



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

*From University of Michigan Press*

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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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- Sales Rank: #1495150 in Books
- Published on: 2015-07-21
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x 1.50" w x 6.00" l, 1.48 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 444 pages

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### **Review**

“*The Latin American Voter* makes a unique, first contribution to a neglected area of electoral behavior. Can the Latin American voter be explained? The authors answer ‘Yes,’ with the proviso that Latin American voters are different. Voting in this region, they conclude, depends on context, heterogeneity, institutions, country, and ballot choices. In sum, they discover the Latin America voter as not one, but many. This perhaps surprising finding deserves a careful read by anyone wanting to understand elections in this part of the world.”

—Michael S. Lewis-Beck, University of Iowa

“... makes a significant contribution to Latin American studies and comparative electoral behavior. The book should be cited by everyone doing electoral behavior research in Latin America in the years ahead.”

—Russell Dalton, University of California-Irvine

“Can one really understand voting behavior without locating the vote in variant social, structural, ethnic and ideological contexts such as Latin America represents? Fully anchored in an understanding of major theoretical traditions, Carlin, Singer and Zechmeister’s collection, *The Latin American Voter*, may prove as fundamental to theorizing about voter choice as did earlier classics. This is a treasure trove of theoretical insight, derived from a masterful survey of existing literature, subjected to inventive and rigorous empirical examination.”

—Kenneth M. Coleman, University of Michigan

### **About the Author**

**Ryan E. Carlin** is Associate Professor of Political Science at Georgia State University.

**Matthew M. Singer** is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Connecticut.

**Elizabeth J. Zechmeister** is Professor of Political Science and Director of the Latin American Public Opinion Project at Vanderbilt University.

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