

BOOK REVIEW ESSAYS

Party Competition in Latin America in Flux: Party Systems, Parties, and Partisans

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This essay reviews the following works:

The Fates of Political Parties: Institutional Crisis, Continuity, and Change in Latin America. By Jennifer Cyr. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Pp. v + 269. \$99.99 hardcover. ISBN: 9781107189799.

Los sistemas de partidos en América Latina, 1978-2015. Tomo 1: México, América Central, y República Dominicana; Tomo 2: Cono Sur y países andinos. Edited by Flavia Freidenberg. Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and Instituto Nacional Electoral, 2016. Pp. vii + 465 and vii + 543. Collection ISBN: 9786078510078.

Party Brands in Crisis: Partisanship, Brand Dilution, and the Breakdown of Political Parties in Latin America. By Noam Lupu. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016. Pp. xii + 247. \$32.99 paperback. ISBN: 9781107423206.

Changing Course in Latin America: Party Systems in the Neoliberal Era. By Kenneth M. Roberts. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Pp. ix + 330. \$35.99 paper. ISBN: 9780521673266.

Simply listing some of the ways in which parties and party systems have changed in the last two decades, one could be accused of melodrama. Some decades-old, prominent political parties have disappeared from electoral landscape: for example, Venezuela's Acción Democrática (AD) and Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente (COPEI); and Peru's Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA), Acción Popular (AP), and Partido Popular Cristiano (PPC). Some of these have revived nationally (APRA), and some have shapeshifted into subnational parties (AD, COPEI, AP) or reinvented themselves in wider coalitions (PPC) (see the books by Jennifer Cyr, Noam Lupu, and Kenneth Roberts, and chapters by Julia María Rubio and Iñaki Sagarzazu in Flavia Freidenberg's collection). By 2010 only a modest fraction of Latin American voters (33.8 percent) identified with political parties, and political parties have free-fallen to become the least trusted (23 percent) political institution in most Latin American polities (Roberts, 33). These melodramatic dynamics threaten to blot out major gains in representation such as greater incorporation of ethnic minorities, the rise of female political leaders, and the decline of military intervention in politics. The sheer breadth of these interrelated questions poses formidable theoretical challenges.

Yet tackling those challenges is crucial because of political parties' and party systems' purported roles in democratic consolidation. If elections became routinized, scholars assumed, parties would cement their roles as conduits between citizens and states and, in turn, party systems would institutionalize. Why parties and party systems remain in flux even as elections have become routine is, therefore, puzzling. Extant conceptual frameworks seemed inadequate to comprehend the widespread changes in Latin American party systems, parties, and partisans in recent decades. The party system institutionalization paradigm, for example, views party competition as a stable equilibrium between parties and voters who share the

expectation that equilibrium behavior and interactions will persist.¹ Latin American party systems largely exist in unstable equilibria.² As accurate as that description may be, it offers little analytic guidance into the dramatic changes within and across party systems. And conceiving of partisanship as “the unmoved mover” only makes sense where parties are unmoved (Lupu, 178). When parties move, what, then, of voters?

The works reviewed in this essay help resolve such problems by contextualizing these changes within a broader process of social transformation spurred by political reactions to market globalization (Roberts); acknowledging (Roberts) if not focusing on citizen behavior (Lupu); shifting the unit of analysis from systems to parties (Lupu and Cyr); taking party organization and subnational party competition seriously (Cyr and Freidenberg); and recognizing elite agency in shaping party competition (all works in this essay). Hence a new generation of research on party competition in Latin America has been born, reinvigorating the field by tackling the implications of neoliberal structural adjustment and its backlash.

Four recent comparative works are representative of this new generation of research. Two analyze party competition at the party-system level, two analyze parties themselves. Though they differ in execution they arrive at largely complementary conclusions. Below I review these works and seek to place them into dialogue in hopes of distilling their collective contributions to our understanding of the political economy of party competition in Latin America. Along the way, I point out questions these works leave unanswered and identify fruitful avenues for future research.

