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Introduction

Latinos—U.S. residents c xican American, Puerto Rican. Cuban. or a variety of other "Hispanic" backgrounds—are the nation's second-largest minority group. after African Americans. comprising about e percent of the population. They are also one of the nation's fastest-growing groups and may well be the largest minority by early in the twenty-first century Latinos already constitute 25 percent or more of the population in California and Texas. Latino students in elementary and secondary schools represent disproportionately large shares of the rchool-age population and probably actual school attenders: in the future, this disproportion will probably increase. Vet. despite their numbers. Latinos in the United States have not received much attention in political science research. and there has been little effort to bring together or systematically discuss the implications of the analyses that do exist (Avalos 1989; Wilson 1985: Barber 1990). The dearth of research on Latino politics is itself notable and suggestive. (We speculate on this in Chapter 10.)

Latino politics has panicular characteristics that should be recognized and understood in and of themselves: at the same time, it must also be viewed in relation to the larger U.S. political system (see M. Garcia 1989, 302). For example. because of population concentration. urban politics is the arena in which we would expect Latino political activity to be greatest: we therefore need to look at recent theoretical and "empirical" work regarding the broader urban political system.

Similarly. education, a major policy concern in U.S. society in general, is especially salient for Latinos. given their low socioeconomic status, because of its significance for economic and social mobility.

Understanding Latino politics in the United Stater has proved challenging and elusive, for a number of interrelated reasons. First, there is a question whether scmething that can be delined as Latino or Hispanic politics really exists. The question arises partly from the diversity of the Hispanic population. Indeed, several identifiable Latino groups can be identified by nationality. Mexican Americans make up about 62 percent of the total Latno population, Puerto Ricansabout 15 percent, and Cubans 5 percent; the remaining 18 to 20 percent are "other Hispanics." Moreover, substantial differences exist, for instance. within jusi one of the Latino groups, Mexican Americans, in terms of socioeconomic status, historical experience in the various southwestern states, and so on (Connor 1985; Garcia and de la Gaiza 1977). Consequently it is not readily apparent that there is a Latin3 politics. Latinos may be a group in name—a nominal group—but not necessarily a politically identifiable group. Some observers see thii lack of political ana related social-psychological identification. within as well as between group,, as a major explanation for the lack of Latino political influence, "Latino politics" assumes certain similarities within and between groups of Americans of Hispanic descent that have not always been borne out in polit cal action or in research.

Nevertheless. as Joan Moore and Harry Pachon (1985) point out, viewing "Hispanics" (their word) as a distinctive group may he appropriate. First. the life situations of all Hispanic minorities in the United States seem to be converging; this is occurring despite their disiinctive histories and separate icentities. "Second. the Hispanic populations are increasingly being treatrd as a group with common characteristics and common problems. In some respects. they are beginning to think of themselves as sharing many problems" (Moore and Pachon 1985. 2). Moreover. there has been a very large increase in the total number of Hispanics.

A related issue is idrntification. that is. the appropriate name or label to attach to a group. In this book I use the term "Latino," although it should be noted that "Hispanic' has become widely and popularly accepted. Considerable, and often heated. debate har taken place over the more correct or appropriate name. Despite precedents for its use, several scholars have criticized "Hispanic" as a label largely imposed by government agencies, particularly the U.S. Census Bureau.

for the sake of convenience and simplicity. The methods and definitions used by government entities to describe Latinc groups in the United States is itself an important example of the social and political "structuring of ethnicity" (see Muñoz 1989; Acuna 1988: Gimenez 1989).

Some have also criticized "Hispanic" as masking the diversity within and between Latino groups. As such, it acts as a form of stereotyping (Melville 1988). The tern emphasizes. or overemphasizes. the Spanish or European arpects of the Latino political experience, while it deemphasizes experiences in the Americas, particularly the experience of conquest by the United States.

"Latino" is preferred by some because it strongly recognizes the New World, that is. the non-European aspects of historical experience. and, perhaps, because similar terms were used relatively early by prominent grcups. One of the Erst and major Mexican American groups, the League of United Latin Anirrican Citizens (LULAC). formed in the 1920s in Texas, may be the best example of this. Also. beginning in the late nineteenth century, Cubans and Spaniard: (and Italians as well) in Tampa, Florida, were generally referred to collectively as "Latins" (Mormino and Pozzetta 1987), and the term's Spanish equivalent, "Latino." was frequently used by the Spanish and Cuban populations in that area.

