

The Latin American Voter: Pursuing Representation and Accountability in Challenging Contexts (New Comparative Politics)

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In this volume, experts on Latin American public opinion and political behavior employ region-wide public opinion studies, elite surveys, experiments, and advanced statistical methods to reach several key conclusions about voting behavior in the region's emerging democracies. In Latin America, to varying degrees the average voter grounds his or her decision in factors identified in classic models of voter choice. Individuals are motivated to go to the polls and select elected officials on the basis of class, religion, gender, ethnicity and other demographic factors; substantive political connections including partisanship, left-right stances, and policy preferences; and politician performance in areas like the economy, corruption, and crime.

Yet evidence from Latin America shows that the determinants of voter choice cannot be properly understood without reference to context—the substance (specific cleavages, campaigns, performance) and the structure (fragmentation and polarization) that characterize the political environment. Voting behavior reflects the relative youth and fluidity of the region's party systems, as parties emerge and splinter to a far greater degree than in long-standing party systems. Consequently, explanations of voter choice centered around country differences stand on equal footing to explanations focused on individual-level factors.



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