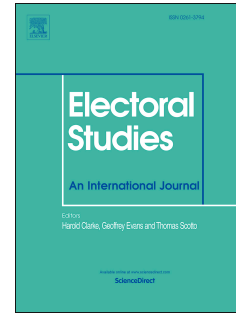


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Representing the national economic agenda in Latin America: Variation by fat and lean times and party brands

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Representing the National Economic Agenda in Latin America: Variation by Fat and Lean Times and Party Brands

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Abstract. Representation is greater when legislators and voters agree on the national agenda. Under what conditions are higher degrees of “issue priority representation” more likely? Our answer focuses on economic conditions and party branding dynamics, and the case of Latin America. With mass and elite survey data we show that economic hard times and left-leaning preferences increase the prioritization of economic issues. In accord with that finding, we document fairly high levels of economic issue priority representation in most of Latin America. From the perspective of democratic quality, evidence of representation in this domain is good news; yet, variation does exist. Consistent with our argument that party branding dynamics matter, we find that leftist and centrist parties tend to over-prioritize economic issues relative to their supporters, and the reverse for rightist parties. Further, we find a significant interaction between economic conditions and the ideological brand of parties: in economic downturns the left and the center are more likely to express a strong commitment to economic performance, whereas the right is less responsive to lean times.

Key words: Representation, Issue Priorities, Economy, Party Brands, Latin America

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