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LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES: THEORY AND PRACTICE

by

Paul W. Drake and Lisa Hilbink¹

Introduction

Latin Americanists have developed and/or contributed to some of the most important and influential theories and debates in the social sciences and humanities in recent history². From dependency to democratization, from studies on the state to research on social movements, scholars of Latin America have been at the forefront of theoretical development in a variety of disciplines. Despite these achievements, Latin American studies in the United States, along with all foreign-area studies, is suffering from a decline in intellectual and material support. The possibility of specialization in the region, which demands field work and sustained dialogue with Latin American scholars, is threatened. It has therefore become necessary to turn our analytical lenses inward to examine critically the past and future trajectory of Latin American studies and to evaluate and respond to criticisms of the field.

As a contribution to this effort, this essay traces the institutional and intellectual history of Latin American studies, principally in the United States, and, with this in mind, addresses contemporary criticisms of area studies. It contends that scholarly work under the umbrella of Latin American studies has been and will be innovative and important in a variety of disciplines. The mid-level theorizing which has been the hallmark of Latin American studies offers a healthy balance between problem-driven research and causal analysis. Moreover, the crossnational collaboration and inter-disciplinary cross-fertilization which characterize Latin American studies are precisely the sorts of practices which should be encouraged in the emerging era of global cooperation and production.

Institutional History of Latin American Studies

The origins and characteristics of Latin American studies differ somewhat from those of other world areas. To begin, the study of Latin America did not originate in an "Orientalist" tradition, such as that which initiated the study of Asia and the Middle East. In other words, present-day Latin American studies is not rooted in colonial scholarship, heavily oriented toward ancient history and language.³ While some scholars of the region have always

¹For comments on earlier drafts of this essay, we are grateful to Sonia Alvarez, Victor Bulmer-Thomas, David Collier, Carlos Ivan De Gregori, Eric Herschberg, Evelyne Huber, Elizabeth Jelín, Gilbert Joseph, Ira Katznelson, Gwen Kirkpatrick, Gerardo Munck, Peter Smith, Doris Sommer, Carlos Waisman, and two anonymous reviewers.

² The authors, two political scientists, acknowledge the emphasis, perhaps inescapable, placed on the social sciences, and especially political science, in this chapter. A reasonable attempt was made to discuss the increasingly important contributions of scholars in the humanities to debates in Latin American Studies, but the authors recognize that there remain many worthy ideas and works that they were unable to cover in this short essay.

³As Richard Lambert explains, "for a scholar studying China or India, the classical civilization is part of everyday life. Serious scholars, even social scientists, must master it to make sense of the contemporary society." See Richard Lambert, "Blurring the Disciplinary Boundaries: Area Studies in the United States," *American Behavioral Scientist* 33:6 (July/August 1990): 712-732, at 724.

focused on Amer-Indian cultures and institutions, and while the influence of postmodernism has brought the region's cultural heterogeneity to the forefront of contemporary concerns, most U.S. researchers have traditionally followed the Latin American lead in defining the region as primarily New World and predominantly mestizo (mixed-race peoples exercising some combination of indigenous and European cultural practices). Partly because of this mixing of peoples and cultures, claims of uniqueness or exceptionalism -- e.g., Ecuador is so unusual that it can be understood only on its own terms and only by Ecuadoreans or by those deeply immersed in Ecuadorean culture -- have been less common in Latin American studies than in studies of some other areas, such as the United States, China, Japan, India, etc.⁴

Secondly, and relatedly, Latin American studies has become a cooperative endeavor between U.S. scholars and their counterparts south of the border. That is, Latin American studies is something that North Americans do *with* Latin Americans, not *to* Latin Americans. Indeed, much of the knowledge production about the region has always come from the Latin Americans. This is as it should be, since the internationalization of knowledge production through dialogue with researchers around the globe is today a keystone of not only the social sciences and humanities but also the natural sciences and all scholarly pursuits. A reciprocal and free flow of questions, ideas, and information is essential to all scientific inquiries, whether in physics or anthropology. Perhaps due to the geographic, linguistic, religious, and historico-political ties between the United States and Latin America, there have been fewer cultural barriers to such scholarly collaboration than there might be between U.S. and African or East Asian scholars. Moreover, many Latin American scholars have come to the United States either in exile or for education, and political obstacles have diminished over the years.⁵

Interactions between national and foreign analysts of Latin America have been beneficial to both sides. Fruitful interdisciplinary work has been fostered, partly because disciplinary boundaries are less rigid in Latin America, and new questions have been generated. For example, the content of scholarly debate in Latin America compelled North American scholarship to address issues such as class inequality and class conflict, both domestically and internationally, while North Americans have brought to the table concerns about democratic stability and gender inequities.

Cross-fertilization occurred between the approaches of the generally more qualitative, theoretical, often Marxist Latin Americans and the frequently more quantitative, empirical, often liberal North Americans. Such interchange tested theories, whether modernization from the north or dependency from the south. Both sides helped each other see beyond their biases. These interactions also produced some unfortunate intellectual distortions, including the imposition of U.S. Cold War research concerns on Latin America, the uninhibited imbibing of U.S. economic models by some Latin Americans, and the uncritical consumption of dependency

⁴This is not to say that claims of exceptionalism are completely absent in Latin America.

⁵Two caveats to this generally positive cooperative scenario are in order. First, there have always been huge inequalities between U.S. and Latin American scholars in terms of the resources, both financial and scholarly, to which they have access. These inequalities have worsened since the continent-wide depression of the 1980s in Latin America. Second, the developmental heterogeneity of the region has also produced inequalities among Latin American scholars themselves, such that scholars from the larger, middle-income countries, particularly Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico, have always assumed a larger role in the field of Latin American Studies than their counterparts in poorer countries such as Bolivia, Paraguay, or the Caribbean states.

theory by many North Americans.⁶ Yet gradually, the two sides have converged around key issues, methods, theories, and even policies, especially with the end of the Cold War and the seeming triumph of classic liberal economics and politics in the 1980s.

Although relations between the colossus of the north and its neighbors to the south have long been asymmetrical, examples of inter-American scholarly cooperation abound. From 1969 to 1989, nearly half of all of the Social Science Research Council's Joint Committee on Latin American Studies (JCLAS, jointly sponsored by the American Council of Learned Societies) advanced research grants were awarded to Latin American investigators. In addition, before its closure, Latin American researchers came to constitute approximately half of the membership of the JCLAS,⁷ and Argentine sociologist Jorge Balan once served as Chair of the Committee. Heavy Latin American participation has also been the norm at conventions and on committees of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), as well as on the editorial boards of the major area journals.⁸ Thus, while there have always been segments of Latin American populations suspicious of the *yanquis*, and while there are certainly some very real reasons justifying these suspicions, the production of knowledge about Latin America has been a transnational enterprise for at least three decades.⁹

Of course, this is not to dispute that Latin American studies, as all area studies in the United States, acquired its present-day stature as the result, at least in part, of U.S. foreign policy and especially Cold War reasoning.¹⁰ While programs on Latin America developed in the 1920s, they got their first big boost with the announcement of Franklin Roosevelt's "Good Neighbor Policy" in the late 1930s, the creation of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (headed by Nelson D. Rockefeller) in 1940, and the founding of the SSRC's Joint Committee on Latin American Studies in 1942.¹¹ However, because policy-makers did not deem Latin America a national security priority, and because they viewed Spanish as an "easy" language

⁶Fernando Henrique Cardoso, "The Consumption of Dependency Theory in the United States," *Latin American Research Review* 12:3 (Fall 1977): 7-24.

