*American Political Science Review* (2025) 119, 2, 932–946
doi:10.1017/S0003055424000534 

# Tradition and Disruption in Latinx and Latin American Political Thought

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*This article presents Latinx political thought as a distinctive tradition in political theory that reworks central concepts in response to historical experiences of conquest, colonialism, migration, and transnational politics. In reconstructing this tradition, we argue that its problem space converges with US-based Latin American political thought. The article first traces a genealogy of Latinx political theory and then explores three realms of theorizing around which Latinx and Latin American political thought cluster: sovereignty and state violence, peoplehood, and transnationalism. We explain how the surveyed works disrupt and enrich political theory accounts of these problems. In arguing for the recognition of this field as a tradition, the article also aims to make it intelligible as an area of concentration for PhD students in political science.*

This article examines Latinx political thought (LPT) as a tradition that emerged in response to shortcomings of the predominant mode of study of Latino politics in political science[1] and the erasure of Latinx politics in the political theory of sovereignty, peoplehood, and transnationalism. This erasure results, first, from the lack of theoretical tools to reflect on the experience of a racialized population with vulnerable legal status heir to the conquest of the Mexican Northwest, migration, and/or exile from Latin American authoritarian regimes. Second, the lack of attention to Latinx politics in political theory stems from the reluctance to theorize conquest and migration as foundational to US democratic politics. LPT theorizes these questions because, historically, it emerges from the demands of Chicano and Puerto Rican movements, which acted in dialogue and solidarity with other US racialized groups and anti-colonial struggles globally. Within these movements, students organized against the study of Latino questions as associated with their supposed deficits and championed an approach that centered racism, structural oppression, and resistance.[2]

LPT merits attention as a growing tradition within political theory that problematizes key conceptions of state power, peoplehood, and the local/global nexus. In engaging with these topics LPT incorporates concerns from the inter-discipline of Ethnic/Chicano/Latino/Latinx studies, addressing their questions politically in ways that both draw on and disrupt the tools and concepts of political theory. These critical interventions by Latinx political theorists tackle long-standing political questions anew by centering conquest, racialization, and transnationalism in the theorization of politics. In so doing, political theorists

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Received: September 17, 2023; revised: January 11, 2024; accepted: April 19, 2024. First published online: August 05, 2024.

[1] The Latino politics tradition of predominantly quantitative approaches to public opinion and institutions tends to disavow Latinx political *theory* as part of the field. The most recent survey of the field of Latino politics considers only a single work of LPT. This mention, moreover, is to reflect on the study of pan-ethnicity in the public opinion tradition, rather than as an approach to theorizing politics internal to Latino politics (Pérez and Cobian Forthcoming). See Julio Orellana (2024), for a broader account of Latinx politics and a brief but more meaningful engagement with Latinx political theory.

[2] The shifting census categorization of Latinos as a race ("Mexican") and then an ethnicity ("Hispanic") reflects their status as "a historical people with customs and conventions … also identified … by bodily morphology" allowing for both affinity and denigration (Alcoff 2009, 122). The internal diversity and the racialization of a class/phenotypically specific subset of them explains the diverse positions Latinos have occupied vis-à-vis whiteness (Hattam 2007, 98, 105) and is part of the conundrum that Latinx political theory tackles. The subgroup "Chicano" historically based their collective consciousness on their attachment to their homeland Aztlán (Pérez-Torres 2000, 103) and resistance to subordination (Arce 1981, 184). In the 2010s, "Latinx" emerged among "left leaning and queer communities" to promote gender inclusivity but spread quickly, leading to its wider adoption (Padilla 2016). This broadened the identities indexed by "x" toward other marginal political and cultural positionalities (DeGuzmán 2017; Guidotti-Hernández 2017; Torres 2018). To signal this openness toward inclusion and political possibility, we use *Latinx* political theory to refer to the body of work we survey, while retaining the traditional "Latino" to index the social group that cannot be subsumed by that project.

in this tradition question the adequacy of both dominant political theory approaches and central political terms to comprehend the political experience of Latinos in the absence of a reconceptualization.[3]

In arguing for a *tradition* of LPT, this article makes a claim of recognition more so than foundation. Our goal is to reconstruct a common problem space, which comprises a series of questions and answers around which conceptual and ideological–political stakes are organized (Scott 2004, 4–5). This is not intended to flatten the dynamic and diverse intellectual production in Latinx political theory and the related field of Latin American political thought (LAPT) but to analyze those accounts as part of a whole and interpret this whole as an internally contested tradition. Without this analysis, the visibility of the tradition and its cohesion lag vis-à-vis other approaches to the study of injustice and political exclusion in political theory as well as other accounts of the Latino experience within political science. This detracts from knowledge production and accumulation and, most importantly, from recognizing this tradition as a worthwhile path of research. In the latter case, political theory PhD students interested in conquest, migration, and unequal political standing are more likely to adopt analytical, continental, or critical theory approaches to these problems, while PhD students interested in Latino politics are channeled toward approaches that eschew interpretation and critique in favor of attitudinal research in the Americanist tradition of race, ethnicity, and politics.[4]

We theorize the tradition of Latinx political theory by organizing the literature around questions of sovereign power and violence, peoplehood, and transnationalism and showing how these interventions enrich, advance, and/or counter traditional forms of theorizing these concepts. This exercise uncovers a contentious realm of discourse that is distinctive, socially embodied, historical, and tied to an intellectual community with a common and recognizable identity (Scott 2013, 3). As shown below, this tradition draws from different interlocutors (like Marxism, post-structuralism, and Latinx studies) and takes different positions when speaking to common interlocutors. This results in competing interpretations of Latinx politics. This heterogeneity means that Latinx political theory as an area of scholarship does not simply engage mainstream accounts in either political theory or Latino politics but develops and sustains debates within itself.

Further, LPT shows points of convergence with US-based LAPT for four reasons.[5] First, LAPT studies political and intellectual traditions that are formative for the Latin American diaspora in the United States, thus necessarily figuring in the theorization of the latter's experience. Second, the experience, positionality, and Latinization of Latin American LAPT scholars in US academia inform their theorizing, thus motivating convergences with LPT. Third, LAPT similarly disrupts Anglo-European accounts of founding, empire, and popular politics, both by recovering national experiences that have been overlooked and by transnationalizing these understandings. This suggests that LAPT as a tradition has a historical and political context (a "problem space") that resonates more with the experience of Latinx groups in the United States than with the Anglo-European tradition. This means that it is worth making the linkage between these two subfields an important part of LPT's intellectual agenda. Finally, the structures of oppression studied and contested by Latinx political theory are not separable from the labor-expelling projects of development, military intervention, and/or neoliberal globalization imposed by the US and international financial institutions. Thus, political accounts of both Latinx migrant subjects produced by these interventions and the subjects who were "crossed by the border" (i.e., those residing in the land annexed after the Mexican-American war) necessitate a dialogue with LAPT. In other words, the relationship between LPT and LAPT follows from intellectual, historical, and (geo)political entanglements of these two peoples/regions, the increase in Latin American scholars in US academia, and convergent interventions in political theory debates.