Flavia Freidenberg’s commanding two-tome collection *Los sistemas de partidos en América Latina, 1978–2015* traces change in eighteen Latin American party systems over the last four decades. It builds on her previous work with Manuel Alcántara on political parties in the region.³ To that end, Freidenberg recruited twenty-five country experts from El Grupo de Investigación de Partidos y Sistemas de Partidos en América Latina (GIPSAL) of the Asociación Latinoamericana de Ciencia Política (ALACIP) to contribute case-study chapters. The collection investigates why some party systems swiftly collapsed (e.g., Venezuela, Bolivia, Peru) while others experienced gradual changes of more (e.g., Brazil, Chile, El Salvador) or less (e.g., Argentina, Costa Rica, Uruguay) subtlety.

In the introduction, Freidenberg makes two guiding assumptions. First, parties vary in their internal organization, strategies, or modes of governing according to context. Second, for all of their shortcomings, political parties remain the key vehicles of interest representation in Latin America. As Freidenberg, quoting Andrés Malamud, puts it, “los partidos se ríen de sus sepultureros [parties laugh at their gravediggers]” (9).⁴ From there, Freidenberg builds an analytic framework around the structure and dynamics of party competition. Structure refers to the orientation of party preferences and the fragmentation of support. Dynamics connote interactions among parties in multiple ambits (i.e., competitiveness, electoral volatility, polarization, ideology, and institutionalization). Hewing to this framework, contributors identify and explain variation over time on both dimensions.

Tracking party systems’ structure and dynamics from 1978 to 2015 at the national level is a massive undertaking. But Freidenberg and colleagues take an additional theoretical step. Namely, they analyze how subnational party competition informs national-level patterns. Not all cases experience such “multilevel” interplay, but Freidenberg gives the contributors free rein to address it where it unmistakably matters. The authors, in turn, deliver the sorts of insights into party competition that comparative research often lacks. Indeed what distinguishes this collection is the attention it gives to multilevel party competition and to the impact of institutions, especially electoral systems, which it treats as both exogenous and endogenous to party competition. This greatly enriches the chapters and boosts the work’s overall theoretical profile. Space restraints preclude anything more than a few cherry-picked examples to illustrate how the focus on structure and dynamics illuminates the interactions between subnational and national competition.

Andrés Malamud and Miguel De Luca’s chapter (“¿Todo sigue igual que ayer? Continuidad y ruptura en el sistema de partidos argentino, 1983–2015”) nicely synthesizes the accumulated knowledge on a well-studied case in which national-level party competition is at the mercy of provincial-level actors. Provincial party leaders and governors hold power by selecting legislative candidates. Furthermore, they use the system

¹ Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, “Introduction: Party Systems in Latin America,” in *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America*, ed. Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 1–34.

² Mariano Torcal, ed., *Sistemas de partidos en América Latina: Causas y consecuencias de su equilibrio inestable* (Barcelona: Anthropos Editorial and Universidad Nacional del Litoral, 2015).

³ Manuel Alcántara Sáez and Flavia Freidenberg, eds., *Partidos políticos de América Latina* (Salamanca: Editorial Universidad de Salamanca, 2001).

⁴ Andrés Malamud, “Los partidos se ríen de sus sepultureros,” *La Nación*, October 15, 2015. <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1838207-los-partidosse-rien-de-sus-sepultureros>.

of staggered elections (*escalonamiento*) and prerogatives (*desdoblamiento*) to decouple provincial elections from national elections or to decouple elections to the same body into elections at multiple time points. Hence provincial party leaders strategically manipulate the electoral calendar to produce coattail effects by allowing concurrent elections, or to negate them by decoupling them. According to Malamud and De Luca, this benefits traditional-party incumbents and stabilizes the national party system by delinking it from cyclical crises (2: 43–44).

In her chapter “La institucionalización del cambio en el sistema de partidos en Guatemala,” María del Mar Martínez Rosón highlights how a different set of rules governing national-level party competition hampers the formation of a subnational party system. Specifically, in Guatemala political parties of any size may compete in national legislative elections, which feature proportional representation via local (75 percent) and national (25 percent) lists. But parties that fail to win at least 5 percent of the vote or to seat at least one deputy are cancelled (*cancelado*). Potential upstart local parties, therefore, face a strategic dilemma: compete and win, or lose and perish. Additionally, legally recognized parties have a monopoly on electoral participation. The only recourse independent candidates and social movements have is to form a civic electoral committee (*comité cívico electoral*), a temporary organization that can compete only at the municipal level. Such high stakes for survival and the provisional nature of civic electoral committees discourage the formation of local or geographically rooted parties and, in turn, a robust subnational party system (1: 174–175).