⁷John H. Coatsworth, "International Collaboration in the Social Sciences: The ACLS/SSRC Joint Committee on Latin American Studies" (Paper presented at the SSRC/CLACSO conference on "International Scholarly Relations in the Social Sciences," Montevideo, Uruguay, August 15-17, 1989), 31.

⁸Europeans have also been active in the programs of the JCLAS and LASA.

⁹On Latin American attitudes toward the United States, see Carlos Rangel, *Latin Americans: Their Love-Hate Relationship with the U.S.* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1977).

¹⁰See Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Unintended Consequences of Cold War Area Studies," in Noam Chomsky et al., *The Cold War and the University: Toward an Intellectual History of the Postwar Years* (New York: The New Press, 1997), esp. p. 202; Vicente L. Rafael, "The Cultures of Area Studies in the United States," *Social Text* (Winter 1994): 91-111; Paul Drake, "From Retrogression to Resurgence: International Scholarly Relations with Latin America in U.S. Universities, 1970s-1980s" (Paper presented at the SSRC/CLACSO conference on "International Scholarly Relations in the Social Sciences," Montevideo, Uruguay, August 15-17, 1989).

¹¹See Charles Wagley, ed., *Social Science Research on Latin America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964).

with bountiful practitioners, they did not see specialized knowledge of Latin America as a major investment in the late forties and early fifties.¹²

Only with the Cuban Revolution of 1959 did Latin America once again become a strategic priority, and it remained so through the end of the Cold War.¹³ From 1959 to 1989, the JCLAS funded the research for 488 dissertations, provided advanced research grants to 762 U.S., Latin American, and west European scholars, and sponsored nearly 80 workshops and conferences involving more than 2,000 leading researchers (50% of them Latin American). In addition, between 1949 and 1985, the Fulbright and USIA faculty exchange programs brought 12,881 Latin Americans to the United States and sponsored 4, 589 North Americans in Latin America.¹⁴

Meanwhile, area studies centers throughout the United States benefited from federal government grants given under Title VI of the National Defense Education Act, created in response to the launching of the first Sputnik in October of 1957.¹⁵ "By the 1970s, more than 150 organized Latin American studies programs were offering courses and enrolling students at U.S. colleges and universities."¹⁶ A significant number of research projects were also funded over the years by the Ford Foundation, the Inter-American Foundation, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, the Tinker Foundation, the Henry L. and Grace Doherty Charitable Foundation, Inc., the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the Hewlett and Mellon foundations, and the MacArthur Foundation.¹⁷ As a result of this support, Latin American studies became arguably "the largest, most intellectually vibrant, and influential of the area studies communities in the United States."¹⁸

¹²In fact, the JCLAS was disbanded from 1947-1959. Nonetheless, during this period some Latin Americanists did serve as consultants to the U.S. State Department. See Michael Jiménez, "In the Middle of the Mess: Rereading John J. Johnson's *Political Change in Latin America* Thirty Years Later" (Paper presented at the Latin American Studies Association XV Annual Conference, Miami, Florida, December 6, 1989).

¹³See Thomas C. Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution* (New York: Praeger, 1991).

¹⁴Thus, in cumulative totals, Latin America outranked Africa (5,066), Eastern Europe (6,638), and Near East and South Asia (13,873), but not East Asia and Pacific (20,487) or Western Europe (88,837). Board of Foreign Scholarships, *Fulbright Program Exchanges, 1984-85* (Washington, DC, 1985).

¹⁵Wallerstein, "Unintended Consequences," p. 209. Latin America was incorporated into the Title VI mission in 1960. It should be noted, however, that "The legislative debate [over the NDEA] had less to do with the cold war than with whether the federal government should fund higher education. ... The bill was strongly contested by conservatives who argued that the NDEA would open the floodgates of federal assistance to higher education" (Gilbert Merkx, "Editor's Foreword," *Latin American Research Review* 30:1 (1995), 4).

¹⁶Gilbert Merkx, "Editor's Foreword," *Latin American Research Review* 29:1 (1994), 4-5.

¹⁷Coatsworth, "International Collaboration," 2.

¹⁸Ibid. As Merkx ("Editor's Foreword," 1994) notes, "in 1985, the Library of Congress's *National Directory of Latin Americanists* identified some 5,000 professionals working as specialists on the region" and judging by student enrollments, subscriptions to *LARR*, and attendance at LASA conferences, the field is now even larger (p. 5).

Notwithstanding the Cold War "national interest" incentives for funding U.S. scholarship on Latin American, many tensions arose over the years between the Latin American Studies community and the foreign policy, defense, and intelligence circles of the U.S. government.¹⁹ Interestingly, and perhaps somewhat ironically, "Title VI programs actually resulted in a democratization of foreign area intelligence that fueled opposition to cold war policies of the government."²⁰ The first serious conflict emerged around the "Operation Camelot" scandal in 1964. Project Camelot was a U.S. Army-funded initiative of the Special Operations Research Office of American University that sought to use area scholars to gather information relevant to the counterinsurgency program of the U.S. government. The operation turned scandal when a Norwegian sociologist working in Chile was invited to participate, but instead publicized the goals of the project to his Chilean colleagues. This was "enough to arouse considerable discussion in Chile, an intervention by the president of Chile with the U.S. State Department, debate in the U.S. Congress, and cancellation of the project worldwide."²¹ It also led to fear on the part of the Latin American studies community that their scholarship would be tainted, appropriated for improper purposes, and even made impossible by anti-U.S. security agency suspicions on the part of Latin Americans.²²

In the years that followed, scholars of the hemisphere criticized a wide array of U.S. policies, including those toward Cuba, multinational corporations, Brazil, Central America, and especially Chile.²³ As Gilbert Merkx explains, "U.S. Latin Americanists of all persuasions felt deep sympathy and support for professional colleagues suffering under dictatorship. [The] Latin American Studies Association achieved a certain fame (or notoriety) for the frequency and rigor of its criticisms of U.S. actions in the hemisphere."²⁴ This passionate engagement of U.S. Latin Americanists with policy issues in the region was one outcome of their collaboration with their counterparts to the south, most of whom were sharply critical of U.S. imperialism, interventionism, capitalism, conservatism, and association with dictators.

¹⁹Coatsworth, "International Collaboration," 15. See also Mark T. Berger, *Under Northern Eyes: Latin American Studies and U.S. Hegemony in the Americas, 1898-1990* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995).

²⁰Merkx, "Editor's Foreword," 1995, 4.

²¹Wallerstein, "Unintended Consequences," p.223.

²²On this issue see Irving Louis Horowitz, *The Rise and Fall of Project Camelot: Studies in the Relationship between Social Science and Practical Politics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1967); and Sigmund Diamond, *Compromised Campus: The Collaboration of Universities with the Intelligence Community, 1945-1955* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

²³Christopher Mitchell, "Introduction," *Changing Perspectives in Latin American Studies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 10-11. See also Robert Packenham, *The Dependency Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

²⁴Merkx, "Editor's Foreword," 1994, 4. Indeed, in his contribution to Samuels and Weiner's (1992) edited volume on the political culture of area studies, Gabriel Almond notes that the politicization of area studies, which the volume discusses as a general problem, has been "the most marked in Latin American studies." See Gabriel A. Almond, "The Political Culture of Foreign Area Research: Methodological Reflections," in Richard J. Samuels and Myron Weiner, eds., *The Political Culture of Foreign Area and International Studies* (New York: Brassey's, 1992).