Group identification is complex and perhaps should be viewed as a process involving social, political. and individual dimensions. Individuals may *perceive* themielves to be members of a particular *ethnic–racial* group, but self-definitions emerge at least partly, or primarily or even solely, in response to social and political structures and pclicies. And they are reinforced by them. Ethnic–racial identification cannot be simply taken for granted or as a given. It is a "dependent variable," something to be understood and explained. This need results from the importance of individual designation for political and policy purposes.

The U.S. Constitution (Article I. section 1, later modified by the Founeenth Amendment) specified that representation in Congress was to be determired by numbers. "which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of **free** Persons. ***including*** *those* ***bound to Service*** for ***a Term*** *of Years,* and excluding *Indians* not taxed, ***three fifths of all other persons."*** Well before the rise of the major Latino interest group. the U.S. Census Bureau began grappling with ways of defining groups for census purposes. Such practices underscore the political and social structuring of ethnic politics. In short, demography plays a large pan in

social and political delinition—and in the way and degree to which government, politics. and related processes are factors ***not*** adequately explored **in** U S . political research as it penains to m nority groups.

Definition is or can be both enabling and delimiting —and perhaps both simultaneously. On the one hand, individual and group identifications may serve purposes of pride and self-esteem; self-identification may also serve "strategic" purposes, leading to greater access to government programs and benefits. On the other hand, certain labels may serve as cues to the broader society that a group is a subordinate one, chat it contributes little positively to society and has, perhaps, little to contribute. In any event. group labels suggest the political nature of issues and the difficulty in even specifying the group(s) of interest.

Another issue is ethnicity in relation to other variables, particularly socioeconomic ones. Political observers generally have viewed race–ethnicity as an "independent variable," that is, as a variable that explains some other phenomenon, such as voting. And, many times, race and ethnicity are treated **as** simple, and static, phenomena. It is **not** unusual, for instance, to find social science research that codes data in the following way: black = 1; white = 2. This seems to occur both at the levels of political analysis, theorizing, and research and in practical or day-to-day politics. Whether it is appropriate (see Barrera 1979) to consider ethnic–racial background as just another variable along with. or in contrast or opposition to, traditional socioeconomic measures such as education and income. in terms of inquiry has been a matter of substantial debate.

Some observers havs claimed that at the practical political level, race–ethnicity has beer made a focus **of** attention in order to deflect attention from other, perhaps more fundamental social divisiors (e.g., social or economic class) and from fundamental policy questiors (e.g., the distribution **of** wealth in society [Wolfinger 1974, 61–73]) Other analysts have been more inclined to see linkages between social class and substantive policy, on the one hand, and ethnic politics on the other. In this view, ethnic consciousness is a shorthand way of referring to social class that avoids Americans' distaste for the idea **of** class distinctions. In any event, the interplay of class and race has sometimes led to conceptual ambiguity from the standpoint of analysis.

Recently it has been said that "arguments about whether the real problem is race [ethnicity–culture] or class, and arguments whether recent U.S. racial progress is real or a sham, are miscast. We can understand the conditions of [ethnic—racial minorities in the United

State;] only by specifying the complex and changing connections among race and class, progress and regress. not by posing one against the other" (Hochschild 1988. 188; emphasis added). These questians of ethnicity–race and class. from the standpoint of both the study and the practice of politics, are important. Yet they have often complicated our understanding of the matter. They are addrersed a number of times in later chapters.

Another issue to think about is that of specifying and developing appropriate theoretical frameworks—ways tc study or understand Latino politics. Political science research has not been especially helpful in this regard (again, see Avalos 1989). This, according to some observers, is because the emphasis in political saence theory and research has been overwhelmingly on the experiences of European groups in the northeastern and midwestem United States. This Atlantic immigration. immigran: analogy, or Eurocentric focus doer not seem especially useiul for understanding Latinos or blacks (Blaunet 1969; Omi and Winant *1986:* 3arrera 1979; Garcia and de la Garza 1977). Relatedly, common notions or assumptions about interest group, and interest-group theory. may not necessarily apply to Latinos (is developed in Chapter 4).

What is suggested, then, is that understanding Lztino politics is challenging because of its theoretical placement. According to Pachon (1985), for example, the Mexican American experierre differs from the European mmigrant experience in several ways. First, Mexican Americans were discriminated against on a racial basis, while Europeans were not. Second. Mexican Americans were "associated with a traditionally subordinate and conquered population." the American Indians. Third, Europeans came to cities in the eastern United States at a time when urban political machines could be used to pursue their interests. Machine politics was much less common in the Southwest. where Mexican Americans were concentrated; wher: political machines did exist, Chicanos scored political gains. In contrast, color or race barriers have been less extreme for Mexican Americans than for black.

