More than 53 million Latinos now constitute the largest, fastest-growing, and most diverse minority group in the United States, and the nation's political future may well be shaped by Latinos’ continuing political incorporation. In the 2012 election, Latinos proved to be a critical voting bloc in both Presidential and Congressional races; this demographic will only become more important in future American elections. Using new evidence from the largest-ever scientific survey addressed exclusively to Latino/Hispanic respondents, Latino Politics en Ciencia Política explores political diversity within the Latino community, considering how intra-community differences influence political behavior and policy preferences.

The editors and contributors, all noted scholars of race and politics, examine key issues of Latino politics in the contemporary United States: Latino/a identities (latinidad), transnationalism, acculturation, political community, and racial consciousness. The book contextualizes today's research within the history of Latino political studies, from the field's beginnings to the present, explaining how systematic analysis of Latino political behavior has over time become integral to the study of political science. Latino Politics en Ciencia Política is thus an ideal text for learning both the state of the field today, and
(Part One)

SUMMARY

Tony Affigne frames our authors’ contributions, showing how today’s scholars represent something of a third generation in the field, after earlier periods in formal political analysis (political science) which were characterized first by exclusion of Latino subjects before 1970. A second period from 1970 to 1998 represents a time of emergence for Latino political movements and for Latino political studies. And now, in the years since 1998, like the Latino political community itself, the study of Latino politics is experiencing a period of empowerment. The research chapters in this book, Affigne writes, reflect some of the best work from this new period, exploring questions about Latino identity (latinidad), the nature of Latino assimilation and community, racial identities, interminority relations, and more.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

• Given the diversity of political interests arising from diverse national origins, cultures, ideologies, immigration experiences, educational and occupational statuses, racial identities, religion beliefs, gendered expectations, ages, local contexts, and more, is there really such a thing as Latino politics?

• In fact, is the underlying concept that Latinos constitute a single panethnic group, sharing common interests and demonstrating similar behaviors, valid or not? How unified can a Latino panethnic identity possibly be—if at all?

• How is a sense of “linked fate” among Latinos different from that felt between Latinos and African Americans?

• What ties do Latinos retain to their home cultures and politics, and how strong is residual attachment to nations of origin?

• More generally, how do Latinos see themselves and the political world around them?

• What are the key questions facing Latino political studies today?

• What methods can best address those questions?

• How can quantitative and qualitative projects each contribute to resolving them, using the comparative strengths of each research modality?

ILLUSTRATIONS

» Tables: Racial Undersampling in the American National Election Studies (1970 – 2008);
SUMMARY

Jessica Lavariega Monforti explores mechanisms for building a pan-ethnic identity among Latinos. Once largely of Mexican and Puerto Rican descent, the Latino population in the U.S. is increasingly diverse. Latinos in the U.S. now have heritages from Cuba, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and other Latin and Central American countries. Some earlier research suggested that the diversity among Latinos was one of the reasons why low levels of panethnicity existed among Latinos. Latinos living in the U.S. were more likely to identify with their nation of origin and/or ancestral home (“Mexican” or “Colombian”) rather than embrace a panethnic identity. Results from the LNS show that this is changing, and more and more Latinos are now panethnic identifiers. In chapter 2, Lavariega Monforti systematically accounts for those factors that are critical in the process of Latinos developing a panethnic identity.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:
• Do panethnic Latino identifiers constitute a politically, socially distinctive subgroup within the Latino population?
• What specific characteristics or variables set them apart?

STUDY QUESTIONS:
• Why is it important to understand panethnic identity?
• Which variables from the LNS are predictors of panethnic identity, for the entire sample? What are the notable subgroup differences?
• Are the categories of “Hispanic” and “Latino” interchangeable? Why or why not?
• How do demographic factors such as gender impact identity?