In the rest of this article, we first outline the political and intellectual origins of LPT. The subsequent sections analyze three thematic areas in political theory around which LPT and LAPT cluster: sovereign power and violence, peoplehood, and transnationalism. We argue that Latinx approaches to sovereignty disrupt and revise understandings of sovereignty, law, and migration by conceptualizing how racialization, labor

[3] In this sense, Latinx political theory echoes comparative political theory in that it demonstrates the connections and disruptions that ensue from "engag[ing] with the unfamiliar" while centering "global asymmetries of knowledge and power" (Jenco, Idris, and Thomas 2019, 1). Yet, comparative political theory (CPT) is ill-fitted for the internal critical traditions of Black, Asian-American, Indigenous, and Latinx political thought. LAPT itself has been somewhat neglected within CPT, likely because of its visibility within area studies in the US academy, but to the detriment of the recognition of unique approaches to national independence, identity and difference, and political economy (Gordy 2019, 62–3).

[4] For the differences between these traditions, see Rocco (1977), who contrasts behavioralist approaches that predominate in the study of AP Latino politics to critical theory accounts, arguing that only the latter explore the "structural and institutional bases of power," which are key to understanding the political processes behind the domination of Chicanos as a group. Gonzales (2018) articulates this problem as one of "empiricism and an impoverished philosophy of social science that prevents [the field] from asking critical questions" about Latinx democratic politics in the conjuncture of neoliberal authoritarianism (546–7). An earlier and more general statement about these contrasting forms of knowledge is Wolin's (1969) juxtaposition of contextual and historical study of political action with data-based research that requires abstraction from "past practices and meanings" (1071). The demands of methodism, Wolin argues, may ultimately impoverish the scientific imagination, decrease creativity, and prevent a thorough interrogation of the factual world (1073).

[5] We do *not* survey the Latin American tradition of political thought writ large, but see Marini and Millán (1994a; 1994b; 1994c), Gordy (2019), and Svampa (2021).

exploitation, and political subjection follow from state racialized violence and surveillance. In relation to peoplehood, we engage with Latinx and Latin American theorists' conceptualization of the racialized/material, processual, cultural, and rhizomatic dimensions of the people. Finally, we recover how hemispheric and transnational accounts by Latinx political theorists problematize and expand the presumed boundaries of politics.

## GENEALOGIES OF RESISTANCE AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF LATINX POLITICAL THOUGHT

Latinx political theory took shape in the late 1970s and early 1980s, influenced by radical Chicano and Puerto Rican politics. These groups politicized Latino identity and demanded departments of Ethnic Studies that centered the perspectives of marginalized communities in knowledge production. The purpose of these programs was to establish a space within academia to promote alternatives to standard treatments of Latinos by predominantly Anglo scholars. The initial conception of this field was self-consciously counter-hegemonic, with a focus on marginalization drawn from Third World writers such as Frantz Fanon, Aimee Césaire, Paulo Freire, and José Martí (Okihiro 2016). However, the ultimate outcomes of these struggles replaced the radical, transnational, anti-colonial curriculum of Third World Studies with the institutionalization of isolated and culture-centered fields of Latinx, Asian American, Indigenous, and Black Studies (Okihiro 2016, 1–4). This was the historical and political context in which the first generation of LPT scholars pursued their graduate studies, a context that shaped their agendas within both Latino politics writ large and the subfield of political theory.

Intellectually, LPT was first influenced by the Marxist-oriented critiques of social science and humanities' work on Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans (Bonilla 1985; Bonilla and Campos 1982; Campos and Bonilla 1982; Romano 1969; Vázquez and Torres 2003). This scholarship creatively applied Marxist insights and anti-colonial thought to understand Latina/os in the United States through the internal colony framework (Barrera 1979). Many of these projects were shaped by works from Latin America and the Black radical tradition, which focused on dependency and racism, respectively, as factors mediating capitalist accumulation. This theoretical and political dialogue reinterpreted the political experiences of Latinx peoples in the United States, laying the groundwork for the counter tradition of LPT.

Second, alongside this conversation, and influenced by cultural studies, feminists of color, and Queer and feminist Chicana theorizing, the work of Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) established the borderlands and the *mestiza* consciousness as central foci for LPT. Anzaldúa also exemplified that engaging with LAPT can be contentious. Anzaldúa's *mestiza* consciousness drew from Mexican José Vasconcelos's notion of *mestizaje* to theorize the subjectivity of marginalized and racialized queer women. These subjects, she showed, had been marginalized by structures of white supremacy and Mexicano machismo alike, against which Anzaldúa opened a space for a new *mestiza* consciousness in resistance. Yet the current generation of LPT scholars' noted the still-potentially-essentialist character of hybrid consciousness and the racially hierarchical features of Vasconcelos' notion of *mestizaje*, on which hybridity was built (Beltrán 2004; Hooker 2014). Anzaldúa's work loomed large in debates in Comparative Literature and Romance Languages departments, where it was put in conversation with knowledge-centered decolonial accounts. Scholars building upon Aníbal Quijano's notion of coloniality borrowed from dependency theory and world systems analysis but departed from the historical and material aspects of these approaches to center discourse and knowledge in the theorization of coloniality (Lugones 2003; Mignolo 1989; Quijano 1992; 2000).

These strands reveal two modes of theorizing the effects of power on identity and the character of resistance. One centers the state, labor, and racial capitalist domination, while the other focuses on knowledge-power constructions and identitarian dynamics that shape Latino subjects and communities. Both accounts conceptualize Latinos as transnational actors and connected to marginalized communities in the Third World. LPT develops from these movements and intellectual fields into a tradition that disrupts three key agendas in political theory. First, it questions accounts of sovereignty, territory, and state power that underplay the violence of law, the heterogeneous reach of territorial control, and the spaces of labor exploitation that they sanction. Second, it rethinks the people in relation to race, collective identity, and history. And third, it posits transnational politics as a distinct realm that decenters the nation-state. It does so by problematizing the homogeneity of national identities and the political legitimacy of bordered power. These are the themes that organize our analysis of the tradition of LPT and LAPT below.

## SOVEREIGNTY, VIOLENCE, AND THE STATE

The history of conquest, Anglo settlement, racial exclusion, and immigration control marked and marks the Latino experience. These structures and practices of rule have traditionally been omitted from standard theorizations of sovereignty, violence, and the state but are centered by Latinx scholars who theorize them in conversation with, but also significant departure from, standard accounts in political theory. These approaches build upon Marxist and critical theory traditions to theorize anew the concept of state sovereignty by considering shifting territorial borders and the violence of settlement and internal colonization. This scholarship also studies how and why sovereign authority targets Latinx groups with particular violence, as well as how this violence is supported by racial

ideologies that infuse citizens' affective states. Here, the focus is on the connection between border and interior policing and the exploitable labor that these forces enable. Work on this theme both stands in contrast with the dominant approach to Latinx politics within the discipline—which focuses on individual political attitudes[6]—and significantly amends political theories of sovereignty and migration.

