

Manuel Alcántara, Mercedes García Montero, and Cristina Rivas Pérez (editors). *Politics and Political Elites in Latin America: Challenges and Trends*. Cham: Springer, 2020. 353 pages. ISBN 978-3-030-51583-6.

EMILY B. CARTY

Universidad de Salamanca

This is an impressively diverse edited volume that performs “double-duty” by providing a detailed description of the Parliamentary Elites in Latin America dataset (PELA) as well as showcasing the data in eight cross-national and five case or small-N comparison studies. While these chapters cover a broad scope of topics, all relate to parliamentary elites in the Latin American region. In the preface of the book, the authors outline the importance of studying elites in this context where significant political changes have occurred over the last decades, particularly the preservation of democracy. The chapters that follow provide the reader with insights into the opinions and behaviors of elites within these democratic systems in the region.

The first chapter of the book presents the methodological and theoretical characteristics of the dataset. This introductory chapter helps to provide information for the reader that is useful both to introduce them to the dataset if they do not know it, as well as to provide context as the PELA dataset is used in all of the following chapters. This data is truly unique and reflects almost three decades of face-to-face survey data collection, an impressive data collection feat in and of itself. While the dataset has been around for quite a while and is fairly well-known among Latin Americanists, it may be less known to those outside of regional studies. The recent efforts by the PELA team to make the dataset more accessible by facilitating access to the data making the website and methodological materials available in English will hopefully allow more scholars to take advantage of this amazing resource.

The rest of the volume provides an impressive overview of important topics in Latin American politics from a perspective that, until recently, has been somewhat underdeveloped in the region. The chapters in this volume both individually and in their collective whole serve both to highlight the versatility of the data as well as make an important contribution to the study of elites in Latin America. Not only do the authors make interesting contributions through their analyses,

but the literature reviewed in the chapters is very well done, incorporating both classic and recent literature from Latin American and other regions. In that way, the volume as a whole is a valuable resource to those looking for references on these topics.

The substantive chapters of the first section of the book generally fall into two categories: the careers of political elites, and the attitudes of elites. Chapters 2 and 8 provide insight into the professional careers of elites in the region. Kernecker (chapter 1) provides a descriptive analysis of political ambition of elites and its variation cross-nationally and over time. Similarly, García and Graciela (chapter 8) also provide a detailed descriptive analysis of the relationship between gender and political careers of parliamentary elites in the region.

The majority of the other chapters in Part 1 deal with attitudes of parliamentary elites and how those relate to the democratic system. Some are more specific to Latin America and other contexts with similar political characteristics, such as the exploration of clientelism by Corral and Martínez (chapter 5), and Bohigues and Morgenstern's analysis of elite attitudes towards the United States and China (chapter 8). Other chapters explore topics that apply to democratic systems more broadly. Chapter 3, for example, explores the degree of political trust parliamentary elites hold to different institutions in the democratic system. In a similar vein, chapter 7 (Arana & Guerrero) looks at executive-legislative relations and to what degree and what conditions increase or decrease legislators' trust in the president. Chapters 4 and 6 explore attitudes toward the democratic system overall, specifically, satisfaction with democracy (Martínez and Mateos) and democratic fatigue (Bohigues and Alcántara).

The second part of the book contains case or small-N comparative studies. Chapters 10 and 14 take a comparative approach with Ranulfo and colleagues examining the explanatory power of ideology on elite attitudes in Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay, and Barragán comparing elite attitudes in two cases which are often underexplored in the literature, Panama and Guatemala. Chapters 11 (Márquez & Marengi) on Mexico, 12 on Colombia (Ramírez & Rivas), and 13 on Uruguay (Chasqueti & Selios) take a more in-depth look at attitudes of elites in those countries.

While each chapter sheds light on a specific topic, there are a couple of commonalities between some chapters. A couple of chapters, for example, trend into the empirical issue of congruence by including elite-citizen comparisons. In chapter 4, Martínez and Mateos analyze satisfaction with democracy and although their primary focus is on elites, they include graphics of data from LAPOP to compare aggregate levels of elite and citizen attitudes. Likewise, chapter 5 on clientelism includes a graphic on citizen's perceptions of clientelism to frame the analysis of elite attitudes. Although these chapters do not directly analyze congruence, they open the door for future investigation on how their findings compare to those on citizen attitudes.