ILLUSTRATIONS
» Tables: Hispanic Population of the United States by National Origin Group (1980 and 2010); Multivariate Characteristics as Building Blocks of Latinidad; Mandated Common Ethnicity; Policy Concerns of Panethnic Identifiers; Multivariate Logistic Regression: Elite Leadership and Public Policy Influences on Latinidad; Multivariate Logistic Regression of Diverse Contact and Latinidad; Multivariate Logistic Regression of All Variables form DeSipio’s Theory
SUMMARY

Sarah Allen Gershon and Adrian Pantoja examine the controversial issue surrounding the relationship between transnational ties and Latino political incorporation in the U.S. Some critics of immigration argue that the ties that bind Latino immigrants to their home countries (e.g., visiting the home country, sending remittances, calling friends and relatives by telephone) inhibit the naturalization process and impede the incorporation of Latinos into American civic and political life. Utilizing a unique set of questions in the LNS about transnational activities, Gershon and Pantoja show that transnational ties influence Latino immigrants in different ways. For example, owning property in the home country decreases significantly the likelihood that a Latino immigrant will seek to become a U.S. citizen. However, Gershon and Pantoja’s findings call into question the argument that transnational ties negatively influence the level of civic engagement in the U.S. In fact, Gershon and Pantoja’s findings suggest that maintenance of transnational ties may positively influence the political incorporation process of Latino immigrants. Gershon and Pantoja show that immigrants from Latin America can maintain ties to their country of origin and simultaneously become incorporated into American political and civic life.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

• What are transnational ties?

• How can transnational ties be measured?

• What are the reasons for the rise in transnational ties among contemporary immigrants?

• Which groups within the Latino community are the most transnationally engaged?

• How do these transnational ties shape political incorporation for Latino immigrants?

STUDY QUESTIONS:

• Is the role of transnational ties in immigrant incorporation politically controversial? Why or why not?

• Do transnational ties help or hurt incorporation? More broadly, are transnational ties a normatively good or bad thing for immigrants? For the health of democracy in the U.S.?
CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY

Jessica Lavariega Monforti and Melissa Michelson provide a detailed empirical examination of political trust among Latinos. Political scientists have long argued that trust in government and government institutions is critical for functioning democracies. Since the 1970s, survey research has shown a considerable decline in the percentages of people who say that they have a high level of trust in government. Lavariega Monforti and Michelson report that recent surveys show that only about 5 percent of respondents in national surveys say that they trust the government “just about always.” Latinos, however, are more trusting of government. Among respondents in the LNS, 12 percent reported that they could trust government “just about always.” Lavariega Monforti and Michelson explore political trust among Latinos generally and within the various Latino subgroups. They show that increased trust in government is related to how Latinos are acculturated into a racialized subgroup and their level of linked fate with other Latinos. In other words, this research shows that for Latino immigrants, feelings of linked fate and a strong sense of community can serve as an antidote to political cynicism.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

• What attitudinal and demographic variables predict Latino trust in government, both generally and within national-origin subgroups?

• Are acculturation and social incorporation correlated with political trust?

• Is political trust linked to experiences with or perceptions of discrimination?

STUDY QUESTIONS:

• Why is it important to know whether or not Latinos trust the government?

• What variables from the LNS are predictors of trust in government for the entire sample? What are the notable subgroup (national-origin) differences?

• Is cynicism among Latinos related to acculturation into the U.S. mainstream or into a minority subculture? How do the unique findings for Cubans help us understand this aspect of Latino trust in government?

• How does the racial diversity of some Latino national-origin groups likely affect their experiences and feelings of political trust?

ILLUSTRATIONS

LATINO POLITICS EN CIENCIA POLÍTICA
SUMMARY

Before the LNS, we knew little about Latinos’ stances on many of the key public policy issues facing the nation. Regina Branton, Ana Franco, and Robert Wrinkle examine how acculturation and political knowledge influences Latino attitudes across several public policy domains. Branton and her colleagues are able to provide these important insights because of the richness and range of the policy issues covered in the LNS. Their research shows important ways in which the level of political knowledge among Latinos mediates how acculturation influences Latino public opinion on education, abortion, same-sex marriage, immigration, and other policy matters. Branton, Franco, and Wrinkle’s exploration of policy preferences among Latinos shows that acculturation matters. Their unique insight, however, is that political knowledge interacts with acculturation to influence Latino public opinion and the impact of the interaction varies across different policy domains.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

• Do unique and/or common determinants of Latino attitudes exist across different public policy domains?