Similarly, as Falcon (1988) points out, important differences between Puerto Ricans and blacks in New York City, to lake one example, emanate in large part from different historical experiences. "The effects of the biack experience with slavery in the United States comparec to the Latino colonial experience are critical to any understanding of many of the current values and perceptions of each

group"; and "while American blacks have developed a distinctive heritage after close to four hundred years in the United States, Latinos come from culturally and/or politically foreign countries. Compared to the black *rootedness* in *the U.S. experience*, albeit in a subordinate relationship. Latinos have a more *tenuous* relationship" (Falcon 1988, 184, 176; emphasis added). The "distinct" and "tenuous" nature of Latino status in the United States has made it difficult to dwelop explanatory frameworks appropriate to their unique status.

Furthermore. unique structural features have been noted in discussions of Mexican Americans relative to other ethnic groups in the United States (Glazer 1985). There structural features also are relevant, to greater or esser degrees. to Puerto Ricans and Cubans in the United Stares. One feature is the common border, Mexico's proximity to the United States which would also seem imponant for Pueno Rico and Cuba. Pueno Rico is a U.S. commonwealth, its citizens are U.S. citizen?: Cuba is only ninety miles from the coast of Florida. A second feature is conquered territories: "that the American Southwest was once a pan of Mexico is a reality in the listing of structural features even if it has no present consequence." according to Glazer (1985). But some interpretations would contend that the long-term consequences of conquest have been more important for Mexican Americans than Glazer suggests. Pueno Rico was obtained subsequent to the Spanish-American War and was administered as a colony for 3 number of years: Cuba was administered by the U.S. government for a brief period after the same war and was subsequently closely linked to the U.S. government.

Donald Horowitz (1985) has asserted that "the history of Mexicans in tie United States has two sides, and bcth are imponant." On the one hand, a "fairly small but significant Mexican population was encaprulated" in the United States as a result of the war with Mexico. which ended in 1848: its treatment "was consistent with the treatment of a conquered population." On the nther hand. there is another, later. arguably more important side. "voluntary inmigration," which began most clearly coincident with the Mexican Revolution. in about 1910. In some respects, then, "the history of Mexican-American immigration parallels that of the great voluntary migrations of Europeans. which took place for the most part somewhat earlier. Both push and pull. bott political and economic incentives played a pan. The experience of Mexican Americans reflects their dual origins in the United States" (Horowitz 1985, 70).

Some scholars have placed primary emphasis on the first side, the initia. contact or the conquest aspect; others have emphasized the "voluntary immigration" aspect of Mexican American presence in the United States. Still others argue that both sides are significantly interrelated. It has been said for instance, that the initial contact of Merican Americans as U.S. citizens was important in "setting the stage" for later devebpments. Mexican Americans, and Native Americans. may have been seen as obstacles to America's "manifest destiny" in a way that other groups, such as Orientals and blacks. 'were not. These different emphases implicitly seem to affect how the Mexican American. and the broader Latino. situation has been viewed (these issues are revisited later).

A third important feature of the Mexican American situation is economir differences. Glazer (1985) contends that the contemporary Mexican economic situation in relation to the United States is unique in that "no other highly ceveloped country shares a long land frontier, or indeed any land frontier at all, with a developing country." Puerto Rico. while also a developing country, is a U.S. entity. The significance of this feature regarding the Cuban population is less clear.

Another aspect that has implications for politics seemingly important for Latinos. yet is difficult to pin down, is their categorization. There are parallels between the Latino—particularly Mexican American and Puerto Rican—and black situations. But Latinos have generally teen considered to he white by Census Bureau definitions, and often in terms of self-definition. Yet the Latino historical experience in the United States has diverged from that of most Anglo and other ethnic groups (and the word "Anglo,' as used in the Southwest, means non-Hispanic white), including thoie eastern and southern Europeans who settled in the Northrast and Midwest ir the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Some areas make a tripartite distinction between white. nonwhite (i.e., Mexican or Mexican American), and black, Thus neither ethnicity nor race seems entirely appropriate in discussing Latino politics although "racism" has often been used to describe Anglo attitudes and behaviors toward various Latino groups.

Perhaps a distinctive quality of Latino politics is that of cultural politics. although a central component of culture. language, has lessened in use over time among Hispanics. A central component of the "Chicano" Movement in the mid 1960s to mid 70s was cultural pride, or cultural nationalism. This broad cultural notion seems to be sufficiently strong to maintain the nction of a Latino politics. But that notion has

not been sufficiently powerful to provide a clear-cut. action-oriented political program. That is. culture has been a source of pride, something precious to be defended against implicit and explicit denigration: what it has actually meant beyond this in the context of U.S. politics has not been made clear (Muñoz 1989). Culture dues, however. seem to have an important impact in terms of political participation and policy outcomes (see Chapters 4 and 8).