The conservative drift of U.S. public opinion and Capitol Hill politics in the 1980s and 1990s is one of the factors contributing to the present decline in support for area studies. Yet cuts to area studies programs began even earlier -- in the 1970s -- due to economic recessions and stagflation, the contraction of the academic market in the United States, the war in Vietnam, and the turn from revolutionary expectations to right-wing authoritarianism in Latin America, where repression severely damaged the social sciences. Total Title VI Fellowships for Latin Americanist graduate students plunged from an average of around 170 per year in the 1960s to a low of 54 in 1975, and by 1979, U.S. government investment in exchange programs had fallen proportionately beneath that of France, Great Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan, China, and the Soviet Union.²⁵

At the same time, previous foundation support for Latin American studies dried up. Some, like Rockefeller, withdrew almost completely. Most importantly, Ford Foundation funding for advanced training and research in international affairs and foreign areas fell from approximately \$27 million per year in the 1960s to \$4 million per annum in the 1970s. Its direct grants to U.S. area studies centers faded away and its Foreign Area Fellowship Program for graduate students was passed on a smaller scale to the JCLAS. Nevertheless, Ford continued to have a smaller, less direct impact through its crucial support for thematic U.S. university programs, for the Latin American Studies Association, for conferences, and, above all, for Latin American social scientists, whether at home or in exile.²⁶

The 1980s witnessed a resurgence of course enrollments, graduate training, and public interest in Latin America. As always, many trends in Latin American studies followed international events. Several factors were at work: turmoil in Central America, the movement of migrants and narcotics across borders, the wave of democratization throughout the hemisphere, the international debt crisis, the revival of the U.S. economy and the decline of inflation, and the reawakening of the academic marketplace in the United States. However, funding continued to lag behind the swelling need for new researchers and research, despite the emergence of some new -- albeit small -- private benefactors of Latin American studies (e.g., the Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies at Notre Dame, the Howard Heinz Endowment, and the Gildred Foundation). In 1987, the Tinker Foundation terminated its Postdoctoral Fellowships, and the Henry L. and Grace Doherty Charitable Foundation, Inc., which had produced the dissertations of many of the leaders in the field, shut down. Consequently, by 1989 the total available awards per year for U.S. faculty to conduct extended research in Latin America were only sufficient to cover 7% of the existing pool of approximately 1,800 active researchers.²⁷

As historian John Coatsworth noted in 1989, this lack of institutional support means that the number of active researchers working on Latin America has stagnated since the 1970s, that graduate students increasingly find themselves unable to obtain funding for research in the region, and that young scholars in both Latin America and the United States have become isolated from one another, and hence less able to benefit from the collaboration which has been so fruitful in the past.²⁸ In the 1990s, this disturbing trend has continued. In 1993, the Ford and

²⁵Drake, "Retrogression to Resurgence," 3.

²⁶President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies, *Strength through Wisdom* (Washington, D.C., 1979), 8-9, 101-103.

²⁷Drake, "Retrogression to Resurgence," 28.

²⁸Coatsworth, "International Collaboration," 8-9.

Mellon foundations reduced their funding of regionally-focused scholars and projects and inaugurated a joint "globalization" project.²⁹ In 1997, the Social Science Research Council terminated its area studies committees, the JCLAS among them, replacing them with less powerful "regional advisory panels." These panels no longer control significant funds for fellowships or research projects. This comes at a time when restricted public funds for education and general economic hardship have made it extremely difficult for most Latin Americans to pursue academic careers in their own countries. Given the past success of Latin American studies in terms of the strengthening of ties between scholars in North and South America and the advancement of research agendas in both hemispheres, this weakening of support should be of great concern to all those interested in the future terms and quality of intellectual inquiry.

Intellectual History of Latin American Studies

As discussed above, the collaborative research fostered under the umbrella of Latin American studies has had many general benefits for scholarly work, including the generation of new questions, the testing of theories, and the challenging of national biases. This section discusses the evolution of particular topics, theories, and approaches which have tied the field of Latin American studies together, and which have contributed to the understanding of issues of common concern to scholars in different academic disciplines. The emphasis is on transdisciplinary trends, especially in the United States. No attempt is made to map all the key intradisciplinary debates and patterns, although Political Science receives some extra attention.³⁰

The earliest U.S. works on Latin America were concentrated in History and Literature.³¹ The first journal specific to the area, the *Hispanic-American Historical Review*, began publication in 1918.³² In Language and Literature, journals such as *Hispania*, the *Hispanic*

²⁹Jacob Heilbrunn, "The News from Everywhere: Does Global Thinking Threaten Local Knowledge?", *Lingua Franca*, May/June 1996, 49-56 at 52.

³⁰Because the study of Latin American Literature followed a slightly different path, we do not treat developments in that discipline below. However, interested readers can consult the following essays for discussions of the developments in the region's Literature and Literary Criticism during the same period: Jean Franco, "From Modernism to Resistance: Latin American Literature 1959-1976," *Latin American Perspectives* 5:1 (Winter 1978): 77-97; Saúl Sosnowski, "Spanish-American Literary Criticism: The State of the Art," in Christopher Mitchell, ed., *Changing Perspectives in Latin American Studies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988): 163-182; Paul B. Dixon, "'Decentering' a Discipline: Recent Trends in Latin American Literary Studies," *Latin American Research Review* 31:3 (1996): 203-217; and essays in Leslie Bethell, ed., *The Cambridge History of Latin America* Vol. X (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

³¹See Wagley, *Social Science Research*. For other surveys of work done under the umbrella of Latin American studies see Bryce Wood and Manuel Diegues Junior, eds., *Social Science in Latin America: Papers Presented at the Conference on Latin American Studies Held at Rio de Janeiro, March 29-31, 1965* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967); Roberto Esquenazi-Mayo and Michael C. Mayer, *Latin American Scholarship since WWII* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1971); and Gláucio Ary Dillon Soares, "Latin American Studies in the United States," *LARR* 11:2 (1976): 51-69.

³²Howard F. Cline, "Latin American History: Development of Its Study and Teaching in the United States Since 1898," in Howard Cline, ed., *Latin American History* Vol. I (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967), pp. 6-16. The *Handbook of Latin American Studies* began publication in 1936.

Review, and the *Revista Hispánica Moderna*, appeared on the scene. Anthropologists and archaeologists also became early leaders in Latin American studies, specializing in native cultures.³³

Since the 1960s, however, and with support from the SSRC, the social sciences, and especially Political Science, have come to rival History for dominance in the major area journals. In 1974-75, submissions to the *Latin American Research Review*,³⁴ the most prominent area journal, were dominated by History and Political Science. By 1979, Political Science submissions had taken the lead, rising from 1/4 to 1/3 of the total. In the 1980s and 1990s, this flow of articles from Political Science continued unabated. Meanwhile, History submissions remained solidly in second place in most years, and Languages/Literature and Anthropology submissions were displaced by those from Economics and Sociology.³⁵ The *Journal of Latin American Studies*, founded in 1969 and published in England, has featured articles primarily in History and Political Science, with none in Literature or the Arts. The bulk of these articles in both journals focused on Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Central America or individual Central American countries, Chile, and Peru.³⁶

In general, the nature of such social scientific studies has tended to be more qualitative than quantitative, and generally (and not surprisingly) more oriented towards a transdisciplinary audience. What characterizes the field of Latin American studies is methodological diversity, a fact which may be partially explained by the significant percentage of Latin American contributions made to these journals (30-40% to *LARR* in recent years³⁷). *LARR* regularly solicits and includes manuscripts from Latin American scholars and reports on the activities of research centers in the region. It also incorporates Latin American colleagues into the editorial process.³⁸ Such collaboration demands greater openness to different approaches and methods, since Latin American disciplinary norms and boundaries differ from those of the United States.