Another strength of the volume is the rich descriptive information provided by the substantive chapters. Some chapters make this their focus, engaging primarily in descriptive analysis, such as chapters 2 (Kerneckner) and 11 (Márquez & Marengi). The case studies in the second part of the volume contain an impressive amount of detail, providing shining examples of how case studies can delve in and give a much more thorough examination of topics within a specific context. However, even those chapters that employ cross-national statistical analyses include a descriptive component that helps to situate the topic and explore cross-national differences, offering a richer look than often provided in large-N chapters and articles.

Without undermining the contribution of the chapters and the edited volume overall, I would argue that there is a bit of a gap in the theories and methodological contributions put forth by the authors that centers around the role of political parties, something to which most of the authors pay little attention. The analyses in the majority of the chapters look at elites from a purely individualistic perspective, or individuals nested within countries, without much attention to the influence that their affiliation to particular parties play. One could imagine that political parties could be an important factor in many of the topics explored in the chapters of this volume. For example, there is likely a relationship between politicians' political ambitions and the political party to which they belong, especially taking into account the degree of institutionalization of the political party. A newer, smaller political party, or personalistic parties might condition political ambitions differently than more established parties; or there may be a self-selection effect where individuals with more lofty political ambitions join political parties that offer more professional opportunities. Clientelism also seems like a phenomenon that would be inherently linked to parties. Once a party begins down the path of clientelism, they have the necessary formal and informal institutional structures, and develop patterns of behavior that would help sustain these types of practices. Some chapters attempt to incorporate political parties into their theories and analyses to varying degrees, but most do not go into depth. Arana and Guerrero in chapter 7, for example, include a variable on president's party in order to control for partisan effects on trust in the executive. The case studies generally go into more depth in examining partisan differences, but largely do so at the aggregate level, which misses an opportunity to explore any within-party variation. It would be nice to see parties better incorporated into the theories and analyses of especially the larger-N studies.

In a similar vein, some of the methodological decisions are questionable, as various chapters' analyses do not properly account for the complex structure of the data. In reality, PELA has three levels of nested data – individual elites within parties within countries, with this data available across almost three decades. Some authors group the data together for all data years of a country without using

fixed effects to account for the variation across years, while others treat each country-year as a separate case without taking into account the within-country tendencies in their statistical analyses. Additionally, a couple of the chapters use HJ-Biplot, a rather uncommon method that some may find difficult to interpret. None of the methods the authors fully account for the complexity of the multi-level cross-national time series data they use. In failing to do so, the authors miss an opportunity to gain insights into the relationships, whether over time, across countries, or by level of observation. Especially as this volume's intent is in part to showcase the PELA dataset, the methodological choices taken by the various authors fail to do full justice in highlighting the full potential that the PELA dataset can provide.

Finally, as is understandable in a volume of this nature, the diversity of the chapters causes it to feel somewhat loosely tied together. While all of the volume's chapters are connected in the sense that they deal with topics relating to parliamentary elites, the broad range gives the reader the sense of a certain lack of cohesion to the volume overall. Certain general themes are highlighted in the prologue with the editors grouping the chapters' topics together as pertaining to "important aspects of representative democracy", which they certainly do, but such a broad umbrella fails to give a very clear direction to the reader. The organization of the chapters, especially in the first part of the book, does little to help in this regard.

Overall, this edited volume is a well-received contribution to the study of political elites in Latin America. By drawing upon literature from within and beyond the region, the chapters serve to situate the findings of the chapters into a broader comparative perspective, one that I believe is useful to scholars, professionals, and students interested in a variety of cases, not just in the Latin American region. I believe, and hope, that it also serves as a call for further exploration of these topics on political elites. The editors and authors in this volume have shown what is possible using the PELA-USAL dataset in regard to the richness and diversity of what we can learn about parliamentary elites in the Latin American region.