Other worthy examples abound. But hopefully this small sampling underscores the analytic value of this fascinating set of high-quality, structured case studies. Now I turn to the collection’s overall contributions.

Freidenberg’s concluding chapter synthesizes the case studies’ findings into a typology of party-system change for Latin America from 1978 to 2015. Here she crosses the structure and dynamics of competition with the pace of change, rendering three types. “Radical” change types witnessed one or more prominent parties collapse and a structure and/or dynamics of competition that broke with its predecessor system: Bolivia (Salvador Romero Ballivián), Ecuador (Flavia Freidenberg), Peru (Julia María Rubio), and Venezuela (Iñaki Sagarzazu). “Gradual change in structure” types exhibited party replacement, continuity in the elites’ leading parties (though sometimes under new labels), relatively stable axes of partisan competition, and moderate volatility; examples are Brazil (Maria do Socorro Sousa Braga, Pedro Floriano Ribeiro, and Osvaldo E. Do Amaral), Chile (Tomáš Došek), the Dominican Republic (Ana Belén Benito Sánchez and Wilfredo Lozano), El Salvador (Gabriel Alejandro Martínez), Honduras (Patricia Otero Felipe), Nicaragua (Salvador Martí i Puig), Panama (Harry Brown Araúz and Willibald Sonnleitner) and, presumably, Paraguay (Camilo Filártiga Callizo). Finally, Argentina (Andrés Malamud and Miguel De Luca), Costa Rica (María José Cascante Matamoros), Uruguay (Daniel Buquet), and, presumably, Colombia (Felipe Botero, Rodrigo Losada, and Laura Wills-Otero), showed “gradual change in structure *and* dynamics” in which traditional patterns of bipartisanship in all three cases were altered incrementally.

Sifting through these three patterns, Freidenberg links gradual changes in the structure and dynamics of party competition to parties’ and citizens’ responses to new incentive structures brought on by institutional reforms, particularly to electoral systems. Yet she is adamant that formal institutional explanations fall short unless studied alongside informal institutions that elites employ to adapt to and absorb rule change. This is a cogent conclusion, to be sure. However one suspects it could have been drawn apart from the typology that precedes it. Since neither gradual nor radical party system transformations can be explained by formal institutions alone, without resort to informal institutions, the analytic power of the typology remains in limbo. Nonetheless, Freidenberg and her colleagues’ careful consideration to the implications of institutional change—formal and informal—make an enduring contribution to our understanding of Latin America party systems.

Kenneth M. Roberts’s *Changing Course in Latin America: Party Systems in the Neoliberal Era* strives for a more sweeping understanding. This theoretical and empirical tour de force uses the study of party system change to provide “a lens through which to view the broader realignment of social, economic, and political fields during Latin America’s turbulent transition to market globalization” (11). Roberts largely meets these lofty aspirations in a compelling, comprehensive account of party system change in the region.

His entry points are two patterns of party system change that characterize the post-adjustment era: the (in)stability of partisan and electoral competition and the nature of leftist alternatives. To explain why Latin American party systems’ institutional outcomes diverged along these two dimensions, Roberts adopts a critical juncture framework. The critical juncture, he argues, corresponds to the exhaustion of import-substituting industrialization models (ISI) and the subsequent embrace of neoliberal policy prescriptions that reoriented states and economies to global markets in the wake of the 1980s debt crisis. Observed party

system dynamics in the region, according to Roberts, reflect the character of the party system under ISI, the depth and duration of economic crisis over the transition from ISI to neoliberalism, and the political orientations of leading market reformers and the opposition during the structural adjustment period. With these causal factors in hand, Roberts posits a sequential, three-step theory that departs significantly from Freidenberg's institutional framework.

