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978-1-107-03045-9 - Black-Latino Relations in U.S. National Politics: Beyond Conflict or Cooperation

Rodney E. Hero and Robert R. Preuhs

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Black-Latino Relations in U.S. National Politics

Social science research has frequently found conflict between Latinos and African Americans in urban politics and governance, as well as in the groups' attitudes toward one another. Rodney E. Hero and Robert R. Preuhs analyze whether conflict between these two groups is also found in national politics. Based on extensive evidence on the activities of minority advocacy groups in national politics and the behavior of minority members of Congress, the authors find the relationship between the groups is characterized mainly by nonconflict and a considerable degree of independence. The question of why there appears to be little minority intergroup conflict at the national level of government is also addressed. This is the first systematic study of black-Latino intergroup relations at the national level of United States politics.

Rodney E. Hero is professor of political science and the Haas Chair in Diversity and Democracy at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of *Racial Diversity and Social Capital: Equality and Community in America* (Cambridge, 2007), *Faces of Inequality: Social Diversity in American Politics* (2000), and *Latinos and the U.S. Political System: Two-Tiered Pluralism* (1992), winner of the American Political Science Association's 1993 Ralph J. Bunche award. He is coauthor of *Latinos in the New Millennium: An Almanac of Opinion, Behavior, and Policy Preferences* (Cambridge, 2012).

Robert R. Preuhs is assistant professor of political science at Metropolitan State University of Denver. His research focuses on representation, state politics, policy, and racial/ethnic politics. His research has been published in leading scholarly outlets, including the *American Journal of Political Science* and the *Journal of Politics*.

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*To My Family – Kathy, Lindsay, Chris, Jennifer, and my mother
and father and sister.*

REH

To My Family – Jennifer, Alex, and Mara.

RRP

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Preface

We began thinking about and initially working on the ideas and evidence in our analysis of black-Latino relations in the United States some time around 2001 (which is more than a decade before it is being published), to the best of our recollection. Our personal lives and situations changed in a host of complex ways. And countless professional responsibilities, developments, commitments (including other research projects) intervened, affecting, and often disrupting and delaying, our ability to focus on this project and give the concentrated periods of time required to move ahead with analysis, writing, and revision, and all their associated complications. In short, “life happens.” At the same time, various political events in American society arose during the decade of 2000–10 that were and are directly relevant to our concerns. To name but a very few of the many that could be noted, the growth and visibility of the Latino population, perhaps punctuated in 2003 with the statement (from the U.S. Census Bureau) that the Latino population had surpassed the black population in size; the clamor and controversies over (illegal) immigration; and the emergence and election of Barack Obama. These and other events underscore and have heightened the salience of the issues we address in this book.

The increased significance of the topic is also reflected in the rather vast and varied body of research on black-Latino relations that proliferated over this time (some part of that research is summarized and reviewed in Chapter 2). We acknowledge here, and emphasize several times later, our appreciation of the previous work on the topic; it is informative and consequential, and we take it most seriously.

We have both long been interested in and have studied various aspects of race/ethnicity in American politics because of what we believe is its

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critical importance as an enduring feature of this political system. To a large extent, our research on these issues had been primarily approached with urban and state politics as the unit of analysis; we had also focused mostly on racial/ethnic groups separately and less on their interrelationships. As we thought more about broader political developments, coupled with emerging scholarly research, it occurred to us that there were other related yet distinct political processes and phenomena that were being overlooked and that also deserved consideration as part of the changing racial (including minority intergroup) landscape of American politics. As we began to articulate to ourselves what we thought was missing and/or ambiguous in the research on evolving racial/ethnic conditions, it occurred to us, first implicitly and later more explicitly, that certain intergroup relations and different, distinct institutional settings were worthy of attention. This led us to conclude that black-Latino relations at the national level warranted examination for several reasons: one, it had scarcely been looked at. Second, we felt that a fuller understanding of American politics, including black-Latino relations, required some attention to all levels of the governmental system. Accordingly, we sought and identified several databases we thought would permit an extensive and systematic analysis.

