

include research on the United States, Latin America, Europe, and Africa, thus serving well the diverse student constituency that usually enrolls in methods classes. The only empirical subfield that is excluded is international relations, which presents formidable (though perhaps not insurmountable) challenges of siting for participant observation.

The specific topics of study include Basque nationalism (Cyrus Ernesto Zirakzadeh); civil war in El Salvador (Elisabeth Jean Wood); class relations in an American slaughterhouse (Timothy Pachirat); survey research in American politics (Katherine Cramer Walsh); political culture in the Congo (Michael G. Schatzberg); authoritarian regimes and political Islam in Mauritania and Senegal (Cédric Jourde); American casino waitresses and Nicaraguan mothers of war victims (Lorraine Bayard de Volo); a survey of ethnographic research in Latin America (Enrique Desmond Arias); and policies toward home ownership in low-income neighborhoods in Philadelphia (Corey Shdaimah, Roland Stahl, and Sanford F. Schram). Even readers who are familiar with the research of these authors will benefit from their self-conscious focus on the costs and benefits of ethnography. Each chapter provides a useful springboard for debating important issues related to the use of this method.

Dvora Yanow adds a helpful chapter that gives advice to would-be ethnographers regarding research design and instructs editors and reviewers as to how they should evaluate ethnographic manuscripts. Journal editors who have had difficulty passing judgment on ethnographic research will be especially grateful for her insights.

The term *immersion* is included in the subtitle of this volume, and the editor, Edward Schatz, stresses the need to differentiate ethnography from other qualitative methods. His introduction and conclusion provide excellent overviews of the field, but the particular task of separating ethnography from other qualitative methods was not accomplished as effectively as it might have been.

Several chapters do not make use of the standard ethnographic method of prolonged immersion in one or a few social milieus; instead, they involve only brief periods of participant observation complemented by interviews, archival research, or other methods. These research designs are referred to as having an “ethnographic sensibility,” even though they do not involve immersion. Purists who identify ethnography with prolonged participant observation may question the inclusion of those chapters. On the other hand, the decision to include them is not without advantage. Given the tremendous investment of time required by traditional immersion, many political scientists may wonder if it is not possible to gain some of the benefits of ethnography in mixed-method projects. These chapters show them several ways to do that. Nonetheless, the differences in philosophical underpinnings and research practice between standard ethnography and interviews,

focus groups, and other methods deserve a more extended and nuanced treatment than they receive here.

This is one of the finest volumes on qualitative methods published in the last decade. It will not ease all the concerns of scholars who balk at the noncomparative and unhistorical character of much ethnographic research or question the ethnographer’s ability to contribute to general theory. But *Political Ethnography* provides a perfect instrument for debating these and other key issues surrounding the use of this important method.

Politics, Culture, and Sociability in the Basque

Nationalist Party. By Roland Vazquez. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2010. 296p. \$39.95.
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— Cyrus Ernesto Zirakzadeh, *University of Connecticut*

Roland Vazquez’s study of contemporary Basque politics is part ethnography, part party-systems analysis, and part journalism. The book occasionally leaps between types of analysis, which might frustrate readers who prefer linear argumentation or a single methodological outlook. At the same time, the book’s multiple analytic frameworks will probably appeal to scholars who enjoy approaching a single topic from different points of view.

Vazquez states at the outset that his goal is *not* to provide another case study of ethnonationalism (pp. x–xi). He thinks that the almost exclusive attention to nationalist ideologies has made Basque politics appear exotic and has prevented scholars from discovering lessons that are applicable elsewhere. He recommends that we think about Basque politics afresh: In terms of the ways in which everyday citizens make sense of their political experiences, the forms of sociability among party followers, and parties’ adaptation to ongoing changes in electoral and legislative situations.

Most of the author’s findings are based on fieldwork. Vazquez resided for 16 months in Tolosa, a midsized rust-belt town in Spain’s Basque Country. The book focuses on formal gatherings and informal encounters in a four-story building that housed the municipal headquarters of the Basque Nationalist Party (Partido Nacionalista Vasco, or PNV). The headquarters also served as a community center with reading rooms, a modest bar and eatery, an indoor handball court, and meeting space for diverse social groupings.

The book records and analyzes the sayings and symbols that were typically used in the building and that reveal how visitors perceived and experienced politics. There are occasional vignettes in which Vazquez relates individuals’ personal histories to their distinctive political outlooks. Some of the more amusing passages are his accounts of a trip organized by local party leaders to an annual jamboree celebrating the PNV’s longevity, and his observations of

chance, street-level encounters among members of rival parties.