In step one, the antecedent character of the party system under ISI conditions the depth and duration of the economic crisis in neoliberal transition which, in turn, influences the stability of partisan electoral competition. Party systems reconfigured by a labor-mobilizing left or populist party under ISI (e.g., Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil) suffered quite severe economic crises that generated high degrees of instability in partisan competition. By contrast, where elitist patterns of partisan competition were retained (e.g., Colombia, Costa Rica, Uruguay), economic crises of the 1980s were less severe and, thus, created less instability.

In step two, post-adjustment levels of programmatic alignment and institutionalization in the party system hinged on the political orientation of leading market reformers and the opposition during the adjustment period. This resulted in three distinct types of critical junctures. If market reform was led by conservative or pro-business parties or leaders *and* opposed by a major left-wing party, the party system became institutionalized and programmatically "aligned," that is, structured by an axis of "contested liberalism" (e.g., Brazil, Chile, Uruguay). If, instead, market reform was carried out by a labor-mobilizing or center-left party, it "dealigned" party systems (e.g., Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, Venezuela). This left critics of reform without representation and opened the door to antisystem and/or left-populist candidates. Where conservative actors carried out market reform without a major leftist opposition, the critical juncture was "neutral" (e.g., Colombia, Honduras). The latter two patterns led to either "neoliberal convergence" (e.g., Argentina, Bolivia) or "serial populism" (e.g., Peru, Ecuador), neither of which contributed to the programmatic structuration of the party system, though "neoliberal convergence" aided institutionalization. Another outcome of dealignment was "polarized populism" (Venezuela), which increased programmatic structuration but decomposed the party system.

In step three, the institutional outcomes of neoliberal critical junctures left legacies. Contested liberalism proved to be a stable equilibrium, reinforced and reproduced by durable parties that consistently championed or criticized the arc of reform. Polarized populism also proved fairly stable. Neoliberal convergence and serial populism—both of which lacked a viable left party to channel discontent with neoliberalism—proved unstable. Ultimately, they were undercut by reactive sequences of social backlash against the neoliberal model and opened the door to actors seeking to outflank traditional parties to the left. These patterns help explain variation in Latin America's "left turns."

Roberts marshals an impressive amount of empirical evidence in support of this explanation. On the dimension of party system institutionalization, "aligning" critical junctures that produced contested liberalism saw lower levels of electoral volatility from 2000 to 2010 than all cases in which "dealigning" critical junctures led to neoliberal convergence, and all but one case of a "neutral" critical juncture. On the dimension of programmatic competition and polarization, the aligned cases remained so in the aftermath, just as Roberts's framework predicts. In dealigned cases, however, Roberts's case studies trace how the specificities of reactive sequences in each nation resulted in patterns not fully anticipated by his framework. In sum, the reader is left with little doubt that Roberts's explanation attains great validity for the cases under analysis. Scholars will surely apply his conceptual tools to shed light on other critical junctures.

While Roberts's explanation is clearly structural, the critical juncture framework allows him to incorporate political agency and contingency as well, and to account not only for change but also continuity. The critical juncture framework, nevertheless, restricts his discussion of agency to the adoption of specific political economic models in reaction to exogenous shocks. It does not consider, as Freidenberg's volume does, the role of elite agency in crafting informal institutions or altering electoral rules, which, while not fully determinant, certainly shaped party competition endogenously. Jennifer Cyr's book (discussed below) argues that elite agency is crucial to parties' fates after breakdown. But Roberts grapples more overtly with the behavioral underpinnings of party systems change than either of these two books. In chapters 2 and 3, for instance, Roberts explores behavioral links between low levels of partisanship and trust in political parties, on one hand, and high levels of volatility, on the other. In this vein he proposes that bait-and-switch tactics undermined programmatic voting and encourage performance-based valence voting. While Roberts does not fully test these propositions, he acknowledges the behavioral underpinnings far more than most structural accounts and analyses that employ the critical juncture framework. Therein lies an intriguingly original contribution.

A more systematic examination of these behavioral underpinnings can be found in Noam Lupu's *Party Brands in Crisis*. Lupu motivates his study by noting that between 1978 and 2007 one-fourth of the established political parties in Latin America broke down, meaning they suffered an electoral defeat so massive in the next presidential election that they were uncompetitive. To explain why, he draws on social psychological and marketing research to develop a theory of partisanship on the basis of party brands. He combines this theory with basic retrospective voting to construct an elegant "branding" model of party breakdown. It predicts party breakdown under two joint conditions: (1) party brand dilution, which erodes partisanship, plus (2) poor economic performance under the party's watch. Because economic evaluations tend to become more determinative in vote choice when partisanship weakens, partisans (and the newly independent) are less likely to forgive performance failures.

