, we used the same model specification and ran separate logistic regression for each of the four host countries with and without personal-level control variables to partial out the link between our theoretical variables and Romanian immigrants' voting decisions from possible between-country heterogeneity and also, more importantly, to assess whether the effects of these theoretical variables on the two types of elections vary across countries—something that may be masked under our previous pooled estimates. We discuss the estimation results for each host country in turn.

#### *France*

We first look at France, the host country of most of our surveyed Romanian immigrants. The effect of *length of stay* clearly on Romanian immigrants' voting decisions differs across local and Romanian national legislative elections. One measurement unit increase in *length of stay* is associated with 1.88 times the odds of Romanian immigrants having voted in previous local (French) elections than not having voted. However, the variable is insignificant in Romanian immigrants' absentee vote decisions (without the control variables) and only became significant at 0.05 significance level after control variables were included, and one measurement unit increase in Romanian immigrants' *length of stay* in France is now associated with 1.35 times the odds of them having voted in previous Romanian national legislative elections than not having voted. Thus, Hypothesis H1a is preferred over H1b.

Second, we look at French-based Romanian immigrants' *involvement in local community*. We can see that one measurement unit increase in *length of stay* is associated with 1.71 times the odds of Romanian immigrants having voted in previous local (French) elections than not having voted. But *involvement in local community* is significantly associated with 1.16 times the odds of Romanian immigrants' having voted in their home country's legislative elections, statistically insignificant. These findings support Hypothesis H3a but their implications are mixed for H3b.



**Table 3: Logistic Regression at Country Level**

	France		Germany		Italy		Spain	
	Residence	Origin	Residence	Origin	Residence	Origin	Residence	Origin
Length of stay	1.88** (0.46)	1.35** (0.20)	1.88** (0.46)	1.48** (0.26)	2.22** (0.86)	1.85* (0.61)	2.94*** (1.12)	1.29 (0.40)
Planned stay	0.74 (0.28)	0.69 (0.17)	2.42 (1.39)	0.90 (0.29)	0.99 (0.39)	0.82 (0.30)	0.64 (0.24)	0.68 (0.23)
Involvement	1.71*** (0.29)	1.16 (0.14)	1.76*** (0.35)	1.55*** (0.25)	1.94*** (0.43)	1.28 (0.25)	1.67*** (0.32)	1.62*** (0.28)
Relations with locals	1.30 (0.33)	0.95 (0.16)	1.37 (0.44)	0.97 (0.23)	1.37 (0.43)	1.73* (0.52)	1.04 (0.28)	1.13 (0.28)
Social network	1.31* (0.21)	1.36** (0.17)	1.03 (0.18)	0.79 (0.12)	0.88 (0.15)	1.18 (0.18)	1.12 (0.16)	1.39** (0.18)
Age	1.06** (0.02)	0.99 (0.02)	1.03 (0.02)	0.99 (0.02)	1.09** (0.04)	1.01 (0.03)	1.11*** (0.03)	1.07*** (0.03)
Education	1.19 (0.19)	1.68*** (0.19)	1.69*** (0.33)	1.55*** (0.23)	1.33 (0.24)	1.44** (0.24)	1.62*** (0.28)	1.35** (0.20)
Gender	0.85 (0.37)	1.55 (0.46)	2.05 (0.94)	1.15 (0.40)	0.69 (0.34)	1.03 (0.49)	1.44 (0.63)	1.15 (0.47)
Media exposure	0.98 (0.05)	1.05 (0.03)	1.01 (0.05)	1.05 (0.04)	1.07 (0.07)	1.02 (0.05)	1.03 (0.07)	1.03 (0.04)
Constant	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.23	0.12	0.33	0.13	0.26	0.14	0.31	0.24
LR $\chi^2$	51.61	42.85	65.51	29.39	42.00	22.23	62.90	52.50
N	259	256	166	169	121	116	150	157

Note: Reported coefficients are odds-ratios, standard errors in brackets.