The founding work within this tradition is Mario Barrera's *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality*, a groundbreaking racial capitalist reading of the political exclusion and economic exploitation of Chicanos in the United States. Barrera posits the US annexation of Mexico as the event that founds an internal colony. He discards Manifest Destiny explanations as mere ideological cover for an imperial project to expand cotton production into Texas, acquire a Pacific harbor in California to trade with India and China, and secure other territories for transportation and trade (1979, 13–6). Barrera interprets the drastic political transformations of conquest as a case of primitive accumulation, that is, the capitalist appropriation of land and the displacement of rural population joined with their subordination as superexploited labor (48). This emerging structure is a "system of colonial labor" that subjects "Native Americans, Asians, Blacks, and Chicanos and other Latinos," relegating these minorities through captive labor, wage dualism, occupational stratification, and reserve and buffer roles (113). What is unique about Barrera's account is that he draws from Marxist debates on the state and theories of reserve labor emerging from dependency theory and Latin American Marxism, in addition to historical and sociological accounts by Chicano scholars published in outlets such as *Aztlán*.

Yet the account he develops is in explicit conversation with approaches to racial inequality in political science. Here, Barrera joins Black scholars in contrasting his account of racism with the predominant view of race prejudice as a bias or dislike studied in isolation from structures of domination and economic interests (Cox [1948] 1970, 333n, 49n; cited in Barrera 1979, 201). Like other racial capitalist scholars at the time, Barrera values Marxism for providing "an understanding of the social and economic context in which racism operates" (209) that he complements with a *racial* theory of class segmentation for Chicanos in the Southwest. The reception of Barrera's challenge to standard studies of Latino politics is encapsulated in the review of the book in the *American Political Science Review* by Rodolfo de la Garza, who—despite being critical of the mainstream American politics approach of pluralism—focuses exclusively on critiquing Barrera's neglect of sector mobility among Latino workers while asserting that internal colonialism has been "criticized and abandoned" and has "minimal contemporary validity" (de la Garza 1981, 575; Fraga et al. 2006, 516).

Yet Barrera does consider processes of mobility and employers' preference for less settled/more vulnerable labor, which is an always changing pool, while other Latinos become part of the networks that "provid[e] transportation and mak[e] other arrangements for … irregular migration" (Barrera 1979, 123; Galarza 1964, 32). In fact, de la Garza's tinkering with this point and with two tables in Barrera's book obscure the more substantive distinctions between Latino politics research framed in the Americanist tradition and that which critiques domination and elaborates normative criteria to overcome political subjection (Rocco 1977, 558, 61). Read today, what is valuable in Barrera's reading of the post-Mexican-American War Southwest is his categorization of state power as a historical force that produces differentiated zones of sovereignty sanctioned through Anglo settlement, labor exploitation, and mob intimidation that constrain Chicanos, among other groups. This evolving system and its normative implications continue to be explored through LPT's theorization of precarity, violence, punishment, and cruelty outlined below, each posited as central to the Latino political experience. Ultimately, Barrera's combined theoretical engagement with Marxist scholars and critical work in Chicano Studies aptly encapsulates the ethos of LPT as a tradition: to embrace the activist, critical, and historical orientation of Ethnic and Chicano Studies while centering normative critiques of domination and the imagination of alternative worlds that characterize political theory.

Raymond Rocco's account of Latinx disposability in neoliberal times is a fitting example of this type of work. Rocco offers a nuanced conceptualization of the expansion of the system of racial subjection of Latinos beyond the Southwest. He develops the notion of disposability based on subjects' perceptions of themselves as *deshechables*, a result of the subjectivation effects of neoliberalism over racialized populations (2016, 100). Rocco grounds this in both history and political economy, tying the post-1970s growth in migration to liberalization measures in Latin America. These measures decimated middle strata and lowered standards of living, which, in combination with the increased US presence in low-wage manufacturing, created the conditions for mass migration (102). While grounding anti-Latino sentiment in long-standing reactionary US politics, Rocco reconstructs the novel migration politics emerging from the magnitude of migration and the transformation of US political economy, which shifted patterns of settlement beyond traditional Latino areas. This elicited a backlash and the proliferation of local ordinances that—alongside labor exploitation and scant social resources for migrants—created "a space of disposability" to contain racialized populations both socially and politically (100). Rocco's account brings together critical work on the legal production of illegality as a tool to create vulnerable labor (de Genova 2004) and Agambean approaches that cast undocumented migrants as bare life (Arnold 2011). Yet

[6] See, however, historical work that centers the politics of domination like that of Cortez (2021) and Wallace and Zepeda-Millán (2020), among others.

Rocco augments the former by considering "quotidian institutional spaces of Latino immigrant life" and provides more nuance to the latter by grounding the production of bare life in specific economic relations and racialized structures (110).

Paul Apostolidis's ethnographic approach to migrants' experience of labor exploitation in the meatpacking industry theorizes "from the common sense of immigrant workers' activism as organized projects that contest hegemony," to counter "Foucault's account of the subject as an effect of power" (2010, xxxi). Apostolidis exhorts theorists to reach beyond the "policies, procedures, and public rhetoric" that manage populations to attend to popular groups that contest these discourses, taking migrants transnational labor activism in the United States as his guide (224). This approach also counters Agambean accounts of biopolitics as the "self-expression of sovereignty" with immigrant politics as a "contested product of hegemony" (227). Yet the project also partially abides by Agamben's universalizing understanding of the exception by suggesting that neoliberalism pushes all (not just racialized migrants) toward the lethal side of biopolitics (231).[7]

The effort to reconstruct both the systems of governmentality that subject migrants and migrants' resistance characterizes Latinx theories of mass surveillance, detention, and deportation in the post-911 period. This includes the Gramscian "Homeland Security State" of Alfonso Gonzales, Anna Sampaio's account of a "terrorizing state," and Inés Valdez's engagement with law, punishment, and resistance to immigration enforcement.

These works provide complex accounts of the transformations of sovereignty. Far from a picture of sovereignty as a waning force that reemerges in authoritarian outbursts to contain flows of migrants (Brown 2008, 123), LPT centers Latinx experience to theorize sovereignty as a systematic force that targets brown racialized subjects constructed as foreign. This targeting is made possible by an intensified territorial sovereignty enabled through the interior policing of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the coordination between and merging of different law enforcement divisions (Valdez, Coleman, and Akbar 2017). These forms of policing are one aspect of a broader "reconfiguration of the state toward a more repressive entity" characteristic of "authoritarian neoliberalism" (Gonzales 2017, 147–8). This regime is sustained by the fluid constellation of forces ("elected officials, state bureaucrats, think tanks," etc.) that privilege criminality and anti-terrorism, thus obfuscating the structural causes that displace millions in Latin America (Gonzales 2013, 5).