The notion of party brands is a novel and powerful instrument with which to scrutinize party competition. It derives from conceptualizations of partisanship as a social identity. For Lupu, brands reflect the prototypical beneficiary of a given party's policy stances. Much like consumers who are loyal to a particular product's brand because they see themselves as typical of the product's modal consumer, voters are loyal to parties if they perceive themselves as typical of "the type of citizens a particular party represents" (19). Over time, parties develop brands by what they say and do, and voters may (or may not) develop partisan affinities on the basis of perceived "comparative fit" with the brand (12).

Because this model conceives of partisanship as a social identity, one party's identifiers must be able to clearly differentiate themselves from other parties' identifiers. Differentiation from partisan out-groups becomes more difficult, Lupu argues, when parties dilute their brands. Brand dilution occurs when voters perceive the party behaving in ways inconsistent with voters' preconceptions of who the party aims to benefit. Elite infighting and position switches, especially if they pull the party closer to other parties, muddle the party brand and, in turn, make partisans wonder whether they, indeed, still resemble the party's prototypical beneficiary. While brand dilution may reflect strategic (if tough) choices—such as using bait-and-switch tactics to enact neoliberal reforms—others are largely inevitable by-products of party life, such as internal conflict and other parties encroaching on a party's issue space.

According to Lupu, by weakening party attachments, party brand dilution sets the stage for party breakdown. Strong partisans filter their perceptions of performance outcomes on valence issues—that is, issues all voters care about and on which parties can only promise to better deliver—through partisan lenses. Hence they are much more forgiving of economic failures, spikes in crime, corruption scandals, and so on than are weak partisans and nonpartisans. Accordingly, this "partisanship-valence tradeoff means that as partisanship erodes in the electorate, parties become increasingly susceptible to valence evaluations" (25). Under these conditions, poor performance on valence issues can drive an erstwhile incumbent party into political obscurity. This is the essence of Lupu's branding model of party breakdown.

Lupu lays the conceptual groundwork of this theory in chapter 2 and tests the model's most obvious empirical implications over five empirical chapters. These tests represent a yardstick for comparative research in terms of their rigor, fieldwork, and plurality. For example, Lupu constructs a formal exposition of branding model of partisanship and vote choice (included as an appendix). He also outlines the painstaking construction of an original measure of brand dilution that can be applied to a cross-section of 105 Latin American presidential elections from 1978 to 2007. To get at the microfoundations, he employs a matched case comparison within and across Argentina and Venezuela—a nice complement to treatments in Freidenberg by Malamud and De Luca and Sagarzazu, respectively. Both case studies feature aggregate-level survey data on partisanship over time and model vote choice as a function of partisanship and economic retrospections. Going beyond correlational analysis, Lupu executes an experiment that manipulates brand consistency, identifying a causal effect of brand dilution on partisan attachments. Finally, he probes the external validity of the polarization-partisanship linkage using data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, and checks its internal validity via panel data from the American National Election Studies.⁵

Altogether, the evidence in support of the branding theory is quite compelling. The interaction of party brand dilution and economic misery reliably predicts party breakdown and outperforms several alternative explanations. The Argentina case study shows the relative impact of retrospective economic evaluations rising relative to incumbent partisanship in the 1989 election of Peronist Carlos Menem and in his 1995 reelection bid. In parallel, the Venezuela case study shows a similar dynamic across the 1988 and 1993 elections featuring incumbents from the Acción Democrática (AD) party. Lupu links evidence of brand

⁵ See <http://cses.org/> and <https://electionstudies.org/>.

dilution ahead of the breakdowns of Argentina's Radicals in 2003 and Venezuela's AD/COPEI in 1998, as well as poor economic performance, to these dismal electoral returns. While model estimates would have allowed yet another set of within-country comparisons, the raw numbers in these cases largely speak for themselves.