\*\*\* p > 0.01; \*\*p > 0.05; \* p > 0.1

Third, *social network* seems to predominantly influence Romanian immigrants' absentee voting decisions but not ~~in~~ their decisions to vote in local elections. One measurement unit increase in social network is associated with 1.36 times the odds of Romanian immigrants having voted in their home country's legislative elections through absentee ballots than not having voted. However, social network is significantly associated with 1.31 times the odds of Romanian immigrants having voted in local elections than not voted when personal-level control variables are included and only at marginally significance level of 0.1. These findings reject hypothesis H4b and only lend weak support to hypothesis H4a.

Also, relationship with local people and planned stay do not show any statistical significance in the logistic models estimating Romanian immigrants' political participation in two different types of elections in France.

### *Germany*

The length of stay is significant in both models and types of elections. Similar to the magnitude of its effect on French-based Romanian immigrants, one measurement unit increase in *length of stay* is associated with 1.88 times the odds of Romanian immigrants having voted in previous local (German) elections than not having voted. One measurement unit increase in *length of stay* is associated with 1.48 times the odds of Romanian immigrants having voted in previous Romanian national legislative elections. Again, hypothesis H1a is preferred over H1b.

For *involvement in local community*, one measurement unit increase in *involvement in local community* is associated with 1.55 times the odds of Romanian immigrants having voted in previous local (Romanian national legislative) elections than not having voted. In comparison, there are 1.76 times the odds of having voted than not having voted after accounting for person-level control variables. Clearly, hypothesis H3a is also preferred over H3b in the estimation results from Romanian immigrants living in Germany.

Note, however, in the German context, *social network* lost significance in the logistic models and as with our previous estimation results from French-based Romanian immigrants, *planned stay* and *relationship with local people* are not statistically significant- in the four logistic models estimating Romanian immigrants' political participation in two different types of elections in Germany.

### *Italy*

The effect of *length of stay* on Romanian immigrants' voting decisions differs across local and their home country's legislative elections. One measurement unit increase in the *length of stay* in Italy is significantly associated with 2.22 times the odds of Romanian immigrants having voted in local (Italian) elections than not having voted. However, *length of stay* is significant (at 0.1 level) and associated with the 1.85 times the odds that Romanian immigrants having voted in their home country's national legislative elections than not voted. In this case, hypothesis H1a is clearly supported by the associational evidences presented here, but hypothesis H1b does not seem to be well-supported here.

The effect of *involvement in local community* is only significantly associated with Romanian immigrants' voting decisions in local elections: one measurement unit increase in the involvement in local community is significantly associated with 1.94 times the odds of Romanian immigrants having voted in local elections than not having voted. By contrast, involvement in local community is only significantly associated with 1.28 times the odds of Romanian immigrants having voted in their home country's legislative elections without statistical significance. Thus, hypothesis H3a is supported by the results from the Italian case, but the results show very weak support for H3b.

Interestingly, relationship with local people turns out to have some effects on Romanian immigrants' voting decisions in both types of elections. One measurement unit increase in surveyed Romanian immigrants' *relationship with local (Italian) people* is associated with 1.37 times the odds of them having voted in local elections than not having voted (although not significant). Also, the same amount of increase in this variable is associated with 1.73 times the odds of Romanian immigrants having voted in their home country's legislative elections than not voted. We thus conclude that hypothesis H4a and H4b are all well-supported by the results here. Also, *planned stay* and *social network* do not exhibit statistical significance in any of the four logistic models drawing from the Italian sample analyzed here.

### *Spain*

The effect of length of stay is only significant in influencing Romanian immigrants' voting decisions in local (Spanish) elections. One measurement unit increase in the length of stay in Spain is significantly associated with 2.94 times the odds of Romanian immigrants having

voted in local elections than not having voted. The results lend support to hypothesis H1a and indirectly support hypothesis H1b by showing that length of stay has no significant effect on Romanian immigrants' absentee voting decisions.

