

PRE-ANALYSIS PLAN

How Does Migration Shape Views on Immigration? A Quasi-Natural Experiment

Olgahan Çat ¹

1 Introduction

This pre-analysis plan (PAP) outlines the design, hypotheses, and analytical strategy for a project investigating how international migration shapes individuals' attitudes toward immigration. The project uses a quasi-natural experiment based on the U.S. Diversity Visa (DV) Lottery, which provides near-random variation in the opportunity to migrate. The primary goal is to understand how firsthand migration experience influences attitudes toward immigration in both the migrant's country of origin and their new host country.

2 Theoretical Framework

The act of migrating internationally is transformative. Migrants must navigate new institutions, legal systems, identities, and norms, often under stressful and uncertain conditions. As such, migration may reshape how individuals understand borders, nationhood, and belonging—not just for themselves but also for others.

Two theoretical mechanisms provide competing expectations. First, migration may lead to greater empathy and solidarity. Experiencing the difficulties of resettlement firsthand may foster more inclusive attitudes, especially toward vulnerable migrant groups like asylum seekers or undocumented individuals. This mechanism would predict that migrants express more positive views toward immigration overall.

Second, migration may reinforce exclusionary attitudes, particularly if migrants who entered legally through selective programs begin to see themselves as more deserving than others. This dynamic may heighten distinctions between legal and illegal migration or between voluntary and forced migration. Migrants might adopt boundary-drawing attitudes to preserve the perceived legitimacy of their own mobility.

These theoretical pathways motivate competing hypotheses about how migration changes attitudes. On the one hand, the empathy pathway suggests that migrants will adopt more inclusive views. This leads

¹Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Brown University

to the expectation that they will express more support for immigration into both their home country and the United States, compared to non-migrants who did not win the lottery. Specifically, I expect that:

Migrants will express more positive attitudes toward immigration into their home country relative to non-migrants (H1a). Likewise, they will express more favorable attitudes toward immigration into the United States, including asylum seekers and other vulnerable groups (H2a).

On the other hand, the boundary-making pathway leads to the opposite prediction. If migrants emphasize legality and deservingness, they may develop more restrictive views. In that case, migrants may express more negative attitudes toward immigration into their home country (H1b), possibly reflecting a protective or idealized view of their origin society. Similarly, they may be less supportive of unauthorized immigration into the United States, even if they support legal migration channels (H2b).

These hypotheses reflect the underlying tension between solidarity and status protection in migrant political behavior. The empirical analysis aims to adjudicate between these competing expectations using a quasi-randomized design.

3 Research Design

This project leverages the random selection process of the U.S. Diversity Visa (DV) Lottery. Individuals from a given home country who enter the lottery and are selected are offered the opportunity to migrate legally to the U.S., whereas those not selected generally remain in their country of origin. Because entry into the lottery is self-selected but random selection among entrants is exogenous, comparing lottery winners and losers provides causal leverage on the effect of migration.

The primary sample consists of individuals from a single home country who entered the DV Lottery. The treatment group includes those who were selected and subsequently migrated to the U.S., while the control group includes those who were not selected and remained in their home country. All respondents applied to migrate, which helps account for underlying migration desire.

4 Outcomes of Interest

The key outcomes of interest are individuals' attitudes toward immigration. These attitudes will be measured through a battery of survey items designed to capture views across three domains. First, the survey includes questions about immigration to respondents' home country, encompassing both general immigration sentiment and attitudes specific to refugee migration. Second, the survey assesses attitudes

toward immigration to the United States, with distinctions made between legal and unauthorized forms of migration. Finally, a third set of items measures symbolic boundaries, including perceptions of who deserves to migrate, what constitutes legality in migration, and views on migrant integration.

All items are pre-specified and will be measured using a Likert scale. Where appropriate, composite indices will be constructed by taking standardized averages of multiple items that tap into the same underlying concept, in order to improve reliability and facilitate interpretation.

5 Empirical Strategy

The main identification strategy relies on intention-to-treat (ITT) comparisons between DV lottery winners and losers. The primary regression specification is:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta \text{DVWin}_i + \gamma X_i + \epsilon_i$$

where Y_i is an outcome measuring attitudes toward immigration, DVWin_i is an indicator for being selected in the DV lottery, and X_i is a vector of baseline covariates (age, gender, education, urban/rural background, etc.). Standard errors will be clustered at the level of DV application if relevant.

Secondary analyses will explore heterogeneity by education, gender, and political ideology. I will also examine whether effects differ depending on whether the attitude in question concerns legal, unauthorized, or refugee migration.

6 Power and Sample Size

Sample size is based on estimated response rates from targeted recruitment of past DV applicants. Assuming a minimum detectable effect size of 0.3 standard deviations and a standard 80% power threshold, the required sample size is approximately 175 per group. Recruitment will continue until at least 200 observations are collected per arm.

7 Data Collection and Ethics

All respondents will be recruited online through targeted outreach to DV applicants. Screening questions will ensure eligibility and balance across treatment and control groups. Informed consent will be obtained prior to participation. The project has been reviewed and approved by an IRB.

8 Deviations from Plan

Any deviations from this pre-analysis plan will be transparently documented in the final paper and supplementary materials. Analyses not pre-specified here will be labeled as exploratory.

References