Latinos in the Legislative Process

Interests and Influence

In one of the only accounts of Latino legislative behavior, Stella M. Rouse examines how well the growing Latino population translates their increased presence into legislative influence. *Latinos in the Legislative Process* explores Latino representation by considering the role of ethnicity throughout the legislative process – from bill sponsorship, to committee deliberations, to floor votes – in seven state legislatures. Rouse first identifies issues that are priorities for Latinos and tells us whether a Latino political agenda exists. She then provides a theoretical framework for ethnicity in legislative behavior and outcomes. Rouse demonstrates that ethnicity is a complex dynamic that plays a variable role in the legislative process. Thus, Latino representation cannot be viewed monolithically.

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To my husband, Rodney L. Rouse, and in memory of my mother, Stella Restrepo
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Acknowledgments

As the largest and fastest growing minority group in the country, Latinos have garnered a significant amount of attention, especially over the past several years. This attention has only added to the necessity and urgency of studying this group. Those of us who not only identify as Latino but who explore the dynamics of the group can relate to such challenges and embrace the opportunity to address some of the many research questions that continuously emerge.

This book is a result of some of these curiosities, and their exploration began several years ago when I was a graduate student at Louisiana State University. My ability to bring this project to fruition is due to support and inspiration from a number of people and organizations – all of which probably saw the ultimate value and potential of the project even before I did. I am especially grateful to my graduate school adviser at LSU, Kathleen Bratton, who was the first person to help me articulate the concepts of this project into something I could research, analyze, and write about. I am also very grateful to Jim Garand, who encouraged my professional development throughout my graduate school career and beyond. Perhaps this book shows that I was paying attention to some of that advice. Bill Clark was one of the political science professors I met many years ago as an undergraduate student. Bill went on to serve on my dissertation committee, but it was conversations that we had during my undergraduate career (in between pick-up basketball games at the recreational center) in which
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