Vazquez is an anthropologist by training, and his attention to methodological standards for interpretive fieldwork is exemplary. He spoke to a variety of party activists (both nationalist and non-nationalist) to ensure exposure to conflicting understandings of local political idioms. He candidly discusses his choices regarding site selection and the degree of his participation in nationalist rituals. He seldom, if ever, passes judgment on behavior that readers of the book might find odd, such as the nationalists' veneration of the decomposed remains of party martyrs. The book's appendices include an autobiographic essay in which Vazquez describes his preresearch intellectual development and the evolution of his fieldwork. His skills in translating local political concepts into images that a non-Basque reader can grasp are remarkable. His knack for crafting insightful metaphors makes the difficult art of hermeneutics look easy.

Today, political ethnography is enjoying a revival within political science, thanks to such publications as Edward Schatz's *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power* (2009) and Timothy Pachirat's *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrial Slaughter and the Politics of Sight* (2011). Vazquez's study, because of its constant attention to methodological protocol, contributes to that tradition within the discipline.

The book is more than ethnography, however. Vazquez also explores how broader electoral rules, patterns of party competition, and constitutional arrangements affect the platforms of nationalist parties (the Basque Nationalist Party, in particular). He inserts brief analyses of electoral dynamics when accounting for changes in the PNV's rituals, the evolution of divisions within the party, and shifts in its legislative agendas.

To describe how electoral conditions shape the party, the author relies heavily on the concepts and hypotheses found in early political science literature on party politics, especially the writings of Maurice Duverger, Otto Kirchheimer, and Giovanni Sartori. That generation of ideas arose after World War II and during the Cold War, and reflected worries among liberal scholars about the ongoing success of "extreme" or "anti-system" parties on the right and left. Vazquez does not discuss the ideological presumptions of the terms that he uses, nor does he reflect on the gloom and dread that inform those scholarly arguments. He seems to assume that the meaning of the technical words in that literature is self-evident. This leads to some awkward sentences with funny-sounding mixed metaphors ("centripetal and centrifugal tendencies lurked in the shadows, wrestling with one another" [p. 108]) that capture the tension between Vazquez's voluntarist outlook concerning local culture and the determinist thinking of an earlier generation of party-system thinkers.

In principle, different types of knowledge (local-level anthropological accounts and translocal observations about movements within the Basque and Spanish party systems) can produce a more rounded account of reality. Vazquez's presentation of party-system dynamics is rushed, however. Moreover, the glue that connects the two types of scholarly analysis is not always clear. The author states early in the book that anthropology's highly contextual knowledge "needs to be 'calibrated'" against "larger realities" (p. 3). That poetic image confuses more than it clarifies. What sort of "calibration" is Vazquez seeking? Does translocal analysis of party-system dynamics and election results make his in-depth descriptions of local partisan parades more accurate or valid? If so, how?

As the book proceeds, its implicit moral moorings become more evident. Vazquez may not be concerned about the ideology of nationalism per se. He is, however, obviously concerned about the persistence of political violence. In the second half, Vazquez chronicles efforts by parties and social movements to bring peace to the Basque region. He also provides an inventory of the cruelty committed both by Basque nationalist insurgents and by the semicovert units of the Spanish state. In terms of reportage, this is probably the most thorough and reliable book-length treatment in English of the contemporary ebbs and surges of political violence in Hegoalde (the four provinces in Spain that Basque patriots consider part of their homeland) since Robert Clark's *Negotiating with ETA: Obstacles to Peace in the Basque Country, 1975–1988* (1990).

Besides covering violence frankly and unflinchingly, Vazquez contrasts three peace movements that emerged in and around the town he studied. The juxtaposition illustrates one of the book's central themes, that everyday citizens in the Basque region are surprisingly flexible and creative as they rethink their political context and its options. According to author, the ongoing cultural creativity from below sometimes annoys party elites, who believe that they alone should represent the people. In the words of one PNV official, "social movements are fine, but they should know their place" (p. 131).

Vazquez has composed an original account of Basque politics at the dawn of the twenty-first century. He draws our attention to day-to-day activities by citizens that scholars often overlook. He reminds us that nonofficials, meeting in diverse venues, constantly reshape broader public discourse and affect the course of history. The book makes evident the life-and-death consequences of political language. And its methodological approach to culture is thoughtful and rigorous. *Politics, Culture, and Sociability in the Basque National Party* deserves to be read not only by students of Basque society, by students of contemporary party systems, and by students of political violence. On methodological grounds, it deserves to be read closely by political scientists seeking an example of well-executed interpretive research.