Chapter Two: Methodology and User Guide

Our previous discussion of the development of the field of Latino politics notes the growing scope of topics and issues researched, and their placement in a variety of journal publications and publishers. Since Garcia et al. (1991) identified the extant literature in this area no other comprehensive bibliography has been published. As a result, this project has been more ambitious and expansive than its precursor. In this brief methodological section we discuss the process we followed to collect and organize the article and book citations included in the annotated bibliography. Specifically, in this section we answer three questions about this process: First, how did we arrive at the selection of conceptual categories utilized to organize citations? Second, how did we locate relevant journal articles and books for the bibliography? And third, how did we determine whether specific citations should be included in the annotated bibliography? Finally, at the end of the section we provide some suggestions to help readers use this bibliography more effectively.

Selection and Organization of Relevant Conceptual Categories

To arrive at a coherent and comprehensive, though not exhaustive, set of categories necessary to organize the citations we relied on three criteria: the primary focus of the article or book, the theoretical importance of the citation's main concepts within the political science literature, and the policy content within the article or book. These criteria allowed us to identify as major categories: (a) concepts that are part of the theoretical toolkit available to political scientists in general and Latino politics scholars in particular; (b) policy areas of scholarly interest; and (c) historical and demographic works that describe the growth and change of the Latino population in the U.S. We were also open to the possibility that new categories might emerge as the collection effort progressed. In fact, we found that it was often necessary to create sub-categories within many of the larger categories. For example, within Political Attitudes and Behavior we created sub-categories for works dealing with public opinion, partisanship and party identification, and political participation.

These procedures to arrive at a set of conceptual categories have at least two potential limitations. First, the final set of categories is not exhaustive, which means that the literature could be further categorized based on other criteria. Second, we relied on a careful reading of the abstracts or book descriptions to determine the extent to which citations fit within each category. However, if authors left out important information, such as the research question, the dependent variable or both, then some citations could be placed in the wrong category. Many works deal with several concepts and do not fall neatly within any one category, so it was often difficult to determine in which category some citations belong. We believe, however, that the adoption of a majority rule, careful reading of the abstract, and our collective knowledge of the literature limited the number of potential errors.

The next stage in the process was to organize the categories coherently, paying particular attention to orderly continuity. We begin the bibliographical citations with historical, demographic, and media related works. The decision to begin with history is rooted in the belief that students wishing to understand Latinos ought to become familiar with Latino political history, migration and demographic patterns, struggles for inclusion and civil rights, etc. This historical and contextual understanding of Latinos is necessary to raise important questions about identity formation, political participation, and descriptive representation among others. This category also includes works related to the growth of La-

tino scholars, and how Latinos are portrayed in the mass media. In combination, all three sub-categories provide a rich context and historical background to help students understand where Latinos come from.

From history we move on to identity and ethnic studies. Ethnicity plays a central role in explanations of Latino attitudes, behavior, and policy preferences. As a result, ethnicity continually appears in the literature, as both a dependent and an independent variable, and in terms of identity, race, or national origin. As dependent variable, scholars try to explain its sources and how it varies. As independent variable, it is used to explain its impact on attitudes and behavior, representation, coalition formation, etc. Whether discussing ethnic identity, racial identity, cultural identity, political identity or any other dimension of identity, scholars depend on this concept to help them explain who Latinos are, and how their self perceptions shape their attitudes and behavior in the political arena.

The next three categories contain citations related to political attitudes and behavior; elites, institutions, and representation; and inter-group relations. The behaviors under consideration range from voter turnout to participation in community politics to participation in church activities and their impact on political outcomes. Ethnicity and identity also figure prominently in these categories as independent variables that help to explain variation in levels of participation across a range of political activities. The number of citations in these categories attests to the prominence of political participation in the research agendas of Latino scholars.

We then move on to public policy and policy issues. Policy oriented research is very important because governments at all levels of the federal system have implemented a series of policies designed to deal with the growing visibility of Latinos in the U.S. Whether these policies respond effectively to the concerns of the Latino community is an important area of research. So, we identified the most prominent policy areas in the literature and created separate categories for each: immigration, education, and employment, among others. Given the history of discrimination against Latinos, their immigrant roots, and their struggles to assimilate, these are prominent areas of policy for government in general and for Latinos in particular; and the literature reflects their importance and prominence. In an effort to make this segment of the annotated bibliography user-friendly, we decided to organize the public policy sub-categories alphabetically. It is interesting to highlight that immigration and education have garnered a much greater level of attention than other policy areas. These two policy areas combined make up nearly two thirds of all public policy and issues citations, and one fourth of all citations.

