Vargas-Ramos, Carlos
Reseña de "Latino Politics: Identity, Mobilization, and Representation" de Rodolfo Espino, David L. Leal, and Kenneth J. Meier
The City University of New York
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Roughly twenty years since the publication of the first comprehensive survey on the politics of Latinos in the United States, a new anthology by a new wave of scholars sees the light of day. They show, among other things, how much has been accomplished and how much is yet to be done on the subject. This is certainly echoed in the second to last essay by Valerie Martinez-Ebers and Manuel Avalos, entitled “We’ve come a Long Way, but Not Far Enough”.

The political involvement of people of Latin American descent in the United States remains a subject in need of sustained scholarly attention. It is receiving some, but not as much as it requires. Martinez-Ebers and Avalos raise the issue of scholarly capacity as well as scholarly acceptance in the larger field of American politics (embodied in the anecdotal comment in Rodney Hero’s foreword and in Kenneth Meier’s concluding essay) to account for the continuing relative dearth of literary output about Latino politics. On the one hand, there is still a significant under-representation of Latinos with Ph.D. degrees in political science (3 percent of all PhDs in political science in 2001 are held by Latinos), and while the number of Latino graduate students in political science programs has hovered around 6 percent—an encouraging fact—there is no guarantee that those Latino political scientists will pursue research on Latino politics or that they will remain in the academia.

Second, there is the issue of acceptance by the canonical outlets in the discipline. Citing a review of four leading political science peer-reviewed journals in the United States, Martinez-Ebers and Avalos show that, in the past 40 years, only twenty articles on Latino politics have been published in those leading publications. This fact points to the resistance or indifference by the American political science establishment to analyses that focus either exclusively or largely on Latinos (or other ethnoracial groups) as subjects. The problem is more serious when the subject is a specific Latino sub-group, whether studied as case study or singularly. At best, studies that focus on the Mexican-origin population may receive some editorial consideration given their larger proportion of the Hispanic population of the country. Others do not receive the same treatment.

The consequences of this state of scholarly affairs for scholars doing research on Latino politics are felt when facing administrative evaluation of their production and contributions to knowledge. Given the reliance on seemingly value neutral metrics of quality production and impact (e.g., total number of articles published in relation to those published in leading discipline journals and the number of citations by other scholars who publish in those leading journals) to assess academic merit, scholars of Latino politics face a serious challenge, which impinges on faculty promotion, retention, and ultimately the capacity to produce more knowledge on the subject. The cycle is vicious. The consequences are clear. There’s a trickle up in Latino political scholarship and scholars, but the bulk of the research and scholarly production remains largely peripheral and often marginalized.
Nonetheless, knowledge on Latino politics is being produced, and it is being disseminated continuously. This anthology is testament to that effort.

The edited volume contains 16 essays, organized in five parts: Latino identity politics, Latino political action, Latino coalitional politics, Latino political representation, and the future of Latino politics research, in addition to the introduction and foreword. Most of the substantive essays in the collection exhibit a strong emphasis on quantitative analysis. Eleven of the topical chapters engage in some form of quantitative analysis or formal modeling. Of these quantitative methodology essays, four use surveys that are national in scope (e.g., the Latino National Political Survey, the National Survey on Latinos in America, Tomás Rivera Policy Institute’s Immigrant Political Participation Survey), while five relied on more local data, whether at the state or municipal level, along with national level data such as NALEO accounts of Latino elected officials. Two essays relied on Congressional voting records. This reliance on quantitative analysis is both a strength and a weakness for the studies.

A quantitative approach allows not only the formulation of hypotheses and the conceptualization or reconceptualization of understandings about the political behavior or opinions of Latinos. It also contributes something else. Quantitative analysis adds value by allowing for the testing of these hypotheses in a single effort. While the results of this testing may not be sufficient to confidently support a hypothesis or theory, they often do. Even when the effort is experimental, such as Barreto’s analysis, the ground broken by such explorations facilitates greatly posterior empirical testing. Moreover, an experimental approach such as Barreto’s uncovers more nuanced understandings of the effects that ethnic attachment may have on an individual’s preference for a candidate, separate and apart from the indirect effect it may have mediated by partisan attachments. When such findings conform to expectation of the canonical literature, a contribution to knowledge is made. However, when such findings challenge what is known or expected, then the contribution is greater.

Manzano’s contribution is of this nature. Her findings on the impact of outwardly oriented social capital on Latino political participation would conform to the expectation of the political science literature. But, additionally, her findings that more insular or inwardly oriented social capital does not interfere with political participation fly in the face of what has been assumed in the field.

On the other hand, relying on nationwide survey data can obscure particularities about Latinos in general and Latino sub-groups in particular. As is well known, the Mexican origin population is by far the largest Latino subgroup, and most Latinos reside in California and Texas. Any representative survey at the national level will reflect these facts, smoothing out whatever difference there may exist between, say, Mexican and Puerto Ricans in their political affinity and relations with African Americans, the subject of Rodrigues and Segura’s essay. Moreover, rarely are politics in the United States practiced at the national level. Not only do people engage in political activity at the local level, but even when the engagement is oriented toward national policy, the focus tends to be circumscribed by dynamics at the state level, including, for instance, presidential elections. Considering that even though there are Latinos in every state of the union, 80 percent of the Latino population of the US is concentrated in nine states, state level samples will compensate for this smoothing effect.