The effect of involvement in local community on Romanian immigrants' voting decisions across the two types of elections is significant in all four logistic models. One measurement unit increase in involvement in local community is associated with 1.67 times the odds of Romanian immigrants having voted in local elections than not voted. Similarly, for Romanian national legislative elections, one measurement unit increase in involvement in local community is associated with 1.62 times the odds of Romanian immigrants having voted in their home country's legislative elections through absentee ballots than not voted. The estimated odds-ratios are very close for both types of elections. We therefore conclude that hypothesis H3a is supported but we cannot reject hypothesis H3b in the presence of such close odds-ratio estimates.

Our estimation results show that social network is only significant in influencing Romanian immigrants' voting decisions in their home country's legislative elections. One measurement unit increase in social network is associated with 1.39 times the odds of Romanian immigrants having voted in their home country's legislative elections than not voted. Hence, the results weakly support hypothesis H5b (because surveyed Spanish-based Romanian immigrants are marginally more likely to vote in Romanian legislative elections than not voting at all). This evidence does not reject hypothesis H5a as the estimated odds-ratio suggests that Romanian immigrants are more likely to have voted in previous local elections than not voted, although this relationship is not statistically significant.

Lastly, *planned stay* and *relationship with local people* do not show statistical significance in any of the four logistic models analyzed here, they have no significant effects in influencing Spanish-based Romanian immigrants' voting decisions in the two types of elections of our interest.

## **Conclusions**

This article analyzed the sources of voting turnout of Romanian immigrants in elections organized in their countries of origin and of residence. Following the framework of exposure theory we expected the contact with institutions, individuals and values from countries of residence to lead to greater likelihood in participation in elections organized in those

countries. At the same time, such contacts were supposed to alienate immigrants from domestic politics in their home country and diminish their electoral participation in elections organized there. Empirical evidence indicates that length of stay in a country (H1a), involvement in the problems of local community (H3a) and relations with locals (H4a) increase to the likelihood of political participation through voting in elections organized in the countries of residence. Furthermore, empirical evidence allows us to gauge the hypothesis according to which an extensive social network of co-nationals has negative effects on voting in the country of residence. While this negative effect is not in place, such a social network has less influence on voting in elections in the country of residence than it has on participation in elections from the country of origin (H5b). Among the control variables, education plays an important role in electoral participation – slightly higher for Romanian elections – with more educated people getting more involved. With few exceptions, all these results are valid at country level with only negligible differences between the strength and direction of effects.

These results bear important implications for the study of migrant electoral participation. First, exposure theory finds little empirical support in the case of Romanian immigrants from recent waves. As our analysis suggests political participation in elections organized in both countries of residence and countries of origin have similar determinants; the only difference is exhibited by the strength of effect with some visible differences for key factors such as length of stay. Accordingly, to better understand the electoral participation of voters, transferability theory may plausibly work as a better approach. On balance, our findings suggest that immigrants - at least for the Romanian immigrants sample examined here - appear to implement in their new environments what they have been practicing in their countries of origin. This is one reason for which factors have similar directions and intensity of effects. However, the socialization process clearly exists in reality and this effect is highly observable (i.e. different size of effects) for immigrants after few years of residence in a new country. Second, electoral participation does not depend on plans of residence or on age. This is important because it adds new nuances to the profiles of immigrants who participate in elections. In this sense, the age structure does not reflect the active participation in elections – as often happens in many European societies. The fact that participation in both types of elections is not positively associated with planned stay

indicates that immigrants are willing to engage in politics – through their newly-gained suffrages as an „alien voters” – no matter where they live and for how long.

Finally, in light of recent resurgence of experimental or quasi-experimental methods in social science research (Druckman 2011), immigrant voters residing in countries where institutional designs allow them to participate in both local elections and elections organized by their countries of origin serve as an ideal platform to experimental-minded researchers to study the “treatment effects” of specific immigration and/or integration policies by gauging immigrants’ observed political participation behaviors across different types of elections, as we do here, which will lead to some insightful researches and help to inform better policy design.

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