This is a very positive development, since some Latin Americans have had harsh words for scholars trained to think exclusively in North American terms. As one Brazilian researcher argued in 1975:

³³Lewis Hanke, "The Development of Latin-American Studies in the United States, 1939-1945," *The Americas* 4:1 (July 1947): 32-64, at 58-9.

³⁴The *Latin American Research Review* (*LARR*) was founded in 1965 as the official publication of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), established in 1964.

³⁵John D. Martz, "Political Science and Latin American Studies," *Latin American Research Review* 25:1 (1990): 67-86, at 75; Gilbert Merkx, "Editor's Foreword," for *Latin American Research Review* volumes 28:1, 29:1, 30:1, and 31:1 (1993, 1994, 1995, 1996).

³⁶From 1965-95 *LARR* featured 191 entries on Mexico, 136 on Brazil, 112 on Argentina, 80 on Central America or individual Central American countries, 64 on Chile, and 58 on Peru. From 1969-95, *JLAS* published 62 articles on Brazil, 57 on Mexico, 50 on Argentina, 37 on Central America or individual Central American countries, 32 on Peru, and 28 on Chile.

³⁷Merkx, "Editor's Foreword," 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996.

³⁸Joseph Tulchin, "Emerging Patterns of Research in the Study of Latin America," *Latin American Research Review* 18:1 (1983), 86.

All too often the attitude of the visiting North American scholar was that all he had to do was collect the data, take them home, and analyze them. He looked at Latin America from his own theoretical and existential perspective. He was closed to local intellectual inputs and often found local criticism and points of view difficult to understand. Unfamiliarity with the history of the country, regions, and institutions involved, as well as the with the data sources, has placed narrow intellectual constraints on the outcome of this type of research.³⁹

With Latin Americans themselves influencing the research agenda in the United States, this unfortunate situation has changed for the better.⁴⁰

Such influence has not been unidirectional, however. While Latin Americans may challenge North Americans to pay greater attention to historical and structural variables, U.S. scholars have begun to persuade their Latin American counterparts of the value of new types of empirical research. For example, survey research has become a virtual cottage industry in Latin America.⁴¹ By the same token, the study of institutions and institutional change has become a central focus for many Latin American as well as U.S. scholars.⁴²

What specifically have been the contributions of Latin Americanists to scholarship in the United States? While the most important contributions have been made in the past thirty or forty years, it is useful to begin with a historical discussion of the intellectual trajectory of the field. The first North American university to accept a dissertation on a Pan-American topic was Yale in 1869. From 1869-1960, 103 North American institutions accepted some 2,000 theses on some topic involving one or more Latin American countries.⁴³

Today, the prevailing view of these early works (especially those of the pre-1950s) is that they were largely narrative, parochial, and atheoretical. Indeed, many early historical and political studies tended to be more descriptive than analytical, and very legalistic and elitist in approach.⁴⁴ However, many authors of the 19th and early 20th centuries did work with implicit

³⁹Soares, "Latin American Studies," 52.

⁴⁰However, the current crisis in Latin American academia has meant that the possibility for such influence has diminished significantly. As a result, the social scientific research agenda in the U.S. is increasingly shaped by narrow theoretical debates which are specific to U.S. disciplines and divorced from Latin American concerns. We thank Eric Hershberg for this insight.

⁴¹Examples are Edgardo Catterberg, "Attitudes towards Democracy in Argentina During the Transition Period," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 2:2 (Summer 1990): 155-68; Catherine M Conaghan, "Polls, Political Discourse, and the Public Sphere," and Miguel Basáñez, "Public Opinion Research in Mexico," in Peter H. Smith, *Latin America in Comparative Perspective* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 227-274. See also the uses of survey material in Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

⁴²See for example Juan J. Linz and Arturo Valenzuela, eds., *The Failure of Presidential Democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); Arend Lijphart and Carlos H. Waisman, *Institutional Design in New Democracies: Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996).

⁴³Allen D. Bushong, "Doctoral Dissertations on Pan-American Topics Accepted by United States and Canadian Colleges and Universities," *Latin American Research Review Supplement* 2:2 (Spring 1967).

⁴⁴Charles W. Bergquist, "Recent U.S. Studies in Latin American History: Trends since 1965," *Latin American Research Review* 9:1 (Spring 1974): 3-35; Arturo Valenzuela, "Political Science and the Study

or explicit theories, albeit theories which have since been dismissed due to their proven inaccuracy and general unpalatability. One such discredited theory is climatic determinism, or "tropicalism," which suggested that the tropical setting of many Latin American countries inhibits economic growth, debilitates sickly and enervated populations, and foments hot-headed, violent politics. The fact, however, is that the majority of Latin Americans live in temperate zones, either far from the equator or up in the mountains. Moreover, the tropical zones exhibit a wide variety of experiences and achievements: from a revolution and long-standing socialist government in Cuba to flourishing British-style parliamentary governments in the English-speaking Caribbean. Although climate and geography present challenges in Latin America, we now know that they do not determine national development.

A second school of thought was based on racial determinism. According to racist ways of thinking, Latin America is made up of poor, backward, inequitable, and politically volatile or dictatorial countries because of the large number of darker peoples, especially Indians and Africans. Latin American intellectuals themselves imbibed Social Darwinism in the closing decades of the 19th century, blaming their lagging behind northern Europe on the prevalence of the offspring and admixtures of "inferior" races.⁴⁵ Racism most certainly played a part in the exploitation of Latin America by richer western nations. Today, however, all educated people know that racial characteristics do not determine prosperity, productivity, class relations, or political beliefs or behavior. Moreover, after centuries of miscegenation in Latin America, it is futile to try to categorize the region's people precisely by genotype or phenotype.⁴⁶

Following World War II, these theories were definitively abandoned by serious scholars, but the metahistorical determinism which characterized them was not.⁴⁷ The two major paradigms which dominated social scientific inquiry on Latin America in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, modernization theory and the dependency approach, were both holistic interpretations grounded in economic determinism. In addition, arguments based on cultural determinism, which were not really new to the field, emerged (or re-emerged) to complement or challenge these perspectives.

Modernization theory arose in the context of decolonization in Africa and Asia and the early years of the Cold War. It grew out of efforts to understand how recently independent nations and other "Third World" countries might achieve economic and political development similar to that of the United States and northern Europe, which were viewed as the products of a linear and potentially universal process of rationalization and progress.⁴⁸ The theory was

of Latin America," in Christopher Mitchell, ed., *Changing Perspectives in Latin American Studies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988): 63-86.

⁴⁵See Albert O. Hirschmann, "Ideologies of Economic Development in Latin America," in Hirschmann, ed., *Latin American Issues: Essays and Comments* (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, 1961), 3-42.

⁴⁶Paul Drake, "Latin America in the Changing World Order: 1492-1992," in Roberto G. Rabel, ed., *Latin America in a Changing World Order* (Dunedin, New Zealand: University of Otago Press, 1992).

⁴⁷On the continuity in theorizing, see Hirschmann, "Ideologies of Economic Development."