Related to cultural politics and its somewhat diffuse, even ambiguous. focus are several questions. What are the goals of Latino politics? Does Latino politics mean specific attentian to government policies and programs focused on the Latino population, or does it mean attention to general policies that are particularly salient for Latinos because of their socioeconomic status? Or does it mean both? Does it mean a greater emphasis on symbolic politics? Do Latinos merely have interests like any other interest group, or do they, like other minority groups. raise different issues and. at least implicitly, more fundamental value questions? One suspects that they are more likely to have to do both.

Part of what is implied in our discussion. then, is that Latinos are "different" politically (Browning. Marshall, and Tabb 1990; Meier and Stewart 1991). In many ways, a theoretically intriguing aspect of understanding Latino politics may lie in its uniqueneis or its "betweenness" relative to dominant (Anglo or white) or other ethnic immigrant groups (e.g., the Irish and the Italians). on the one hand. and other minority groups (e.g., African Americans or Native Americans) on the other. That uniqueness has made the study of Latino politics particularly difficult and elusive. For better or worse, the discussions and analyses presented in this book reflect the intellectual elusiveness of Latinos' unique status.

An understanding of Latino politics seems to require a reliance on *concepts* and *perspectives*, and perhaps *methodological* approaches. that lie somewhere between several concepts arid theoretical models. Similarly. an understanding of Latino politics seems to lie between race and ethnicity. or race–ethnicity and class. It reflects concerns for ecuality and community, the relation and tension between interests and values, and between symbols and substance. The uniqueness, and challenge, of Latino politics can be illustrated by the position af Latinos relative to the other large minority group in the United States: blacks. By several. though not all. measures of socioeconomic status, Latinos fare better than blacks; this would be expected because Latinos did not

endure slavery and the formal diicrimination blacks experienced. But Latinos have had substantially less political success than blacks to this point (Welch 1990). at least in the ways **that** such success is typically defined, by levels of political partcipation. electoral successes. and the like.

One focus of this book is its attention to the unicueness ard "between-nesses." and the resulting paradoxes and tensions that are evident in Latino politics. Apparent are the dilemmas faced by Latinos in terns of the group itself (or groups themselves), and important contextual or politicosocial structural factors that have **not** been sufficiently emphasized in examinations of Latino politics. As pan of this, I link micro and macro perspectives.

Any study of Latino politics requires that we focus at several levels. We need some understanding of the internal dimensions of the group—the basic differences within a particular group and the degree of social. economic, geographical division within the group (e.g., the Mexican American group). **A** second issue requiring attention **is** the essential similarity, the "core qualities" of a particular group. A third focus is the bases for coalitinn **among** several groups. for example, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans. in the Latino category.

At the broad level, the study of Latino politics is valuable for a variety of reason:. **A** focus on what is often referred to **as** minority politics implies an alternative perspectiv: on majority politics—the political operations and activities of the **U.S.** "mainstream." A political **system** needs to be viewed and understood in terms of its contradictions and weaknesses. as **well** as its strengths. Latino and minority politic: brings attention not only to numerically smaller groups but. more important, **to** "marginalized" groups and to the problem of how these groups practice a politics that both draws on and challenges American values. It **is** a politics **that** to a considerable degree seeks to be pan of the mainstream but has not succeeded in **its** efforts and therefore often functions at the margins of U.S. society and politics. Thus the study of Latino politics leads us to examine several assumptions and theoretical questions in **U.S.** political science,

How does our democratic theory account for the disadvantaged status of Latinos? Do such groups and their circumstances imply a need to question or redefine nur undentanding of democracy and power? If so. how; if not, why not? Considerable political and social theorizing has focused on blacks as an excrption to the broader embrace of our

"democratic creed." Latinos—and perhaps Native Americans and others—may be additional exceptonr.

Other issues arise. Do ostensibly universal principles, such as procedural fairness and government neutrality. hold up when applied to all groups. or do they result in differential outcomes and impacts? What happens when the activities of government, which are supposed to be neutral at worst acd ameliorative at best, seem to maintain. reinforce. and perhaps worsen soaal inequality? Are the concepts. methods, measures of the study of politics able accurately, adequately. and appropriately to address questions of Latino politics?

In this book there is a perception that much of the existing scholarly work on Latino politics has been lacking in several respects. Moreover, there has not been sufficient effort to synthesize or critically assess the existing research. A goal of this work is understanding and comprehension, a goal that differs from the narrower and more common goals of explanation and prediction evident in much political science research. This book is trying to explain something, but what is more impanant. it hopes to provide insights into Latino politics in the United States and, indeed, minority politics in general.