Gender further nuances the operation of sovereign power and its entanglements with biopower invested in protecting white life from racialized threats. Sampaio explores the extra burden of surveillance added to migrant women's grueling work and social reproductive functions and their exposure to sexual harassment while in detention or deportation procedures (Sampaio 2014). Valdez centers the question of domestic violence, whose victims the state protects, revealing a humanitarianism that both moderates and authorizes the routine violence of surveillance, detention, and deportation. Moderation operates when the humanitarian state highlights its benevolence toward immigrant populations, obscuring its responsibility in their subjection. This subjection includes surveillance, confinement, and sexual and gender violence. The humanitarian turn relocates the latter problem to migrants' families, which obscures state violence (Valdez 2020, 98). Brittany Leach (2022) also examines gendered dynamics at the intersection of biopolitical racism and sovereign power. Her work conceptualizes pregnant migrant subjects, who—located at the node of articulation between anti-immigration and "pro-life" discourse—are punished for abortion and motherhood alike (127). Sara Riva expands on state power that targets migrant women by studying the cold holding cells [*hieleras*] that received Central American asylum-seeking women and their children in the mid-2010s. She reconstructs this disciplinary confinement as anticipating the governing of racialized women in US territory. Scrutinizing state power in relation to gender, sexuality, and bodies points to the centrality of social reproduction in capitalist state projects. Valdez (2023) connects the problem of kinship and family separations to the possessive attachments of white popular sovereignty, which demand "spaces of regeneration" facilitated by relegating nonwhite groups "to the strenuous work required for their provision" (95). In this framework, capitalist accumulation proceeds by racializing Latinx families and destroying "their intimate and community spaces" (95). This approach historicizes differentiated coercive regimes—including conquest and annexation, Anglo settlement, guest labor, and mass surveillance of undocumented migrants—but finds them continuous in their effects of labor control, degradation of kinship, and family separation. These destructive processes, importantly, enable the nurturing of white families and capitalist reproduction (98).

Other contributions delve into the affective attachments that organize Latinx surveillance, detention, deportation, and the malleability of law. PJ Brendese examines migration government as military and medicinal, rather than contractual. In his Foucaultian analysis of anti-immigration discourse, migrants appear both as a solution to endemic problems (labor scarcity and military preparedness) and an epidemic-like threat to the body politic (Brendese 2014). Also, working with Foucault, Valdez (2016) theorizes punitive realms of everyday life, working conditions, and paths to citizenship as redress for the multiple supposed harms suffered by white populations at the hands of migrant lawbreakers (643–6). By recovering Walter Benjamin's

[7] This move is echoed in later work that elevates migrants' "desperate responsibility" as key to understanding the precarity of nonmigrants, which can also harmonize with right wing populism and impoverish the "political literacy" needed for collective engagement (Apostolidis 2022, 116; on political literacy, see Vázquez-Arroyo 2016).

more historical and targeted state of exception vis-à-vis Agamben's generalizing inclination, Valdez also retheorizes law. In her account, law does not authorize force. Instead, law follows violence by sanctioning it even if it contravenes written rules (2020, 96). This means that violence makes and remakes law, which adapts to the violently imposed ends which serve racial capitalist exploitation (97, 103). Beltrán's (2020) recent work also turns to violence, focusing on the desires and practices that underpin anti-immigrant nativism. She rereads cruelty and violence as central to the democratic imaginary and to freedom itself, particularly in the vigilante reclaiming of policing power as a form of frontier freedom (94). Beltrán also complicates the politics of whiteness by noting how the ambivalent position of Latinos in the US racial order and their historical claims to whiteness, make certain Latinos "free to partake in racist and dehumanizing speech and acts against 'illegals'" (24–5, 98). In simultaneously appearing as police and population, Latinos "justify and obscure the supremacist logics at play" (98).

These works reveal the theoretical stakes of LPT's problem space by theorizing sovereignty as complex and racialized, in ways that correct existing accounts. The territorial reach of sovereignty is historically determined and negotiated through discourse, affect, and material violence, which in turn stretch and remake law in ways aligned with the political demands of the white polity. Some of these approaches connect racialized discourses, affect, and violence to capitalist priorities of accumulation. In so doing, they enrich and amend accounts of sovereignty and migration that either relativize its durability and territorial reach or favor textual reconstructions that disavows sovereignty's material operation and the violence entailed in the construction of the brown migrant subject (Brown 2010; Honig 2001).

Yet, faced with such state power, Latinx groups have been far from the "politically disqualified and untethered" subjects of neoliberalism that Brown sees contained by "sovereign outbursts"(2008, 98). Instead, Latinx groups resist and contest dehumanizing constructions and humanitarian narratives, disrupt exclusionary understandings of citizenship, and construct their own spaces and practices of politics. Latinx political theorists engage with these instances of political action to rework accounts of identity and the people and to consider the transnational and hemispheric dimensions of politics, examined in the next two sections.

## PEOPLEHOOD

The notion that the legitimacy of authority or the sovereignty of democratic regimes is derived from "the people" is both central to democratic political theory and one of the most contested areas of inquiry in the subfield. "The people" necessarily performs a dialectic of inclusion and exclusion that informs our conceptions of borders, democracy, political membership, and populism, and has animated intense intellectual debate and violent political struggle alike.

Political thinkers have grappled with the problem of determining both who the people are and the processes through which it is formed, and the implications for affiliated concepts like membership, citizenship, and emancipation. Latinx political theorists have taken up this question in ways that disrupt, problematize, and challenge traditional framings of popular sovereignty. Although differing in focus, theoretical register, and background literatures, LPT approaches jointly demarcate a terrain of contestation that advances new conceptualizations of the people.

The exclusions entailed in declarations of peoplehood have been explored by Juliet Hooker and Inés Valdez, whose respective critiques of multiculturalism and popular sovereignty clarify the connection between hierarchies and people-making. Hooker's (2009) study of racial solidarity critiques the then-dominant literature on multiculturalism for disavowing how racial hierarchies constrain ties of solidarity and thus undermines the task of legitimating democratic governance (88). This is because "dominant groups will resist minority group rights that [would] either reshape the racial polity in fundamental ways or dismantle it" (88). Hooker categorizes multiculturalism as split between the advocacy of temporary group rights to compensate for historical racial injustice (considered an aberration or to be eventually resolved) and permanent group rights for cultural minorities. In this framework, racial hierarchy as a structural phenomenon—constitutive of societal relations, of who we are as individuals and members of a group institutionally and societally embedded—is erased. Because of this omission, multiculturalist egalitarian accounts that depend on "reciprocal relations of trust and obligations … between members," nonetheless fail to explore how racial hierarchy limits reciprocity (4). Ultimately, if political solidarity creates "the people," and racial, cultural, and ethnic hierarchies present a challenge to this foundational requirement, then a people constituted before addressing these injustices is bound to exclude.

Valdez (2023) extends the analysis of racialized popular sovereignty by theorizing its material foundations (exploitative racialized labor and appropriation of land and resources). She shows that principles of democratic rule and power-sharing among a racially privileged group depend on conscripting others to satisfy the well-being of the constituted people, a feature that peoplehood scholars do not puzzle over (10). Thus, the people appears in Valdez's account as nested in transnational networks of "extraction of forced racialized labor and nature that [are] its [practical] condition of possibility," thus exercising excessive self-determination, that is, "self-and-other-determination" (5, 22, 44–5).

In Hooker and Valdez's accounts alike, solidarity is delimited by race, and it both binds and separates different sectors of a population, producing a distorted myth on which racialized democracies rest. Valdez's account further roots popular sovereignty as a form of rule in empire, demonstrating that historically, popular

sovereignty was imbued with claims of white solidarity. These claims sustained systematic racial labor hostility and helped consolidate imperial systems of labor control, which were then nationalized and rebaptized "immigration regulation." This recasts migration control as a founding element of the people, in that it allowed for the welcoming of white subjects to populate settler colonies while controlling or subjecting Mexicans in annexed lands and subsequent migration waves (Valdez 2023, 84). Thus, the political parameters of popular rule are tied to capitalist processes of accumulation, colonization, and settlement that create the commonwealth *the people* appropriate.