⁴⁸As Peter Klarén explains, modernization theory evolved, via Talcott Parson's structural-functionalism, from Max Weber's polar conception of traditional versus modern and Auguste Comte's theory of social evolution via stages (See Peter F. Klarén, "Lost Promise: Explaining Latin American Underdevelopment," in Peter F. Klarén and Thomas J. Bossert, *Promise of Development: Theories of Change in Latin America* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), 9.

developed largely by specialists on Africa and Asia, but Latin Americanists in all the social scientific disciplines fell in line to offer supporting evidence.⁴⁹ Following the spread of U.S. interest in the region from the Caribbean basin towards the larger, industrializing countries, scholarly attention turned towards Mexico, and the Southern Cone of Latin America.⁵⁰

The main argument of modernization theory was that industrialization and economic growth, and/or the value orientations associated with them, were the engines of social and political progress.⁵¹ This was a vision rooted in classic, Western liberal economic and political thought. In order to develop, Third World societies needed to embrace ideas, values, techniques, and organizations commensurate with urbanization, a complex division of labor, increased social mobility, and a rational-legal, impersonal economic and political system. As countries overcame feudal, semifeudal, precapitalist, or at least inefficient behavior patterns and institutions from the past, new urban social groups, particularly the middle classes, would emerge, and these groups would in turn push for social equality and political democracy. The appropriate subjects for social science research were thus the social groups and institutions that would implement and reflect these changes, and as noted above, plenty of funding was forthcoming for extensive studies involving scholars from many disciplines.⁵²

In Economics, the structuralist school within the U.N.'s Economic Commission on Latin America (ECLA) supported the strategy of import substitution industrialization which had begun in Latin America in the 1930s and 1940s and had launched several Latin American countries into what many hoped would be the "take-off stage," as theorized by Walt Rostow.⁵³ Rostow argued that Third World countries could replicate the industrialization and economic growth of Western Europe and the United States by adopting policies to increase capital accumulation and

⁴⁹See for example Gabriel A. Almond and James S. Coleman, *The Politics of Developing Areas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960); Seymour Martin Lipset and Aldo Solari, eds., *Elites in Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); Jacques Lambert, *Latin America: Social Structure and Political Institutions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967). Latin America was also used as the point of comparison for Seymour Martin Lipset's classic work in this paradigm, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960).

⁵⁰Jiménez, "Middle of the Mess," 24.

⁵¹Classic works in modernization theory are W.A. Lewis, *The Theory of Economic Growth* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1955); W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1960); Cyril Black, *The Dynamics of Modernization* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966).

⁵²See Lipset and Solari, *Elites in Latin America*; Lambert, *Latin America: Social Structure and Political Institutions*; and John J. Johnson, *Political Change in Latin America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958).

⁵³See Albert Fishlow, "The State of Latin American Economics," in Christopher Mitchell, ed., *Changing Perspectives in Latin American Studies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988): 87-119, and Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth*. On the general evolution of economic thought in Latin America after 1930, see Joseph L. Love, "Economic Ideas and Ideologies in Latin America since 1930," in Leslie Bethell, ed., *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, Vol. XI (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 393-460; Joseph Love, *Crafting the Third World: Theorizing Underdevelopment in Rumania and Brazil* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); E.V.K. Fitzgerald, "ECLA and the Formation of Latin American Economic Doctrine," in David Rock, ed. *Latin American in the 1940s: War and Postwar Transitions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 89-108.

investment and to promote entrepreneurial values.⁵⁴ Central to the structuralist strategy was land reform, a policy which was advocated by the United States in the "Alliance for Progress,"⁵⁵ and which enlisted the support of many anthropologists who specialized in community studies and understood well the dynamics of the countryside in Latin American countries.⁵⁶ Structuralist policies, by creating an industrial bias in the economy, "enhanced the power and prestige of the urban industrialists vis-à-vis the rural oligarchy,"⁵⁷ and urban industrialists, it was believed, would direct the social and political changes integral to modernization.

This change in value orientations was a central concern of modernization theorists within Political Science and Sociology, who focused on issues such as elite and mass education, mobilization of the popular classes, interest articulation, and institutional development. Political scientists produced valuable studies on "key institutions such as the military and the Church, and about the political role of urban dwellers, peasants, and students, all of which were studied as interest groups --that is, as actors within a political process of competing groups at different levels of modernization."⁵⁸ Meanwhile, sociologists in both the United States and Latin America studied emerging social groups and boasted "grand visions of guiding or at least aiding major processes of societal change," focusing on "the [generalizable] forces that produced sustained economic growth and improvements in mass standards of living."⁵⁹ Historians, too, were brought on board to offer historical perspectives on the "geographic, demographic, social, and...even social-psychological preconditions and consequences" of economic and social change.⁶⁰ This increased contact between historians and social scientists definitively changed

⁵⁴It should be noted that while the driving idea behind modernization theory was that Latin America could and should replicate U.S. development, modernization theory was not based in the same (neo-)liberal economic theory that drives U.S. policy toward Latin America (and the world) in the 1990s. Structuralism called for an explicit and leading role for the state in economic affairs.

⁵⁵The Alliance for Progress was a \$22.3 billion program launched by the Kennedy administration to attack the social ills (poverty, illiteracy, inequality) which might breed support for communism in the region. See Tony Smith, "The Alliance for Progress: the 1960s," in Abraham F. Lowenthal, *Exporting Democracy: The U.S. and Latin America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 71-89.

⁵⁶Lourdes Arizpe, "Anthropology in Latin America: Old Boundaries, New Contexts," in Christopher Mitchell, ed., *Changing Perspectives in Latin American Studies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988): 143-161 at 145 and 156.

⁵⁷Fishlow, "Latin American Economics," 92.

⁵⁸Valenzuela, "Political Science and the Study of Latin America," 67-68.

⁵⁹Alejandro Portes, "Latin American Sociology in the Mid-1980's: Learning from Hard Experience," in Christopher Mitchell, ed., *Changing Perspectives in Latin American Studies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988): 121-142, at 123 and 131.

⁶⁰Tulio Halperín Donghi, "The State of Latin American History," in Christopher Mitchell, ed., *Changing Perspectives in Latin American Studies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988): 13-62, at 13. On historians' participation in the modernization school, see Cristóbal Kay, *Latin American Theories of Development and Underdevelopment* (London: Routledge, 1989) and Frederick Cooper et al., *Confronting Historical Paradigms: Peasants, Labor, and the Capitalist World System in Africa and Latin America* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993).

the study of Latin American history, as historians were exposed to and increasingly embraced the methodological and analytical tools of social science.⁶¹

Quickly, however, critics assailed the main tenets of modernization theory based on evidence and perspectives from Latin America itself. Economic growth in most countries did not meet expectations, social inequalities were rarely reduced, and military dictatorships became the norm in the region. Scholars thus began to take issue with many of the underlying assumptions of modernization theory. They challenged the idea of a linear, evolutionary developmental continuum, the conception of preindustrial societies as homogeneous and static, the assumption of the Western European capitalist experience as generalizable and desirable, the faith that new urban social sectors would be democratic and progressive, and the neglect of constraining factors exogenous to Third World societies.

While alternative theories were advanced to explain Latin American patterns,⁶² the primary challenge to modernization theory, and that which bridged all the disciplines within Latin American studies, was the dependency approach. The dependency school accepted modernization's economic determinism, but turned it on its head: The adoption of U.S. and European-style economic policies had not and would not lead to healthy economic and political development, but rather to skewed and highly limited development, or "underdevelopment." Rather than the cure for underdevelopment, capitalism was seen as the cause. The dependency approach, developed mainly by Latin Americans but also by foreign Latin Americanists, and highly influential outside the region, "called for a broad inter-disciplinary perspective to explain the major themes of Latin American reality: economic underdevelopment, social inequality, political instability, and authoritarianism."⁶³ It emphasized the need to go beyond the

⁶¹Bergquist, "Recent U.S. Studies," 4.