• Is the influence of acculturation on Latino attitudes moderated by political knowledge?

STUDY QUESTIONS:

• Historically, what role has acculturation played in Latino attitudes?

• How does acculturation influence Latino attitudes across different policy domains?

• Consider and explain the relationship between political knowledge and acculturation.

• When and how does political knowledge moderate the impact of acculturation?

• Explain the impact of acculturation for different policy domains.

• Explain and discuss the role of linked fate on Latino political attitudes.

ILLUSTRATIONS:
SUMMARY:
Heather Silber Mohamed explores the meaning of being an “Ameri¬can” to Lati¬nos. The chapter examines differences in the boundaries of Americanism among individuals from distinct ancestral-origin subgroups, levels of integration, and regions of residence across the United States. Silber Mohamed measures how country of origin, place of resident, and acculturation into the U.S. shape wheth¬er or not Latinos perceive “American” to be an open category that they are able to be a part of. She finds, for example, that Latinos typically believe that speak¬ing Eng¬lish is an important component of being American. Among the various Latino subgroups, Salvadorans have the most restrictive view of what it takes to be consid¬ered an American. This chapter provides researchers with a better understanding of the conditions under which Latino immigrants view “American” as an open or closed designation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:
• How do individuals’ experiences shape their definitions of what it means to be “American”?
• Specifically, do country of origin, level of integration in the United States, and region of residence impact the extent to which Latinos view “American” as an ascriptive category, which may be closed to them simply by virtue of their Latino origins, or an open cat¬egory, which they may join?

STUDY QUESTIONS:
• How do the results in this chapter support or debunk claims of a Latino “chal¬lenge”?
• How might immigrants’ experience from their home country (or country of ori¬gin, for later generations) impact their perceptions of what it means to be Ameri¬can? In what other ways could political learning affect a minority’s experience?
• What are the strengths and weaknesses of using a prototypical respondent to interpret results? What other statistical tools could be used?
• Discuss some of the counterintuitive findings outlined in this chapter (i.e., gender, skin color, region, etc.).
• Based on the findings of this chapter, what are the varying ways that a respon¬dent’s individual characteristics appear to shape his or her definition of “Ameri¬can”? Specifi¬cally, what characteristics might be associated with a more perme-
SUMMARY

Marion Orr, Domingo Morel, and Katrina Gamble make use of the New England extension of the LNS. They focus on the factors that predict whether or not Latinos in New England believe they have something in common with African Americans. A considerable amount of research focuses on competition between Blacks and Latinos. In this chapter, Orr, Morel, and Gamble, shift the focus from competition between Blacks and Latinos to political and economic commonality. Instead of analyzing potential hurdles to coalition building, this chapter helps us understand what contexts encourage coalition building. If Blacks and Latinos recognize that they are both politically and economically marginalized, they may decide to work together rather than fight over limited resources. Orr, Morel, and Gamble explore those factors that make Latinos more likely to believe they have something politically or economically in common with African Americans.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

• What contexts may encourage African American and Latino coalition building?

• What factors lead Latinos in New England to believe that they share political or economic commonalities with African Americans?

• Are there differences between perceptions of economic commonality and political commonality that may affect the potential for Latino–African American coalition building?

STUDY QUESTIONS:

• Why is it important to focus on African American–Latino coalition building in New England?

• What are some of the factors that increase the likelihood that Latinos will perceive of themselves as having political and economic commonality with African Americans?

• Do perceptions of competition for elected office present a barrier for Latino and African American coalition building?