Despite the different theoretical frameworks and interlocutors, both Hooker and Valdez disrupt fundamental assumptions of democratic theory and propose a displacement or "replanteamiento" (Rocco 1980, 45; Zea 1969; 2019) of the traditional parameters of study of the people. This disrupts sanitized mythologies of the people as abstractly plural/agonistic (Honig 2007; Näsström 2007), divided predominantly by culture (Kymlicka 2016; Spinner-Halev 1995), or ideally engaged in reciprocity (Rawls 1971). Notably, this disruption is not simply reactive, because it advances a positive research agenda grounded in racialized experience and radical traditions of thought that set the stage for thinking differently about the people, as other Latinx thinkers have done.

In another approach to peoplehood, Ochoa Espejo (2011) brings process philosophy to bear on the paradox of popular sovereignty, thus transforming the solution to popular indeterminacy from the people as a unified whole defined by consensus, into a notion of the people as "a series of events, an ongoing process unfolding in time" (167). This model of democratic peoplehood circumvents the circularity of traditional liberal democratic frameworks of legitimacy. Instead of a fixed and unified people, her theory accounts for the empirical fact that the populace of a given community is in constant flux over time. Allowing for "the people [to change] in time reformulates the problem of popular sovereignty and eschews the paradoxes that marred previous attempts" (3).

Bernal (2017) pinpoints another exclusionary tendency in the literature: to posit a singular political foundation as an exceptional moment in space and time that establishes the identity that defines the developmental trajectory of the polity. Ironically, this "authoritative beginning" simultaneously founds and erases, limiting the notion of the political that can emerge by avoiding issues of contingency, power struggles, conflicts, and exclusions that comprise the political realm. Bernal decenters traditional accounts and re-anchors the people in a wider variety of political actors to provide "a more politically grounded approach" (21). Thus, alongside canonical thinkers, Bernal bases her theorization upon legal struggles against school desegregation by Latinos in the *Méndez* case, presidential refounding in Latin America, and the Haitian Revolution. This illustrates the continuous and contentious contestation for power obscured by the focus on singular founding moments. These "underauthorized" foundations are claims to establish "authority and legitimacy [that] are necessarily incomplete and open to unsettlement" (11). Both Bernal and Ochoa Espejo expose what they see as theoretical cul-de-sacs and reground legitimacy on processual aspects of the political that can accommodate change. This problematizes how other theories legitimate boundaries and regulate the parameters of political membership. While process-based accounts relatively de-emphasize questions of power, capitalism, and racial hierarchy (part of the messy politics that will unsettle existing arrangements), they center different actors as founders and expand the archives of this literature, thus also expanding its theoretical reach.

Among LAPT scholars, Katherine Gordy is unique in centering political economy, a rich tradition in LAPT that is relatively underrepresented in US-based accounts. Gordy's theorization of Cuban socialism develops an account of "living ideology" that tracks the historical ideological constellations that culminate in Cuban socialism. Gordy (2015), moreover, attends to the modification of this system and its politics brought about by the marketization of the Cubans' economy. In particular, Gordy reconstructs Cubans' critiques of neoliberalism, which they blame for the *imposition* of a particular order while appearing to be based on consent (190–1). She concludes that Cuban socialism is a "set of ever-evolving principles" where dissatisfaction with the status quo does not mean an outright embrace of the free market (191). Ciccariello-Maher (2017) echoes a concern with left politics in Latin America, this time enlisting Enrique Dussel's concept of the people to study the "Bolivarian Revolution" in Venezuela. Ciccariello-Maher decenters the state and Hugo Chávez to focus instead on the movements that propelled him. These groups and their "dynamic and combative political identity," can subject "institutions permanently and ruthlessly to popular pressure from below" (132–3). Without granting the people an inevitably progressive identity, Ciccariello-Maher nonetheless convincingly recasts societal "polarization" as the politicization of existing divisions caused by poverty and exclusion, revealed, rather than produced, by the Chávez regime (138–9).

Beltrán and José Esteban Muñoz's attention to racialized citizenship and Latinidades illuminate Latinx sites of political contestation of political marginalization. Beltrán, writing at the intersection of Latino Studies and post-structuralism, deconstructs the monolithic view of Latinx communities that presumes common interests, perspectives, and political consciousness. Beltrán argues that this "political imaginary" is a profound distortion of the complex and widely diverse histories, cultures, experiences, and modes of incorporation in the United States of peoples of Latin American and Caribbean descent. While this homogenization served to promote a sense of shared history and racial struggle against discrimination, it was later misconstrued as a political identity (Beltrán 2010, 7). In response, Beltrán foregrounds the contested character of Latinx identity as a "historically and discursively constructed … site of permanent political contestation … [and] ongoing

resignifiability" (9, 169). It is through these complex processes that Latinidad is performed and transformed. In reconceiving Latinidad, Beltrán provides an alternative non-essentialist approach to Latino "efforts to constitute themselves as a people (a Latino 'we'…)" while being racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse. Muñoz (2020) further infuses Latinidad with queerness but re-racializes the term by centering the "knowing [of] a brownness that is our commonality" (2). This Latinidad entails the performance of affect that is an homage to "insurrectionist student movements [and the] brown berets" and stands in relation "to an official national affect … aligned with a hegemonic class" (3, 8–9).

It is important to note the distinct theoretical orientations organizing these theorizations, that is, the foregrounding of racialization and domination in the case of Hooker, Valdez, and Rocco and the centering of process, transformation, and ongoing resignifiability of Ochoa Espejo, Bernal, and Beltrán,[8] even while both groups tackle questions of peoplehood vis-à-vis Latinx or Latin American politics. Alcoff (2006) acknowledges this duality of Latino identity, noting that the heterogeneity of this group does not detract from the fact that theirs is a "visible identity" with visible "social meanings and political effects" (227). In other words, because the racialization of Latinos continues to explain their political and economic oppression, their visible identity needs to be politicized rather than abandoned (Alcoff 2006, chap. 10).

Raymond Rocco's notion of associative citizenship further contributes to theorizing peoplehood in conditions of unequal belonging. Like Hooker, Rocco argues that structural racial hierarchies undermine the relations of reciprocity and trust that are key for broad political solidarity. Despite the heterogeneity of legal incorporation available to Latinos, Rocco (2014) argues that they are "categorized within a preexisting racialized cultural imaginary" indebted to the dominance of Anglo settlers in the US Southwest (72–3). This is the structure of domination that Latino resistance targets. Drawing from critical theory to interpret ethnographic field research, he argues that, within Latinx communities, performative rights-claims contest exclusion and produce "associative citizenship." Thus, citizenship takes shape in networks of reciprocity and association that enable oppositional consciousness (153). Rights-claims, in turn, emerge from "contested extensions of political struggles [rooted] within the lived experiences of disempowered sectors of the society" (118). This grounding of theorization in migrant and Latinx activism is prominent in the LPT tradition. For example, Gonzales (2013) argues that mainstream immigrants' rights organizations remain within the good-immigrant/bad-immigrant binary and thus do not question the obfuscating framing of the "Homeland Security State." This is unlike the more sporadic and disorganized forces led by undocumented migrants themselves, who do contest it (11). Also grounded is Beltrán's (2009) account of "festive anger" as the sovereignty-disrupting ethos of the 2006 immigrant marches, which departs from the representations of migrants as toilsome workers and an "always available mass" that overshadows political acts of freedom (614). Yet the activism of undocumented farmworkers *can* contest the racial capitalist structures that make toilsome work "Latino work" in the first place. By tying violent labor exploitation and policing to law, food monopolies, and citizens' thoughtless consumption practices, organizers like the Coalition of Immokalee Workers denaturalize the racialization of this work and reveal the state sanctioning of exploitation (Valdez 2020, 105). Labor-centered activism, moreover, can act as a counterpower by highlighting the transnational character of US capitalism in the Americas and organizing democratically in opposition to precarity (Apostolidis 2010, xxxi–xxxii, xxxv; 2019).