Two questions linger. First, if brand dilution weakens incumbent partisans' willingness to trade shared partisanship for poor valence performance—by obscuring the prototypical party beneficiary—then wouldn't another testable implication of the model be the interaction of incumbent partisanship and economic evaluations as predictors of incumbent vote? A second question concerns elites' ability to rebrand the party. Public opinion scholars have long noted how elites lead public opinion. Can elites therefore use rhetoric to align partisans with shifts in the party's prototypical beneficiary? If so, can a broken-down party make a comeback?

The role of elites in parties' comebacks receives far more attention in Jennifer Cyr's *The Fates of Political Parties*. Whereas Lupu asks why parties break down, Cyr asks how parties recover after breaking down within the context of a complete party-system collapse. Her motivating puzzle is the diverging fates of parties in Bolivia (Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario (MNR), Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR), Acción Democrática Nacionalista (ADN), Peru (APRA, AP, PPC), and Venezuela (AD, COPEI) after these party systems collapsed in the 1990s and 2000s. Her analyses pair nicely with chapters in Freidenberg's volume on the Bolivian (Romero Ballivián), Peruvian (Rubio), and Venezuelan (Sagarzazu) cases.

Cyr argues that a party's resources largely determine its fate. Party resources refer to "those assets that a party wields to function successfully" (30) and come in four varieties: material (e.g., money, patronage), organizational (e.g., militants, staff, branches), elite (e.g., candidates, campaign/organizational decision makers, founders, "faces" of the party), and ideational (ideology, brand, expertise). These resource types "make goals actionable" (15) and bolster party resilience in the face of electoral collapse.

As a basic theoretical prior, Cyr posits that different resources matter in different ways. Not all resources are created equal. Resources vary according to the amount of investment required and their dependence on short-term electoral success. Whereas some resources are high-cost (e.g., ideology, brand, expertise, staff, militants, branches), others are low-cost (e.g., money, patronage, elites). Cyr stipulates that parties are best suited to survive the hostility that accompanies electoral collapse—and to potentially revive—by drawing on high-cost resources. Placing a premium on maintaining a party's ideology and brand for party survival harmonizes with Roberts's and Lupu's accounts of party system and party dynamics, respectively.

Survival can take place at the subnational level or in the public debate, according to Cyr. Among high-cost resources, organizational resources allow the party to maintain visibility and to organize more localized campaigns and, thus, survive as subnational electoral entities. Attention to subnational party competition echoes a similar refrain in Freidenberg's volume. Ideational resources, for their part, help the party to survive in the public debate, as the media ask them to comment on issues related to their ideology and brand.

Though also a form of survival, revival entails a party recovering its national influence or relevance. Parties can leverage high-cost resources, Cyr argues, to revive as an independent electoral entity, a pivotal player in coalitional politics, as a kingmaker, or via reinvention. Yet she sees revival as contingent on postcrisis party system patterns. In an "atomized" system such as post-1992 Peru, parties give way to individualized movements lacking formal structure and coherent platforms that crop up during campaign seasons only to retreat afterward. Here parties that (re-)invest in ideational resources (APRA) have the best odds of revival; those that do not must rely on reinvention strategies (PPC) or languish at the whim of other actors (AP). "Regionalized" party systems, such as post-1998 Venezuela, facilitate revival for parties with organizational structures spread throughout the country (AD) as opposed to in traditional bastions (COPEI). Finally, in "hyper-fluid" systems, like post-2005 Bolivia, resources play an idiosyncratic role in party revival.

Cyr tests these theoretical expectations within and across three cases of party-system collapse in which established parties sustained a national-electoral breakdown—Peru, Venezuela, and Bolivia—using an integrated, mixed-method research design meant to exploit the comparative advantage of various methods. But this requires significant conceptual and measurement groundwork. She therefore carefully develops the fourfold typology of party resources by synthesizing literatures on party development from several world regions, and mounts an enormous effort to measure party resources. To gauge organizational resources, for example, Cyr collects original data from surveys and interviews of subnational party leaders and party expert surveys. To tap ideational resources, she conducts a series of focus groups and scores of interviews to complement secondary source material. After producing organizational and ideational resources scores for each party, Cyr tests her hypotheses with comparative case studies and finds broadly supportive evidence.