Once all major historical, theoretical, or policy categories have been covered, we move on to methodology and references. Methodological contributions are very important because many of the central concepts in the literature are disputed and difficult to measure. For example, a dimension of ethnicity is ethnic group consciousness. While some researchers have operationalized the concept as a single-item measure, others treat is as a multi-item measure; but what is the optimal indicator? This section is particularly relevant because of the need to move from conceptualization to measurement of important concepts such as consciousness, acculturation, etc. However, this is an area of research that is underrepresented and emerged as a glaring gap in the literature.
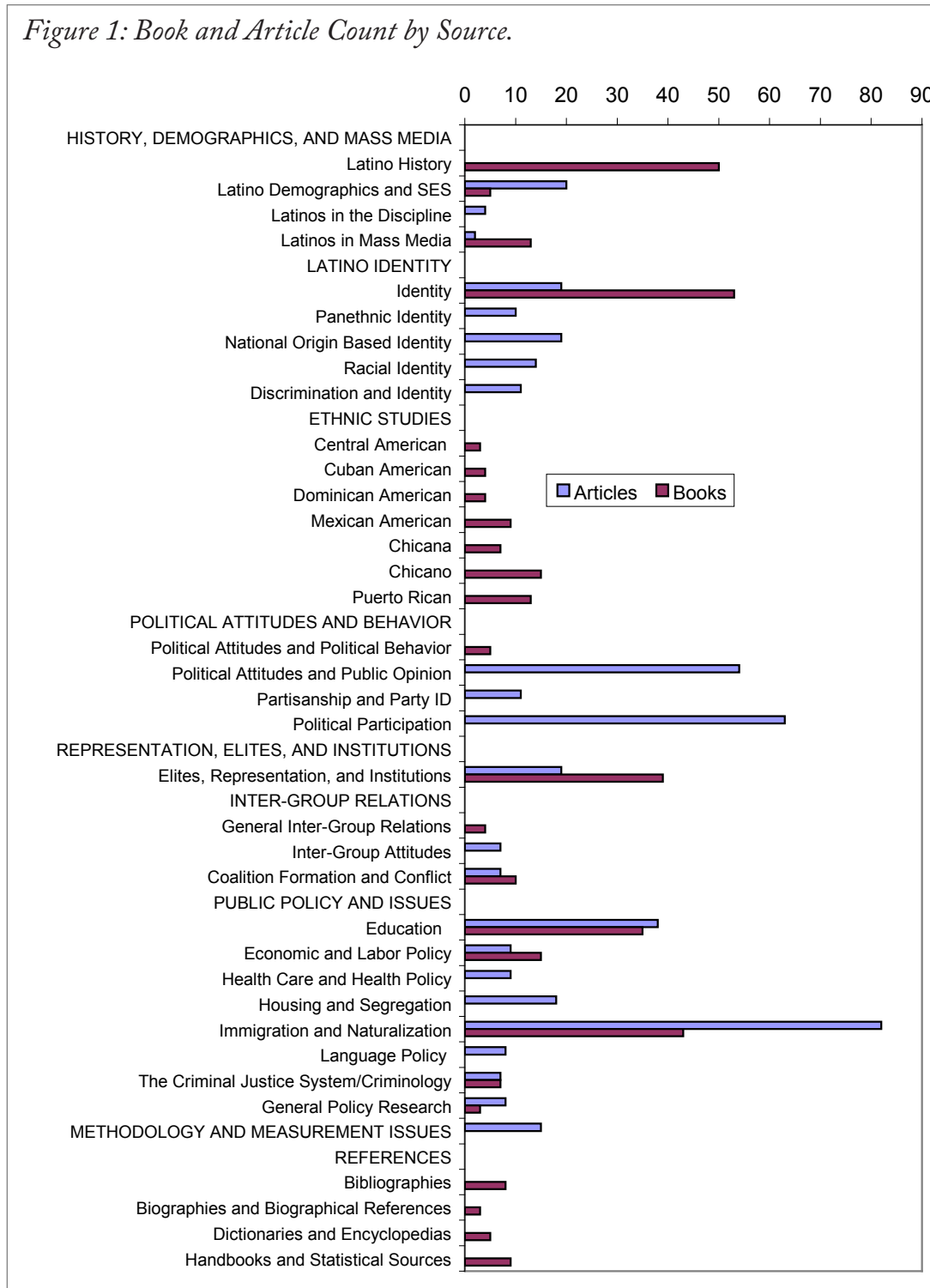
The necessity to include a "References" category became apparent as the collection process developed. As we collected our citations based on the primary criteria, we realized the need to include other bibliographical and/or reference materials that are not theoretically, methodologically, or policy relevant, but are important sources of empirical data. We therefore organized a series of entries under the major category of "References". Here we grouped entries that provide historical background, statistical sources, datasets, or any resources that can help researchers find sources of data to test their theories.

The number of citations included under each category underscores the relative importance of these concepts in the field. Figure 1 below is a graphic depicting the number of citations related to each category by book and articles. The graph illustrates the major conceptual categories and sub-categories

we employed to organize the literature, it also shows the areas of research that have received most attention (public policy, political attitudes and behavior, identity, and history), as well as areas of research that have not received as much attention (ethnic studies, inter-group relations, and methodology).

Figure 1: Book and Article Count by Source.

Data Collection

In addition to substantive considerations, we decided to collect citations from 1990 to 2008. The rationale for this time frame was simple: we wanted to present the most current Latino politics literature, and to trace the development of Latino politics literature since Garcia et al. (1991) published their annotated bibliography associated with the Latino National Political Survey (LNPS).