These rich theoretical accounts of Latinx emancipatory politics and organizing against exclusionary and violent notions of the people are echoed in LAPT works. Examples include Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez work on Indigeneity and neoliberalism in North America, Desiree Poets rethinking of settler colonialism through Brazilian Black and Indigenous politics, Elva Orozco Mendoza's work on feminicide in Ciudad Juárez, and Amy Lind and Cricket Keating's study of Ecuadorian constitutional moments. Altamirano-Jiménez shows that development and privatization impoverish Indigenous self-government, culture, and identity. In particular, the role granted to Indigenous groups by development projects obscures that territory is intimately entangled with their "culture and self-government" (Altamirano-Jiménez 2004, 350). Her examination of "green neoliberalism" similarly critiques discourses of sustainability that posit privatization as the best form of conservation (2017). Thus, Altamirano-Jiménez echoes critiques of culturalist notions of inclusion. She notes the paradoxical confluence of the extension of recognition of Indigenous rights and the reorganization of their lives through dispossession and privatization, which threaten their customary rights and livelihood (32). Indigenous resistance to these measures contests the "technical" character of development by recasting "land, sea, and wind" as central to political community and thus "entities that cannot be sold" (32). Poets's work on Black and indigenous politics in Brazil contests the land-labor binary by showing that both Black and Indigenous groups have been affected by "elimination, dispossession, labour exploitation, and exclusion (racism)" (2021a, 271). Her work challenges two other points of conventional wisdom on settler colonialism. First, despite acknowledging the continuities between the settler and the multicultural state, she shows that Indigenous peoples in Brazil have used Indigenous rights to "interrupt settler colonialism" thus contesting the simple dichotomization between refusal

[8] Muñoz, by centering racialization and hierarchy alongside performance, straddles these groups. It should also be noted that Beltrán's more recent work, covered earlier, pivots toward examining violence, racialized cruelty, and intra-Latino hierarchy.

and recognition (2021b, 3; 2021a). Second, Poets explores the politics of urban Indigenous group Aldeia Maracanã and quilombo Sacopã to argue that the assimilationist strategy of miscegenation has also "functioned as the space from which indigenous and black peoples have resurged, survived, and thrived" (2021a, 271–2).

Orozco Mendoza (2021) focuses on Mexico to recover new political possibilities in maternal protests, which she sees through Hannah Arendt as enacting freedom by shifting the institutional gaze and denaturalizing extreme gender violence (124–5). These "counter pedagog[ies] of cruelty" critique "the state's … production of disposable life through … neglect, criminalization and abandonment" of the victims (Orozco Mendoza 2019, 214; Segato 2018). Orozco Mendoza's theorization extends to studying pink crosses, graffiti, and victims' photographs publicly displayed in Ciudad Juárez to argue for expanded political accounts of protest (2017, 353). Amy Lind and Cricket Keating further theorize gender and sexuality by analyzing Ecuador's 2008 Constitution, which shifts its accounts of family and nation in less heteronormative directions. The authors liken the recognition of multiple and open-ended family arrangements in the Constitution to a decolonial refounding (2017, 292–301). Yet, alongside these measures and the recognition of gender as a protected identity and same-sex civil unions, the legal regime retained misogynistic and homophobic aspects, suggesting the continued need for non-state-centered coalitional politics (Lind and Keating 2013).

Taken together, these accounts of the people and political community in LPT and LAPT enrich theories of peoplehood and expand the archive of politics used to theorize it. These works follow the vocation of political theory but do so by mobilizing disparate traditions—from canonical Latinx and Latin American thinkers and process philosophy to grassroots activism, Marx and the Black radical tradition, Indigenous resistance, and Latin American feminisms. They also offer contrasting emphases, focusing on structures of domination and capitalism versus pluralism and indeterminacy. Yet, in every case, they ground their theorization in novel realms of politics and the emancipatory action of Latinx and Latin American groups to conceptualize moments of closure and their contestation.

## HEMISPHERIC POLITICS AND TRANSNATIONALISM

LPT and LAPT are also attentive to historical linkages and transnational connections between the publics, identities, and communities that make up Latinx, Hemispheric, and Latin American politics. They theorize concrete connections between political processes and movements and juxtapose thinkers or literatures previously regarded as unconnected. Here, what is distinctive of the tradition is the problematization of the nation-state, the highlighting of both hemispheric hierarchies and practices of transnational solidarity, and the linking of these entanglements to colonial and imperial trajectories. By noting how politics systematically exceeds territorial borders, the works analyzed below significantly complicate the spatial politics of domination and popular politics alike.

A transnational framework is the only way to properly conceptualize Latinx politics. This is because these groups are located at the intersection of racial capitalist projects of the US and Latin American countries, hemispheric hierarchies, and interconnected networks of subjection that encompass Black, Asian American, and Indigenous groups throughout the Americas. This is Valdez's point in her reconstruction of US immigration control as central to the founding of the United States as a settler, white, imperial polity. While European migrants were received as welcome additions to the settler project, Mexican-Americans and migrants from the Western hemisphere were channeled toward strenuous labor, continuous with other colonial forms of racialized labor that sustained the imperial polity (Valdez 2023, chaps. 1, 2). This transnational imperial picture further explicates Mexican immigration to the United States as enabled by hierarchical US–Mexican relations (chap. 3). Valdez, moreover, engages Manuel Gamio's writings to study the role that Mexican elites granted to emigration as part of projects of state building and development, labor control, and racialized understandings of Indigenous *migrantes* as in need of civilization through immersion in US society (Valdez 2023, 111–3). Thus, theorizing how Latinx groups are ruled in the United States requires an account of transnational oppression and the juxtaposition of LPT and LAPT to account for political ideologies and forms of rule operating on both sides of the border.

The connections and tensions between intellectual currents and projects of state building in the Americas is one of the most dynamic areas of research in LAPT, which explore Latin American thinkers' "strategic deployments" of European thought (Gordy 2017), "convergences" between US and Latin American revolutionary thought (Simon 2017), and common "problem spaces" across the Americas (Dahl 2023). These hemispheric approaches identify discursive and material connections between elite and subjected communities that cut across national and imperial spaces. This lens also problematizes artificial divisions between American, Latinx, Latin American, and Caribbean political thought by exploring convergences and shared visions of hemispheric emancipation from Europe (Chang 2021; Hooker 2017; Simon 2017). As such, this perspective can inform political theory's more systematic conceptualization of multiple publics, global domination, and transnational currents of resistance.