The Fates of Political Parties is another exemplary piece of research. Like Roberts's work, it reminds us that agency and contingency strongly condition parties trajectories. Like Lupu's book, it shows the payoff, in terms of knowledge construction, of extensive fieldwork, conceptual development, and methodological plurality. Yet one wonders about the unspoken scope conditions of Cyr's deterministic argument. Though it covers the universe of party-system collapses in Latin America, each of the three Andean cases under analysis are, essentially, inchoate from the outset. Would we expect the resource argument to apply to a more institutionalized and programmatically structured system that suddenly collapses? Or is it the case, as Roberts's and Lupu's analyses appear to suggest, that party-system collapse is unlikely except in inchoate systems? Should we witness another party-system collapse in Latin America, in tribute to Cyr's masterful study, these will be among the first questions students will seek to answer.

As should now be clear, a new generation of research has made major strides toward, as Roberts put it, "locating some semblance of order in the cacophony of political and economic changes that swept across Latin America at the end of the 20th century" (11). Freidenberg and company's magisterial collection reminds scholars of both the intricate institutional contexts that make each party system unique and the fluidity that binds party systems in the region. It also nicely bridges research on informal institutions within parties to patterns of party systems change. Roberts's critical juncture argument will be a touchstone for understanding party system dynamics during a turbulent period of Latin American democracy. Its empirical contribution is unquestionable. As masterfully as *Changing Course in Latin America* intertwines method and evidence, it is still too early to assess its theoretical contribution. The fullness of its theoretical value will reveal itself once it is applied to contexts such as Europe and the United States. I suspect we have not heard the last word from Roberts on this point. Lupu's concept of party brands and branding model of party breakdown constitute stand-alone contributions. As he notes, conceiving of parties as brands resolves a tension in classic conceptualizations of partisanship in which the social group—not the party itself—is the referent for the prototypical in-group member. But, as occurs in Latin America, frequent and abrupt shifts cast doubt on the prototypical beneficiary and, in turn, weaken partisanship. Only by viewing party attachments in this light can we understand how a long-standing party can break down electorally. This insight should travel to democracies in other regions, new and old. In *The Fates of Political Parties*, Cyr takes us past the hang-wringing stage of party crisis and pushes us to consider what comes next. Theoretically and conceptually, the book is rich. Practically, any organization contemplating forming a political party should heed its lesson: investing scarce resources in communicating a set of unique ideas and building a national infrastructure gives parties the best shot at withstanding even the most debilitating crises. It is equally impressive as a study in how to conduct rigorous, question-driven, and theoretically informed fieldwork. Students would do well to use this work as a model.

In sum, the books reviewed here set a high bar for the next generation of research in this field. They tackle big questions, construct new conceptual tools, craft compelling theories, and employ methodologically plural research designs to examine a wide array of evidence. Together, these works advance the study of parties and party systems in several ways. Ignoring the multilevel nature of parties and party systems is no longer viable. These works drive home the relevance of subnational party competition, internal party institutions, and voter behavior, attachments, and attitudes. Hence researchers in this field will be pushed to test the observable implications of their hypotheses for a much wider range of relevant actors. Finally, snapshots of party competition in the region or a given country will become comparatively less attractive. Not only does the fluidity of party competition in Latin America give such views a short shelf life, but the research reviewed here underscores the empirical richness and theoretical payoff of analyzing temporal variation as well.

Whereas the period under study witnessed a few, fairly brief authoritarian interludes, the next generation of party systems research may need to grapple with how party competition emerges from longer, more variegated authoritarian episodes. Additionally, it may have to address how party competition adapts to new sets of positional issues (e.g., immigration, homosexual rights, environmental protection) and valence issues (e.g., drug gangs and violence, organized crime, natural disasters, corruption) that are increasingly politicized throughout the region, not just in pockets. Exogenous shocks will likely matter as well. Booms in a broad class of commodities spurred high growth rates for most Latin American countries over the most recent decade or so, to the benefit of incumbents and their parties. Will the post-commodity boom era prove as consequential for party competition as the post-adjustment era? Without the theoretical groundwork laid by the four studies reviewed in this essay, answering these and other questions would be far more daunting.

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