Our analysis is thus distinct from others in several ways. We focus on the *national* (rather than local or state) level, on *governance* (rather than attitudes and opinions), and on *elites* (rather than the masses). Taken together, these distinct and novel characteristics help to advance and expand the study of black-Latino relations, and by extension racial/ethnic politics, in America. At the same time, our approach has its own limits, certainly in contrast with or compared to other analytical foci and approaches. We certainly hope, however, that the distinctiveness and novelty of our study bring new evidence and insights to bear and that these far outweigh its limitations. In any case, we believe our core findings of nonconflict between and independence in black-Latino relations in national politics is certainly notable. And we trust that our attempts to explain the findings – focused on the institution of federalism and its implications for the geography/scope of politics, the types of policies, and the differences in the “essential character” of governments across the levels of the political system – will be seriously considered, even if one does not agree with it entirely.

We are pretty confident that the temporal span of our analysis is longer than about any other study of this sort. Some of our data cover a period of roughly thirty years, and even the shorter periods in our study are still

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longer than in most other studies. Indeed, a considerable amount of our data encompasses a substantial portion of the post–civil rights era, about 1970 into the early 2000s. As such, ours is also partly a story of American political development regarding a specific dimension of U.S. politics. An obvious path for future research is to extend the period of analysis up to the recent past, which has been characterized by some as a post-racial era. We are pursuing such longer-term analysis and expect to expand several substantive aspects of this research as well.

In a broad sense, this inquiry into unstudied or under-studied aspects of minority intergroup relations and thus our telling of an untold story – of “nonconflict” – provide a more complete, wider, richer, and more nuanced perspective on America’s evolving multiethnic/racial democracy. Our hope is that readers will find the central questions, the unique focus and other attributes of our analytical approach, and our major findings to be substantively informative and intellectually engaging.

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Al Tillery (then a colleague at the University of Notre Dame, now of Rutgers University, and a dear friend [to Rodney] for years) was important and particularly helpful in our thinking and formulation of ideas in the project's early days. Andrew Thangasamy – at that time a graduate student at the University of Colorado, Boulder – and Monika Klimek played a major role in the collection and coding of data, particularly for Chapters 3 and 4.

Patrick Flavin and Michael Keane, who were graduate students at Notre Dame at the time, did excellent work bringing together and developing materials for the discussion presented in Chapter 7. Three undergraduate students at Notre Dame – Justina Tong, Anna Porto, and Daniella Rosa – served as very able “research apprentices,” conscientiously and skillfully examining, coding, and summarizing congressional testimony and amicus briefs that were essential supplements to our other evidence in Chapters 3 and 4. And as implied in the preceding sentences, but which deserves specific recognition, I [Rodney] benefited tremendously from the generous support of the department, departmental colleagues, the College of Arts and Letters, and other help that I received during my ten years at the University of Notre Dame. I am most grateful.

Our thinking and revisions of the ideas and evidence in the book were also informed and improved by the comments and observations we received at a number of presentations we made (individually or together) on parts of the book. These include the University of Washington's WISER

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Center Second Annual Conference, which Gary Segura and Matt Barreto organized and were generous in inviting us to (in April 2008); paper presentation at the American Political Science Association annual meeting (August 2008); a presentation at Princeton's Wilson School Center for the Study of Democratic Politics (2007) directed (at the time) by Larry Bartels; Rutgers University, New Brunswick, at the invitation of Jane Junn (April 2009); Columbia University, invited by Rodolfo de la Garza (March 2009); Duke University, at the invitation of Paula McClain and Kerry Haynie (Spring 2009). More recently, there have been presentations at the UC-Berkeley Department of Sociology, requested by Cybelle Fox and Irene Bloemraad (September 2010), and at Purdue University (March 2011).

We are grateful to all of those who invited us and shared their time and observations with us.

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We also thank Eric Crahan of Cambridge University Press for his help, guidance, and encouragement; and we thank the anonymous reviewers for the Press for their thoughtful and helpful comments and suggestions.

Finally, and most important, we thank our families.

Abbreviations

ALP	Alternate Language Program
CAFTA	Central America Free Trade Agreement
CBC	Congressional Black Caucus
CHC	Congressional Hispanic Caucus
CUL	National Urban Coalition
ESL	English as Second Language
LCCR	Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
LULAC	League of United Latin American Citizens
MALDEF	Mexican American Legal Defense Fund
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NADBank.	North American Development Bank
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NALEO	National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials
NCLB	No Child Left Behind Act
NCLR	National Council of La Raza
NHLA	National Hispanic Leadership Agenda
PUSH	People United to Serve Humanity
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
UL	National Urban League
USCCR	U.S. Commission on Civil Rights
VRA	Voting Rights Act

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