The anthology includes five essays relying on data at this level of analysis or even the municipal level, which contributes to capture, and therefore control for,
local variations providing for a more accurate reflection of Latino political behavior. Particularly fruitful are the three essays by Rocha, Gonzalez Juenke, and Theobald, which focus their analysis at the level of the school district. Rocha’s finding that African-American representation in school boards or school bureaucracy does not decrease with an increase in Latino representation in these settings (while Latino representation decreases as African American representation increases) can help frame the discussion on cooperation between both minority groups. Gonzalez Juenke’s and Theobald’s individual findings are also complementary in demonstrating what the impact of Latino representation is on the hiring of teachers and administrators, and in the implementation of English Language Learner programs.

Of course, the limitation to this state level of analysis approach is the limited generalizability of the results. The solution, to which the contributors to the volume would agree, is engaging in the same or similar type of research in, say, the nine largest Latino population states simultaneously. The challenge is, of course, how the distribution of research resources is constrained by capacity and acceptance.

A number of contributors to the anthology (e.g., Espino and Leal, Jones-Correa, Rodrigues and Segura, and Martinez-Ebers and Avalos) remark on the pressing need for attention to researchable subjects on Latinos in the United States, and their political involvement in particular, given their rapidly increasing population and their diversity. This is certainly appropriate and reasonable. With the rapid growth and dispersion of Latino subgroups such as Salvadoran, Dominican, Guatemalan, or Colombian cohorts, attention must be paid to these groups singularly and in the context of the larger Latino grouping and polity more generally. But to insinuate, as Fraga and Navarro do when outlining future research on Latina politics, that because the traditionally second and third largest Latino subgroups—Puerto Ricans and Cubans—compose only 8.6 percent and 3.7 percent of the Latino population, respectively, while collectively Central and South Americans make up 14.3 percent of the Latino population to be “the second largest grouping,” is to suggest that more attention must be paid to these “emerging” Latino groups, potentially even at the expense of the former. Doing so would result in the loss of important points and give rise to serious implications.

In the aggregate, Caribbean Hispanics (i.e., Cubans, Dominicans, and Puerto Ricans) represented 15 percent of the Latino population in 2006, whereas Central and South Americans (representing 14 national origin groups) comprised only 13 percent. Thus, from simply a numerical logic it would follow that scholarly and public policy attention must be devoted to these Caribbean Hispanics. Of course, the logic becomes moot when the single largest Latino subgroup—the Mexican origin population—made up 64 percent of Latinos in the U.S. in 2006. But research attention to Latinos must not and cannot become a zero-sum game. Cubans and Cuban Americans will continue to be an important Latino subgroup to study because of their singularity. They break the aggregate Latino norm in terms of age and socioeconomic structures, and in their geographic concentration, as well as in terms of their partisanship and legislative representation. The fact that they have been able to translate their political incorporation into a political representation that is double that of their proportion in the population alone is reason to continue to focus on their experience. But as the Latino population in, for example, Florida becomes more diverse as a result of both immigration and internal migration, greater focus will have to be placed in inter-Latino political relations. Will there continue to be an absolute Cuban political dominance in Florida as more Latinos, particularly Puerto
Ricans, settle in that state? Or will Democrat Puerto Ricans come to neutralize the Republican Cubans in statewide elections, including presidential elections, considering how Puerto Rican growth in that state between 2000 and 2006 was estimated to be approximately 41 percent, while Cuban growth was 27 percent. Or will Puerto Ricans in Florida become more Republicans as they settle in political jurisdictions dominated by Republican machines? Or will states where no single Latino subgroup comes to dominate the demographic or political spectrum, such as New Jersey, show the future of Latino politics in the country?

The solution is more research and wider breath of this research. This collection of essays is a good example of what can be accomplished. Collaboration and mentorship between established scholars and the junior cohort is also necessary. Resources for this are required. Will professional organizations such as the American Political Science Association contribute? ...

NOTES

1 In 2001, there were 68,000 Latinos with doctoral degrees in any field, a number that represented 3.2 percent of the total number of people with doctorates in the United States, which highlights further the underrepresentation of Latinos with PhDs in political science (Source: Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2001).

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**America Beyond Black and White: How Immigrants and Fusions are Helping US Overcome the Racial Divide**

By Ronald Fernandez

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REVIEWER: VíCTOR M. RODRÍGUEZ, California State University—Long Beach

It is not a coincidence that early social science research in the United States was focused on making sense of the dynamics of immigration, race, and culture. While America is a nation of immigrants, immigrants have been racialized, eulogized, and despised. In Chicago, sociologists like Robert Park developed theoretical models that attempted to make sense of the dynamic changes in United States society, brought about by the growing numbers of immigrants in their midst. Historically, in this country, race, culture, and immigration have walked through overlapping paths. Racialization—that social and historical process by which individuals and group are assigned a racial identity and status—has hinged on the interrelationship of ideas and practices about race, culture, and immigration.

But today, a color-blind ideology has become dominant, both in the popular culture and in legal discourse. Since the 1978 Bakke decision, the high courts of the United States have slowly created a legal foundation for the illusion that race and class are no longer the core organizing principles of this nation. No legal stone is left unturned, and last June 28, 2007, the Supreme Court decided that the voluntary efforts taken by school systems in Seattle and Kentucky to desegregate were not protected under the 1954 Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board*. According to the majority of the court, these segregated school systems were not products of state policies but were “societally caused” (de facto)—as if the “state” and “society” were independent spheres