The hemispheric approach to LAPT illuminates the shared elite projects connecting Latinx and Latin American politics. These connections date back to experiences of colonization but become especially clear during the "Age of Revolutions" (c. 1775–1830), when resistance movements against the legitimacy of European subjection arose throughout the hemisphere. Simon (2017) conceptualizes a "Creole-elite ideology," that is, political thinking that developed anticolonial rhetoric from the liminal standpoint of Creoles as simultaneously elite and non-European (33). Jointly

reading Simón Bolívar, Lucas Alamán, and Alexander Hamilton, Simon shows that Creole-elites similarly leveraged the dilemma of their positionality (32). They did so by deploying arguments against European rule while also protecting their position as the most influential strata of colonial society as the Americas approached a postcolonial break (148; see also Mariátegui [1928] 1971, 47).

It was not just Latin American elites who shared hemispheric investments, however. Political and cultural production converged among Latin, Caribbean, and Anglo-American thinkers by the early nineteenth century (Coronado 2013), when borders only barely distinguished between sovereign territories. Chang's research on Mexico (2023) and the US–Mexico border (2021) shows that hemispheric discourses of the New World, well-attuned to republicanism, became a prominent tool used by both elites and marginalized communities. These appealed to the shared trajectory of US America and *americanos*, but also shaped emancipatory projects that linked the histories of Indigenous and enslaved peoples with emergent nation-building efforts (2023, 721). By zooming in on borderlands republicanism and centering Indigenous groups in insurgent/revolutionary politics, Chang (2021) identifies a rich geopolitics where Latinx and Latin American, Western and non-Western, and elite versus popular are insufficient markers. Moreover, these strategic interventions sought to subvert colonial politics from within the colonial order (375–6).

These dynamics evolved once the United States emerged as an imperial threat to Latin America in the later half of the nineteenth century, which complicated its exemplar role. This duality affected conceptions of modernization and democracy in the Americas, as Dahl (2023) shows through the thought of Lorenzo Zavala and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento. These statesmen responded to two pressures linked with colonial legacies. The first was to show that nations could democratize *contra* the Tocquevillian assumption that the violence of Spanish colonization would lead to despotism (277). The second, by extension, was the establishment of a characteristically Latin American approach to democratization that did not just mimic the United States (Dahl 2023, 279; Gordy 2013). These spaces of hemispheric critique became especially common among early diasporic communities settled in cities like Philadelphia, New York, and New Orleans (Chang 2021; Simon 2022), relocating spirited political debates from Latin American to US soil.

Sonia Alvarez's account of translocation/*translocalidades* is helpful to grasp the "social and power relations that 'produce location and situated knowledges,'" (Alvarez 2014, 1–2; Davis 2007, 7–11, 122, cited in Alvarez 2014). These locations matter when considering the intellectual tradition of diasporas. Latin American critiques of US imperialism not always drew connections with or extended solidarity to Chicanos subjected by the internal colonial system in the Southwest or US Black groups. José Martí exemplifies this standpoint dilemma when writing against imperial expansion into Latin America by the United States while living in exile in New York City (Simon 2022). Does this make Martí an early Latinx thinker? Or does this elite Cuban theorist of Cuban and Latin American national projects (Gordy 2015, 57–8) fit better the translocation of the back-and-forth movement, less attentive to Black subjection, Anglo settlement in the Southwest, and Latinx struggles in the borderlands? The latter is more likely given his problematic assessment of the US Civil War as a usable paradigm of reconciliation (Hooker 2023). This points to the dangers of erasure of the struggles of racialized US subjects in creole Latin American thought.

Yet the thought of creole statesmen may be productive nonetheless, particularly when subverted, most notably by Anzaldúa's oppositional appropriation of Vasconcelos's language of *mestizaje* to contrast brown borderlands consciousness with Anglo supremacy.[9] Vasconcelos's thought is also engaged by Von Vacano's (2014) agonistic reading of his central concept of the "raza cósmica," recast as an anti-imperialist and anti-nationalist cosmopolitan aesthetic project (chap. 6). Similarly, the Latin American creole tradition in general, and Latin American national projects in particular, proved productive for Black thinkers, as Hooker's (2017) *Theorizing Race in the Americas* demonstrates. Her analysis of hemispheric "juxtapositions" reveals both the idiosyncrasies of racial thinking in the Americas and the "intellectual connections and political genealogies of racial thought" in Frederick Douglas, W.E.B. Du Bois, Sarmiento, and Vasconcelos (Hooker 2017, 2–3). As Hooker shows, racial myths were integral to national development in the Americas and central to interpret the imperial threat of the United States (5). Far from limited to national projects, Hooker shows that racial imaginaries developed via transnational connections that responded to overlapping and contrasting racial orders produced during the colonial period.

Hence, in determining the emancipatory valence of particular readings, the choice of engaging elite or subaltern traditions is as important as the uses to which they are put by Black, Latino, and other historical and contemporary thinkers. And here, engagements with thinkers like José Carlos Mariátegui or Indigenous thinkers are promising. Mariátegui, for example, creatively appropriated Marxism to posit Indigenous peoples as the progressive class (Gordy 2017, 136, 9). Indigenous groups, on their part, offer powerful critiques of nation-state and neoliberal developmentalism alike (Altamirano-Jiménez 2004; Cusicanqui 2010b). These readings not only expand the cast of characters in LAPT, but they also show stronger affinities with Chicano and Latinx emancipatory projects relative to elite thinkers. This promise is also evident in work that eschews the border and the state as the focus of analysis, like Ochoa Espejo's (2020). This work both contextualizes prominent theories of bordered regulation, but, perhaps most importantly, argues for a "Watershed Model" that centers sustainability and collective cooperation around "place-specific" duties (chaps. 7, 8). While Ochoa Espejo engages exclusively with non-LPT work on the political

[9] Though at the cost of disavowing *mestizaje*'s racialized hierarchies (Hooker 2014).

philosophy of migration and borders, her argument foregrounds questions of presence and participation in cooperative schemas and redirects the discussion of borders toward sustainability and evolving publics (175, 248).

Yet, given that border and cross-border mobility, connection, and solidarity remain central markers of Latinx and Latin American experiences, theorizing politics that manifest transnationally from *within* those conditions is particularly important. This is at play in the Latinx cosmopolitanism theorized by Apostolidis and Valenzuela (2014) via the grassroots actions of migrants' day labor organizing. Their account recovers "political dispositions and behaviors" that link "endeavors on different political-geographical planes," matching legal advocacy with "direct action and consistent programs of popular grassroots education" (223). This activism opens spaces of "mobility and visibility for migrant workers," despite their condition of subalternity, and allows them to challenge that ultimate sovereign function: deportation (223, 39–40). Echoing their search for alternative cosmopolitan archives, Valdez's (2019) *Transnational Cosmopolitanism* critiques the dominant Kantian grounding of cosmopolitan political theory and engages instead Du Bois's transnational politics to theorize anti-colonial, transnational political action. In her account, the transformation of consciousness among racialized groups allows them to recognize commonalities in subjection and possibilities of emancipation in solidarity with others abroad. This allows these marginalized subjects to exit hostile political arenas and inaugurate anti-colonial counterpublics. These counterpublics, in turn, activate political coalitions of oppressed groups around the globe and challenge sites of authority and sovereignty by revealing the transnational political economy of subjection (161–71).