ILLUSTRATIONS

» Tables: Measures of Linked Fate; Percentage of Latinos Who Perceive Political and Economic Competition with Blacks; Latino-Black Linked Fate and Political and Economic Commonality; Explaining Perceptions of Economic Commonality with Blacks; Explaining Perceptions of Political Commonality with Blacks; Group Consciousness Predicted
SUMMARY

Atiya Kai Stokes-Brown explores the ways in which racial identity influences Latino policy attitudes. Racial identity in the U.S. has typically been shaped along a Black-white paradigm. This racial paradigm is embedded in the nation’s institutional structures. However, in the LNS, large majorities of Latinos responded that they consider themselves to be “some other race” than “Black” or “white.” When asked to explain their “some other race” response, 75 percent identified “Latino” or “Hispanic” as their race. Stokes-Brown provides a broad overview of the controversial issues related to racial classification in the U.S. Using the responses from a unique set of questions in which LNS interviewers probed deeper into the respondents’ self-identification, Stokes-Brown shows how racial identification shapes Latinos’ opinions across a range of policy issues.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

• How do Latinos racially self-identify in the U.S.? What are the most common racial categories chosen by Latinos?

• What is the social reality of race for Latinos? How might the social realities created by racial identities influence policy attitudes?

• How does generational status condition the influence of racial identity on Latino policy attitudes?

STUDY QUESTIONS:

• What is the most common racial identity chosen by LNS respondents? How does the author attempt to better understand that racial identity?

• The chapter uses a social identity framework and suggests that racial self-identification within the Latino community influences individual policy attitudes. How useful is this theory in helping us understand the relationship between Latino racial identity and political attitudes and behaviors?

• The chapter suggests that the current strategy adopted by the government to measure and classify the Latino population can be improved on, to further disaggregate this population. What improvements are suggested? Do you find them to be useful? Why or why not?

• Given the multivariate results presented in table 8.1, how does racial identity influence Latino policy attitudes? How are respondents’ attitudes about these issues related to racial identity?
SUMMARY

Matt Barreto and Gabriel Sanchez expand the discussion of race by focusing on how variation in the state and local context influences Latinos’ perceptions of group competition with African Americans. Barreto and Sanchez focus their analysis on Latinos in the South. As they note, the South has seen an explosion in the growth of the Latino population, creating new intergroup dynamics in a region in the country where group relations have largely been between Blacks and whites. Their work shows that nationally, Latinos tend to perceive that they are in competition more with other Latinos than with any other group. However, when the southern states are isolated, Latinos tend to perceive that Blacks are their nearest competitors. Barreto and Sanchez also note the significant role that having multiracial social networks plays in lowering Latinos’ perceptions of group competition with African Americans and how Black population density influences Latinos’ perceptions of group competition.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

• Research Questions:
  • Do Latinos living in the South, as compared to Latinos living outside the South, perceive greater competition with African Americans?
  • Does having Black friends or Black co-workers improve Latino attitudes toward Blacks, with respect to perceptions of social, economic, and political competition?
  • How does the existence of a large Black population at the county level impact Latino attitudes toward Blacks?

STUDY QUESTIONS:

• Why is it important to study Black-Latino relations?
• What are the principal variables used by scholars to investigate Latino attitudes toward Blacks?
• How do demographic factors (e.g., age, education, religion, gender, etc.) affect Latino attitudes toward Blacks?
• How do southern Latinos’ perceptions of Blacks compare and contrast with those of Latinos living in other regions of the country?
SUMMARY

Manny Avalos and Tony Affigne explore real-world lessons we should take from these research findings. Does it help us understand the 2012 elections, for example, to know how strongly, and for what reasons, individuals feel a sense of a panethnic (i.e., Latino or Hispanic) identity? Could the nation better navigate contentious immigration politics if it were widely understood that immigrants’ home-country attachments have countervailing effects on their choice to pursue U.S. citizenship, with some transnational activities appearing to promote naturalization? Research questions like these, Avalos and Affigne argue, answered with empirical evidence and hypothesis testing, move students and scholars directly into the world of Latino communities, leaders, and political empowerment, armed with knowledge, separating political fact from fiction.