⁶²One holistic theory developed to explain Latin American development patterns was corporatism, which held that Latin American societies had inherited a distinct Iberian tradition, featuring feudalistic social relations, anti-capitalist preferences and incentives, patrimonial extended families, hierarchical Roman Catholic religious affinities, corporatist and organic links between the state and society, and authoritarian, verticalist governing structures. From this perspective, such characteristics were not necessarily undesirable or destined to vanish with economic development, as modernization theorists would have it, but were part of Latin America's unique developmental path. Accordingly, powerful, activist, and interventionist states within the essentially Catholic cultural and philosophical framework of the Latin American tradition would direct Latin American societies on a noncapitalist, non-Marxist path to modernity and development. (See Klarén, "Lost Promise," 26-8.) The most influential works on the corporatist tradition were Richard M. Morse, "The Heritage of Latin America," in Louis Hartz, ed., *The Founding of New Societies* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964); Howard J. Wiarda, ed., *Politics and Social Change in Latin America: The Distinct Tradition* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1974); and Claudio Veliz, *The Centralist Tradition of Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979). It should be noted that other analysts of Latin America had employed the concept of corporatism to describe the monopolistic, hierarchical, state-structured form of interest group politics common in the region, but did not accept the broader cultural explanation developed therefrom. See for example Philippe C. Schmitter, *Interest Conflict and Political Change in Brazil* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971) and "Still the Century of Corporatism?" *The Review of Politics* 36:1 (January 1974): 85-132. For an excellent summary of the literature on corporatism in Latin America, see David Collier, "Trajectory of a Concept: 'Corporatism' in the Study of Latin American Politics," in Peter H. Smith, *Latin America in Comparative Perspective* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 135-162. We do not discuss corporatism further in this essay because it did not have as broad an interdisciplinary impact as did modernization and dependency.

⁶³Valenzuela, "Political Science and the Study of Latin America," 71.

examination of individual societies to understand the international historical process of development.

Within the dependency paradigm, economists, sociologists, and political scientists argued that a country's "position within the international system is determinant of internal class behavior."⁶⁴ Because Latin American countries occupied an inferior position in the international division of labor, producing mainly raw materials and cheap workers, they were the victims of unequal terms of trade and exploitation by foreign investors.⁶⁵ Local entrepreneurial classes and political leaders were captives of the international market and had only limited opportunities to steer the development of their own economies and societies. In addition, the copying of consumption patterns characteristic of the advanced industrialized countries led to severe distortions within Latin American economies. According to the more radical dependency writers, foreign and national capitalists siphoned off Latin America's surplus, leaving the vast majority of people sunk in poverty and oppressed by authoritarian regimes.

By implication, the solution to inequality between the center and the periphery was to break out of the capitalist network, or at least renegotiate the terms of participation, for example raising taxes on or expropriating multinational corporations. The first solution was touted by radical *dependentistas* who extrapolated from Marxist ideas to conceptualize the international division of labor as a struggle between bourgeois and proletarian nations, pointing to the Cuban revolution as an attractive alternative.⁶⁶ The second solution was advocated by economists identified with ECLA who contended that unequal exchange could be overcome through protected industrialization and controls on foreign capital. Dependency ideas spread throughout the third world and beyond.⁶⁷ For example, an influential global vision of center-periphery relations was elaborated by an Africanist, Immanuel Wallerstein, who added the concept of a semi-periphery of middle-income countries between the rich and the poor, not unlike the Marxian category of the petty bourgeoisie.⁶⁸

⁶⁴Fishlow, "Latin American Economics," 97-8. See for example Paul Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1957); Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependencia y Desarrollo en América Latina* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1969); Theotonio dos Santos, *Dependencia y Cambio Social* (Santiago: CESO, Universidad de Chile, 1970); Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967); Celso Furtado, *Economic Development of Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Osvaldo Sunkel, "Transnational Capitalism and National Disintegration in Latin America," *Social and Economic Studies* 22:1 (March 1973): 132-76.

⁶⁵See Raúl Prebisch, *The Economic Development of Latin America and Its Principle Problems* (New York: United Nations, 1950), placed in historical context in Joseph L. Love, "Raúl Prebisch and the Origins of the Doctrine of Unequal Exchange," *Latin American Research Review* 15:1 (1980): 45-72.

⁶⁶Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth*; Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*.

⁶⁷See Samir Amin, *Imperialism and Unequal Development* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977); Cardoso, "Consumption of Dependency Theory;" Love, *Crafting the Third World*; Packenham, *Dependency Movement*.. Most economists in the United States did not subscribe to dependency thinking, however.

⁶⁸See Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), *The Politics of the World-Economy: The States, the Movements, and the Civilizations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), and *The Modern World-System III: the Second Era of Great Expansion of the Capitalist World Economy, 1730-1840s* (New York: Academic Press, 1989).

Building on these general points, anthropologists developed the theory of internal colonialism, focusing particularly on the relation of domination between the European/mestizo elites and indigenous peoples.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, historians began to critique the methods and concepts which many had adopted in the heyday of modernization theory. They thus shifted their perspective to economic and social history, and began to examine the role of external exploiters and subordinate sectors in both the colonial and post-independence periods. Some historians argued that capitalist relations of production stretched all the way back to the conquest and accounted for Latin America's inferior position in the world system. Others focused on disadvantaged groups, a research agenda which eventually fed into the international interest in subaltern studies.⁷⁰

Within Political Science, the most important theoretical contribution to come out of the dependency paradigm was bureaucratic-authoritarianism.⁷¹ This theory argued that the bureaucratic-authoritarian state which emerged in the most economically advanced Latin American countries was "a necessary political stage, dictated by an alliance of political forces intent on overcoming economic stagnation with a strategy of deepening industrialization in alliance with foreign capital."⁷² In other words, continued economic growth depended on the repression of the working classes, whose demand for higher wages and other guarantees would otherwise fuel inflation and drive out foreign investment. Contrary to the explanation offered by modernization theorists, then, "repressive regimes did not emerge despite Latin America's economic development; they emerged because of it."⁷³

Dependency arguments held sway into the late 1970s, when Latin American countries began a wave of transitions to formally democratic regimes. Already, dependency-related economic theories had been displaced by international monetarism in many countries, increasingly so as the 1980s unfolded. Both import substituting industrialization and socialism seemed to have failed to overcome underdevelopment. Governments began slashing trade barriers and encouraging comparative advantage, while they pruned the bloated public sector. Moreover, foreign investment and loans were "welcomed to compensate for the scarcity of national capital and to bring domestic interest rates into parity with international levels," particularly in the wake of the debt crisis.⁷⁴ These changes towards a model of export-led growth were supported by historical research, which showed that growth, structural changes like urbanization and industrialization, social mobility, and political liberalization could occur during periods of great reliance on the international market, such as the 1880s-1920s heyday of laissez-

⁶⁹Arizpe, "Anthropology in Latin America."

⁷⁰For example, see Stanley J. and Barbara H. Stein, *The Colonial Heritage of Latin America; Essays on Economic Dependence in Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

⁷¹See Guillermo O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California 1973), and David Collier, ed., *The New Authoritarianism in Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

⁷²Valenzuela, "Political Science and the Study of Latin America," 72.

⁷³Peter H. Smith, "The Changing Agenda for Social Science Research on Latin America," in Peter H. Smith, *Latin America in Comparative Perspective* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995): 1-29, at 9.