The transnational and hemispheric lenses of the works surveyed in this section exhibit the distinctive, socially embodied, and temporal styles of reasoning that characterize problem spaces according to Scott. The historical and intellectual connections traced by these scholars speak to the contingency of the nation-state system and its idiosyncratic and reciprocally entangled development in the Americas and globally. These contributions open avenues for an analysis of coalitional politics across transnational, hemispheric, and historical realms, which contrast with accounts of cosmopolitanism and/or global justice that are either centered in Europe or abstractly theorized (Habermas 2000; Beitz 1999; see also critiques by Kohn 2019; Lu 2019). Instead, the approaches covered above encompass distinct but overlapping sites where emancipation and solidarity have developed throughout history, from which a more accurate account of politics can materialize. Moreover, in linking the transnational trajectories of Latinx and Latin American thought, diverse experiential standpoints and heterogeneous politics emerge, from elite white creoles, to Indigenous, mestizos, or Afro-descendant groups. This highlights the historical and political dynamics that connect them, which entail hierarchy and domination but also solidarity and joint projects of emancipation within and across borders. Hence, this dialogue constitutes a single problem space in which colonial/imperial violence, global capitalism, and structural marginalization shape political rule and resistance, and can be enlisted in the rethinking of core political theory concepts in transnational directions.

## CONCLUSION

This article reconstructs LPT as an intellectual tradition and traces back its contributions to the activist impetus of Chicano and Puerto Rican critique of academic knowledge and its disavowal of US racialized state power and its contestation by subjected groups. This tradition developed in conversation with mainstream political theory agendas while disrupting and substantially amending them to consider undertheorized political phenomena like racialized state power, hierarchizing and dominating accounts of peoplehood, and transnational politics and political economy. We further connect LPT with LAPT produced in the United States, given their convergence around the aforementioned themes, the connected positionality of its contributors, and the hemispheric discursive, political, and imperial/capitalist relations that link Latinx and Latin American peoples. The reviewed works are diverse in their methodology (encompassing conceptual analysis, historical political thought, ethnography, genealogy, and grounded theorizing, among others). Tensions and methodological diversity notwithstanding, the approaches surveyed offer historically located, Latinx-inflected political theoretic accounts of power, peoplehood, and transnational politics. These accounts enable a critique of preexisting, misleading, and/or incomplete theorizations of central political concepts.[10]

The problem space and critical frameworks outlined above emerge from a survey of existing work within this tradition rather than an encompassing political account of the Latinx experience. Yet the consolidation of a more visible tradition that we endeavor can result in its wider use. These approaches could be creatively expanded to theorize Puerto Rican colonialism and subjected citizenship in the mainland, or Afro-Latino and Indigenous-Latino experience, as scholars in American Political Development, history, and the humanities have done (Fernández 2012; Henning 2023; Masiki and Mills 2022; Milian 2013; Saldaña-Portillo 2016).

This historical and activist account of Latinx political theory also opens paths to theorizing material points of contact between the domination of Latinx, Black, Asian American, and Indigenous subjects by jointly engaging the political thought of these communities.[11] The relations between these subfields and the political possibilities emerging from their solidarity are themselves a realm of inquiry, as ongoing discussions about

[10] A feature of periods of epistemological crisis, in MacIntyre's account (1977, 455).

[11] For accounts of the Black and Asian-American political theory traditions, see Collins (2000), Gooding-Williams (2011), Lee (2018), and Estes (2019).

relationalities within Critical Ethnic Studies show (Lowe 2015; King, Navarro, and Smith 2020, 2–3).

Political and intellectual lines of affinity also run between the tradition we outline and the foundational Haitian Revolution (1995, 83, 9; see also James [1938] 1989, ix; Trouillot [1992] 2021, 161; Buck-Morss 2000), and later Haitian thinkers who theorized racism as an obstacle to solidarity (Holley 2024). Echoing C. L. R. James, our goal is to consider the future of the field of LPT and LAPT in relation to its history and to consider "previous revolutions" through the standpoint of "the violent conflicts of our age" (James [1938] 1989, xi; James [1962] 1989, 391–418). James ([1962] 1989) positions the Haitian struggle against the French colonizer and opposition to US imperialism in a single radical constellation that connects Toussaint L'Ouverture and Fidel Castro (391–418). This suggests an opening for juxtaposing the LPT/LAPT tradition with Caribbean thought by, for example, tracing the influence of the Cuban revolution in Latin America's 1970s revolutionary thought.

The above survey of Latinx and Latin American political theory is thus open to the discovery of unexpected intimacies, both with geographies near and far and within the field. We wish to enable a creative and expansive Jamesian vision that can theorize emancipation informed by how Chicanos and Puerto Ricans joined their struggles to colonial and postcolonial ones in Latin America and the broader Third World. This means situating the tradition of LPT and LAPT in a political realm that encompasses internal racialized domination alongside US imperialism in the Western hemisphere and beyond.

This situatedness requires foregrounding the incompleteness of this exercise, the *dudas* that accompany it, and its privileged location within US academia relative to Latin America-based scholars (Alvarez 2014, 2–3; Marey 2024).[12] Indeed, in treating LPT and LAPT jointly, the proposed account elevates the Latinx tradition to the status of interlocutor to both US- and non-US-based Latin American thinking, a position that not only Martí, but contemporary debates too readily disavow. Given these complexities, we do *not* aim to make a claim for the autonomy or completeness of the tradition but to think with Vázquez-Arroyo's (2018) account of historical interpretation, which privileges the "richness of [ideas'] concrete misplacements as part of political struggles and socioeconomic processes in colonial, postcolonial, or neocolonial situations" (25).

Otherwise put, the goal of this article is neither to canonize this tradition of thought, nor separate it from other traditions of theorizing by and/or about racialized groups, but to give it shape and articulate it as a field. Thus articulated, it becomes available to be taken, engaged, critiqued, and advanced by a broader set of contributors, Latinx and non-Latinx alike. Among its readers, this article takes Latinx and non-Latinx graduate students and young scholars particularly seriously as an audience, and here it does aim to sanction Latinx and Latin American political thought as an *intelligible area of focus* in PhD-granting political science departments in the United States. The goal is to expand both what counts as Latinx politics and to claim a space for this area of inquiry within political theory, thus enlarging the political imagination, historical sensitivity, and tools of critique available in this field.

[12] An important debate regarding the (mis)uses of privilege among US-based scholars is currently taking place in Latin America. The US-based decolonial school which has taken shape in the humanities in the last three decades and its representatives are the target of critique (Cusicanqui 2010a, 19, 66–8; González Casanova [1969] 2009; Makaran and Gaussens 2020).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are indebted to the feedback of participants in the workshop "Tradition and Disruption in Latinx and Latin American Political Thought," held at Ohio State University, in particular Angélica Bernal, Juliet Hooker, Ben McKean, Paulina Ochoa-Espejo, Elva Orozco-Mendoza, Gabriel Salgado, and Antonio Vázquez-Arroyo, as well as to the comments of APSR Editors and reviewers.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

## ETHICAL STANDARDS

The authors affirm this research did not involve human participants.

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