

Rouse, Stella M. *Latinos in the Legislative Process: Interests and Influence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 186 pp. (\$99.00 hardcover).

In this comprehensive study of Latino representation, Stella Rouse works to define Latino interests and identify how ethnicity affects legislative behavior and outcomes. Using multi-method analysis, this project takes a step toward answering lingering questions in the literature, such as “Is the election of Latinos necessary for the representation of Latino interests?” and “What influence can Latinos have over the legislative process, and do they need to hold positions of power to exert that influence?” (p. 2). Through assessment of quantitative data on bill sponsorship, committee activity, and roll-call voting, along with qualitative information gathered from personal interviews with 25 Latino state lawmakers, the study concludes that ethnicity is a complex dynamic (p. 149) and the link between Latino descriptive representation and substantive representation varies across different contexts and stages of the legislative process.

Prior to addressing the larger question of Latino representation, Rouse examines the Latino agenda (chapter 2). Her approach is unique because she draws out the objective, as opposed to the subjective interests of the broader Latino population (using 2008 ANES Times Series data), while connecting these to the policy priorities of Latino lawmakers. Future scholars ought to take note of this approach, perhaps going even further to draw on other broad and Latino-specific surveys (such as the Latino National Survey) to capture not only what *should* matter to Latinos, but also what actually *does* matter to this group. An additional extension would be to examine more thoroughly the diversity of Latino interests. While Rouse recognizes the complexity of Latino identity throughout the book, her assessment of Latino issue priorities and later, representation, does not account for generational or even sub-ethnic variation.

Moving to examine whether a Latino agenda is actually reflected in the content of legislation, Rouse uses QDA MINER software to content code legislation. Assessing all bills introduced in three state legislatures, she finds that Latino-relevant language does co-occur in bills introduced, although this happens more frequently in California and Texas than in Arizona. One avenue for expanding this particular study would be to categorize legislation based on whether it is in favor of or against Latino interests. This is not something that Rouse does here, but it would significantly enhance her argument.

Chapters 3-5 of the book move from examining Latino interests to establishing when and how these interests are reflected in legislative behavior. While many existing studies of Latino representation rely primarily on analyses of roll-call voting behavior (e.g. Welch and Hibbing (1984), Hero and Tolbert (1995), Kerr and Miller (1997) and Casellas (2011)), Rouse expands to consider the influence of ethnicity on agenda-setting and committee work, as well as on roll-call behavior. In Chapter 3, she examines the role of ethnicity on bill sponsorship and passage, finding that Latino lawmakers are more likely to sponsor specific Latino-interest legislation, especially in cases where Latinos make up a smaller proportion of a legislative party within the chamber. She also finds that when Latinos make up fewer than 15 percent of a party, Latino interests make up a higher proportion of the bills that each Latino legislator passes. The theory put forth to explain this result is that when Latinos are under-represented in their legislative party, they tend to take on the role of “critical actor,” serving to maximize their individual influence in order to serve a broader Latino community. Overall, this “critical actor” argument is compelling, however, even more theoretical development to uncover the underlying mechanism of this behavior is warranted.

The most original contribution of this book is the analysis of Latino representation within committees. Rouse examines committee markup meetings in four states in 2005, assessing each lawmaker's degree of participation on three types of legislation: non-Latino interest, general-Latino interest, and specific-Latino interest. The work put into this is commendable and allows readers to get a sense of the preference intensities of Latino lawmakers, which is something that prior scholars have not adequately explored. That said, the results concerning the role of ethnicity are not entirely convincing nor are they consistent across the four states. In only two states (Arizona and Texas) does the author find Latino lawmakers participating at higher rates on Latino interest legislation. One factor that is found to be significant in all models is the role of committee chairs, who participate at higher rates on all types of legislation. Although this result is not surprising, it nonetheless lends predictions on how Latino elites may influence legislative outcomes as they acquire more powerful positions within the legislature over time.

To complete her empirical analysis, Rouse explores roll call voting. Expanding on the work of Casellas (2011), she assesses voting behavior on both general *and* Latino interest legislation. In line with existing studies, she finds a strong effect of party, yet little to no effect of ethnicity on voting in both categories of bills. The author recognizes the collinear relationship between party and ethnicity (p. 104), but does not delve into what the party label actually stands for and why members affiliate with a given party in the first place (see Weisberg (1978)). Party identity is not drawn out of thin air and thus recognition of its meaning and origin is appropriate in this instance.

Tying the argument together, Rouse concludes by carefully tracing legislative activity on two pieces of legislation: Arizona's SB 1070 and California's AB 9. Overall, the in-depth analysis of these bills is useful, however the selection of AB 9 (an anti-bullying bill) was a bit puzzling and served as an odd contrast to the highly Latino-salient, and highly polarizing SB 1070.

In sum, this book stands as one of the most thorough examinations of substantive representation of Latino interests to date and makes great progress in the effort to link descriptive representation to substantive activity at various stages of the legislative process. Despite some issues concerning analysis and interpretation (not to mention a very high price), this book ought to draw attention within the field and encourage many future studies on the complexity of ethnicity within the legislature across space and over time.

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