⁷⁴Fishlow, "Latin American Economics," 101.

faire.⁷⁵ The examples of export-led development in East Asia, namely South Korea and Taiwan, also cast heavy doubt on the pessimistic tenets of the *dependentistas*.⁷⁶

By the 1980s, sociologists in Latin America had been hard hit by authoritarian persecution and were thus "compelled to aim at increasingly more modest goals" than rapid modernization or revolution.⁷⁷ Instead of engaging in broad ideological and philosophical debates characteristic of the dependency era, they began to focus on more practical problems, such as household strategies for economic survival among low-income groups, the position of women in the family and society, and the emergence and dynamics of grass-roots organizations in poor urban settlements. "High hopes for egalitarian and anti-imperialist processes of change" were abandoned, and focused field research became the norm. Just as the Latin American middle classes had failed to carry out the progressive transformations expected by the modernization theorists, so the workers and peasants had failed to bring about the revolutions awaited by some dependency thinkers.⁷⁸

Also in the 1980s, political scientists turned their attention to the analysis of the politics of liberalization and transition from authoritarian regimes.⁷⁹ Like their counterparts in Sociology, they gradually abandoned the grand theorizing and structural determinism which had characterized both the modernization and dependency eras. Instead, they focused on the dynamics of agency, the role of ideology, the issue of political will, and the application of game theory. "Democracy came to be viewed as the achievement of courageous leaders and/or civil society, rather than an automatic consequence of economic performance."⁸⁰

Meanwhile, many anthropologists and historians were challenging the totalizing logic of both modernization and dependency theories, which they claimed "subsumed difference into the service of a greater machinery that set limits, extracted surpluses, established hierarchies, and shaped identities." Like political scientists, these scholars sought to "break down reifications and restore agency to the historical narrative." However, in contrast to political scientists, who tended to focus on the agency of the political elite within formal state structures, these

⁷⁵Jonathan Brown, *A Socioeconomic History of Argentina, 1776-1860* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Paul Drake, *The Money Doctor in the Andes: The Kemmerer Missions, 1923-1933* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989); Joseph L. Love and Nils Jacobsen, eds., *Guiding the Invisible Hand: Economic Liberalism and the State in Latin American History* (New York: Praeger, 1988).

⁷⁶See articles on this topic in Frederic C. Deyo, ed., *The Political Economy of the New Asian Industrialism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

⁷⁷Portes, "Latin American Sociology," 123. As Portes further explains, "Military regimes, in particular those of the Southern Cone countries, took aim at the discipline as one of their major intellectual adversaries. The career of sociology was abolished in several universities ... [and] many of the best thinkers and researchers were compelled to seek refuge either abroad or in private centers supported by foreign foundations."

⁷⁸Ibid, 125.

⁷⁹See for example Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁸⁰Smith, "Changing Agenda," 9.

anthropologists and historians sought to expand notions of the political. Under the influence of neo-Gramesian theory, they began to examine the intersection of culture and power, and to emphasize the social construction of political life. They advanced gendered, ethnic, and linguistic analyses of imperial-subaltern encounters, and highlighted the contributions to community and national life of traditionally marginalized groups.

All of this does not mean that either modernization or dependency was swept definitively into the dustbin of history. Like most good theories in the social sciences, both bequeathed a legacy of important lessons and middle-level hypotheses, shorn of their more grandiose pretensions. Both theories contributed an abiding concern with underlying structural conditions, especially with dependency's emphasis on historical structuralism, although most social scientists now insist that we must focus on institutions, agents, identities and/or choices as well as structures. Dependency thinking was moderated and adapted to explain persuasively instances of "dependent development," not only in Latin America but in other regions of the globe as well. In addition, it left its mark in terms of a general awareness of the important role of external factors to the internal economic and political systems of Latin America.⁸¹ Remnants of modernization theory are evident in some recent analyses which attempt to establish pre-requisites, economic and/or cultural, of political democracy.⁸²

Many Latin Americanists are now analyzing, if not celebrating, the current coincidence of liberal economics and politics in the region. Economists are hailing the growth achieved by free-market models, though some worry about the lack of equity. Political scientists are studying the potential for consolidation and/or the quality of the new democracies, the functioning of new institutions, and the trend toward decentralization; many of them believe that the challenge today is to synchronize and sustain relatively free economic and political markets, while realizing that progress may not be linear, that structural conditions are not sufficient for success, and that fortuitous combinations of agents, institutions, and actions will be required. Sociologists and anthropologists are concerned about the fate of disadvantaged groups as the state pulls back from social welfare and about the ability of new actors --such as social movements and non-governmental organizations-- to fill the gap. Historians draw parallels with previous periods of market-oriented economics and elitist democracies with low levels of participation and contestation. Few scholars are venturing predictions about the future.

⁸¹Political-economists specializing in Latin America produced noteworthy and enduring works explaining the variable patterns of development that had occurred in peripheral countries. See for example Peter Evans, *Dependent Development: The Alliance of Multinational, State, and Local Capital in Brazil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979) and *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Gary Gereffi and Donald L. Wyman, *Manufacturing Miracles: Paths of Industrialization in Latin America and East Asia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Stephan Haggard, *Pathways from the Periphery: The Politics of Growth in the Newly Industrializing Countries* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Stephan Haggard and Robert R. Kaufman, eds., *The Politics of Economic Adjustment: International Constraints, Distributive Conflicts, and the State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

⁸²See for example Kenneth Bollen and Robert W Jackman, "Political Democracy and the Size Distribution of Income," *American Sociological Review* 50 (1985): 438-57; Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992); Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991); Mitchell A. Seligson, "Democratization in Latin America: The Current Cycle," in James M. Malloy and Mitchell A. Seligson, eds., *Authoritarians and Democrats: Regime Transition in Latin America* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987).

In the 1980s and 1990s, despite the cross-disciplinary attention to the resurgence of classical liberalism, Latin American studies has been characterized by the absence of a prevailing paradigm.⁸³ From the perspective of many, the resultant eclecticism is healthy and promising. As one prominent political scientist has put it, "In the absence of an overarching conceptual framework, scholars may [now] turn their focus toward empirical hypothesis-testing and examination of questions at the so-called middle range of social science theory." The same could be said for sociologists and anthropologists, and many historians are more comfortable not having to prove or disprove some all-encompassing theory of development.⁸⁴ This is important because "[t]he resilient pillars of development studies are not works of grand theory, but rather detailed studies of historical and contemporary processes."⁸⁵

Of course, Latin American studies has not been unaffected by the more recent trends toward theory-driven analysis, whether shaped by world-systems theory (mainly in Sociology), rational choice theory (Economics and Political Science), or post-modernism (Literature, Anthropology, and History). However, for the time being, studies within these paradigms must share the intellectual terrain with an abundance of middle-level theories. In Political Science, such theories have emerged on topics ranging from the specific forms that democracy has assumed in Latin America, to the sources and political effects of different institutional structures, to the emergence and effectiveness of social movements, to changing constructions of gender and citizenship.⁸⁶ In the realm of Economics, nearly everyone emphasizes market mechanisms and free trade more than in the past, but not everyone embraces the canon of neoliberal, Chicago-school orthodoxy. In Latin America, despite the apparent hegemony of neoliberalism, "a pragmatic neostructuralism appears to be gaining influence throughout the region," with emphasis on a reduced but flexible and non-negligible role for the state in economic development.⁸⁷ In Anthropology, recent studies examine such subjects as ethnohistory, workers, women, the middle class, urban social movements, Indian ethnic militancy, and communities

⁸³Portes, "Latin American Sociology in the Mid-1980's," 127, speaking specifically of Sociology, but this can surely be applied to Political Science and Anthropology, as well. See Daniel H. Levine, "Paradigm Lost: Dependence to Democracy," *World Politics* 40 (April 1988): 377-95.

⁸⁴Smith, "Changing Agenda," 10; Halperín, "Latin American History."

⁸⁵Alejandro Portes and A. Douglas Kincaid, "Sociology and Development in the 1990s: Critical Challenges and Empirical Trends," *Sociological Forum* 4:4 (1989): 479-503 at 499.