It was our intent to be as exhaustive as possible in our search for literature focused on Latino politics. As scholars in the field of Latino politics, we often find it necessary to read works published outside of political science to fully understand and analyze issues related to Latinos. Therefore, in our search for journal articles, although we relied primarily on political science journals, we also searched for relevant research in journals dedicated to racial and ethnic populations, those from other social science disciplines, and some of the most important policy research institutes such as Pew Hispanic Center. We believe that looking beyond political science was a critically important step to take with the bibliography.

The most time consuming component of this process was searching for relevant articles and books to include in the bibliography for the time frame identified above. Although we considered including manuscripts under review and conference papers in the bibliography, we ultimately decided to exclude because many appear in print eventually; or if they are never published, then they would be very difficult to locate.

We followed a similar process for the identification of relevant books, and relied primarily on three sources: (1) Book publishers, which provide a comprehensive catalog of publications and their respective book descriptions for the period of interest; (2) Amazon.com, which contains a comprehensive database of books in print along with their respective abstracts or book descriptions; and (3) The Chronicle of Higher Education, which contains a database of major publishers, identifies the most recent publications, and provides short book descriptions. Similar to the journal articles, only those books that fit within one of the conceptual categories were included in the bibliography.

In the interest of full disclosure, we did not write the abstracts contained in this bibliography. This strategy helped us to avoid two problems: (a) significantly delaying the completion of the project, and (b) potentially misrepresenting the core theme(s) of the articles and the books by imposing our own interpretation of the works. The abstracts, therefore, come from the authors themselves (more likely in the case of journal articles); from book publishers; or from Amazon.com, which make them available to the public through their websites. In the case of some bibliographies, however, we do not provide book descriptions because we believe that the title is self-explanatory. Appendices B and C contain a complete list of all the sources consulted including journals, book publishers, policy institutes, etc.

How did we decide on what citations belong in the annotated bibliography, as well as within each category? At the outset we agreed on a procedure to insure inter-coder reliability. For a citation to be accepted for inclusion in the bibliography and within a particular category we decided on a majority rule: at least two out of three votes were necessary for a citation to be included in the bibliography, and subsequently to be placed in a particular conceptual category. Citations that received unanimous support for inclusion in the bibliography and in a particular category are included; citations that received two votes for inclusion in the bibliography and in a particular category are included as well; citations that received only one vote were discussed in detail and were ultimately excluded.

What was excluded and why? At the end of this process, we also had to exclude some works based on their lack of relevance, contribution, and usefulness toward advancing our understanding of Latino politics. We collectively decided on a set of exclusion rules to guide our efforts. First, based on the title and abstract, the article or book had to primarily address issues, questions, quandaries, or concerns related to Latinos. Secondly, we based our decision to retain a citation based on the following question:

does the article or book inform readers as to Latinos and their intersection with the political system or public policy? Works that focus primarily on the internal life of Latinos without connection to political activities were excluded.

Based on the above criteria, we decided to exclude works that were primarily biographical, literary, artistic, or otherwise did not inform us about Latinos and their political public life. Biographies of Latinos in general were omitted; but biographies that deal with political personalities, such as social movement leaders, prominent political pioneers, leaders of important political organizations, and works that can shed some light on central research concerns were included. Works of literature were also excluded. For example, although we recognize that Chicano/Latino literature is an important area of research, assessing its contribution to political science literature would require a separate analysis that is beyond the scope of this project. As a result, we decided to exclude such works. Finally, we excluded book chapters, anthologies, and conference paper because either they only deal with Latinos tangentially or they had appeared in article format elsewhere.

Using this Bibliography Effectively

One of the central goals of this project is to provide scholars and students of Latino politics a useful guide to the most current and relevant literature to support the continued research of this population. The most direct method of locating literature within a specific topic is to begin by perusing the theoretical category of interest in the table of contents - i.e. identity, political behavior, political participation, etc. Second, within each category, the citations are organized in alphabetical order by author, but some authors' works appear in different categories. So, it is important to keep in mind authors' diverse research agendas throughout the research process. Third we separated journal articles and books in each category and sub-category because we noticed that in some areas of research the primary medium of publication has been either books or articles. This is useful information because it can guide researchers toward the appropriate medium.

Scholars wishing to embark on research of understudied concepts, policy issues, ethnic groups, etc., need only look at the areas that have received the least attention (see Figure 1 above). For example, questions about the importance of institutions and how they affect attitudes, behavior, and policies have been severely understudied. Given the growth of the Latino population, research related to healthcare and the elderly also need scholarly attention. Latino representation remains low in proportion to other groups, currently at about 6% in the U.S. Congress and slightly higher at the state level, yet this very important aspect of Latino politics has not received enough attention. Thus understanding what are the causes and consequences of underrepresentation for Latinos at the local, state, and national level is also an interesting and timely research program.

This annotated bibliography should provide interested "students" of Latino politics a resource to familiarize themselves with the extant literature and develop their own research agendas. Ultimately, it can help to raise three important questions: what questions have not been posed? What puzzles have not been explored? What policy issues have not been researched sufficiently? Hopefully this annotated bibliography can point students and seasoned scholars alike in new directions and toward interesting research agendas.