⁸⁶For examples, see Guillermo O'Donnell, "Delegative Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 5:1 (January 1994): 55-69; Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*; David Collier and Ruth Berins Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); Scott Mainwaring and Matthew S. Shugart, *Presidentialism and Democracy in Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Joe Foweraker and Ann L. Craig, eds., *Popular Movements and Political Change in Mexico* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1990); Arturo Escobar and Sonia E. Alvarez, *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992); Sonia E. Alvarez, *Engendering Democracy in Brazil: Women's Movements in Transition Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Jane S. Jacquette, *The Women's Movement in Latin America: Participation and Democracy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994); Elizabeth Jelín and Eric Hershberg, eds., *Constructing Democracy: Human Rights, Citizenship, and Society in Latin America* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996).

⁸⁷Fishlow, "Latin American Economics," 111.

participating in international migration.⁸⁸ And in Sociology, thematic comparative studies have emerged on the flow of capital and technology across the center-periphery divide, the reproduction of cultural forms on a global scale, the elaboration of social networks, the causes of rebellion and revolution, the evolution of social movements, and the uses and control of labor in different parts of the world economy.⁸⁹ While no overarching paradigms link these studies today, fruitful cooperation continues on themes which cross both disciplinary and geographic boundaries, such as political economy, social movements, gender, and immigration. Throughout the social sciences, scholars are studying the interactions between globalizing forces and local conditions.

This boundary-crossing trend is also evident in the bridging, or even merging, of Latin American and Latina/o Studies. An increasing number of scholars and institutions are now combining approaches from these two intellectual traditions in creative ways, building a new curriculum and pursuing research on the "Latin/oAmericas."

A survey of the main area journals confirms the general topical and theoretical developments discussed above. To complement our narrative account of the intellectual trajectory of Latin American studies since the 1960s, we surveyed all the issues (through 1996) of the five most important interdisciplinary Latin American studies journals: the *Latin American Research Review*, the *Journal of Latin American Studies*, *Latin American Perspectives*, the *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs*, and *The Americas*. While there were numerous important journals published in Latin America and consulted frequently by Latin Americanists, it would be a monumental task to appropriately survey all of them. We have thus limited ourselves to the main inter-disciplinary area journals published in the United States and Great Britain.

The *Latin American Research Review*, as noted above, began publication in 1965. During the first five years (1965-69), it featured mainly "state of research" articles on such grand themes of modernization as urbanization, agrarian problems and change, and sources of political instability. Such articles tended to be interdisciplinary in focus, and largely social scientific. In the next five years (1970-74), central issues were students, guerrillas, and political violence, topics in social history, and the quantitative history debate. The first article on women, entitled "The Female in Ibero-America," appeared in 1972. During the 1975-79 period, the influence of the dependency approach was fully evident as articles focused on issues such as U.S. policy towards Latin America, foreign investment, and income distribution. Urban and rural social relations and problems were still a focus and two articles on women appeared. Analyses of Chile spiked following the 1973 military coup, and the journal offered a greater representation of articles from literature and the arts. From 1980-84, critiques and modifications of dependency theory appeared, but many articles continued to focus on issues of political economy, both international and national. In the wake of the triumph of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua,

⁸⁸For specifics see Arizpe, "Anthropology in Latin America."

⁸⁹See Portes, "Latin American Sociology," pp. 136-7 and related citations; Peter Evans, *Embedded Autonomy*; Susan Eckstein, ed., *Power and Popular Protest: Latin American Social Movements* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Elizabeth Jelin, ed., *Los nuevos movimientos sociales* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de America Latina, 1985); Elizabeth Jelin, ed., *Women and Social Change in Latin America* (London: Zed, 1990); Alejandro Portes, *The Economic Sociology of Immigration: Essays on Networks, Ethnicity, and Entrepreneurship* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1995); Alejandro Portes, Manuel Castells, and Lauren A. Benton, eds., *The Informal Economy: Studies in Advanced and Less Developed Countries* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

revolutions, both the recent Nicaraguan (1979) and the earlier Mexican (1910), became a focus topic. Gender received increased attention, and Literature and the Arts maintained a steady representation. In the late 1980s (1985-89), the journal featured a marked diversity of articles, with debt, democratization, and policy making in specific areas as leading subjects. In the 1990s, this diversity has continued, with articles ranging from the examination of changing patterns of religiosity in the region, dissections of the effects of neoliberal economics, globalization, and democratization, discourse analyses, and histories of agrarian relations and peasant rebellion. Gender and ethnicity, and more generally, identity, have become central analytical categories.

The *Journal of Latin American Studies*, surveyed from 1969-1995, was more heavily dominated by articles in History, especially social history. From the start, the journal emphasized topics on foreign influences in the region, both military and economic. From 1969 to 1983,⁹⁰ entries on political organizations and movements, topics in economics, and militarism and military institutions appeared most frequently after articles in history and social history. From 1984-1995, common subjects were economic history, especially the history of particular sectors and/or industries, foreign relations, urban and rural labor history, and the Church or religion. Gender received only limited treatment, appearing as a central category in only three articles over both periods. Literature and the arts remained completely outside the purview of the journal.

Latin American Perspectives began publication in 1974. Its first issue made clear its leftist mission: "While the many bourgeois journals and scholarly associations dealing with Latin America prefer to disguise their support of the capitalist system behind a facade of 'academic neutrality,' *Latin American Perspectives* has no such abstract pretensions. We explicitly declare that nothing academic can ever be neutral and that all scholarship has a political function."⁹¹ The development of leftist thought on the region can be traced through the issue titles and themes. In the 1970s, these included dependency, imperialism, the process of underdevelopment, class struggle, and revolution. Interestingly, significant attention was paid to issues of gender in these early issues, albeit in the context of class analysis.⁹² In the 1980s, while class remained a central organizational category, race and ethnicity, along with gender, also received attention. The state, hegemony, and popular protest and resistance became the main themes in articles on most countries, although revolution was still the focus for the many articles on Nicaragua and Central America. In the 1990s, several issues have been devoted to the Left in the post-Marxist era, and ethnicity and gender have become central categories of analysis. As in other journals, global restructuring, social movements, and democratization have received significant attention. Over the years, Literature and the Arts received some, albeit limited, attention within the context of the journal's political focus.

The *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs* began publication in 1959 under an editorial policy which embraced all aspects of Latin American culture and life, including Literature and the Arts. Until 1971, it featured inter-disciplinary articles in Spanish, Portuguese, and French as well as English, and while these articles covered history as far back as the colonial period, the emphasis was on the post-World War II era. From 1971-83, the journal became increasingly social scientific in orientation, and in 1983 began focusing exclusively on

⁹⁰A useful cumulative index was published in 1984 for these years.

⁹¹*Latin American Perspectives* 1:1 (1974), 2.

⁹²In 1977, for example, an entire double issue was devoted to women and class struggle.

issues relevant to contemporary international relations, especially U.S.-Latin American relations. From 1959-1989, then, the journal's major focus topics, in order of frequency, were politics and political violence, international relations, developmental economics, demographic issues, intellectual thought, literature, and culture and society.⁹³ Since 1989, almost all the articles appearing in the journal have been on topics in international relations, political economy, and democratization, with special focus on such issues as NAFTA and the drug trade.

Finally, the oldest of the inter-disciplinary area journals, *The Americas*, deserves mention. A publication of the Academy of American Franciscan History, the quarterly journal first went to press in 1944. Early issues were devoted almost exclusively to the history of the Franciscan order, the Church, and religion. However, over time, the journal's subtitle, "A Quarterly Review of Inter-American Cultural History," took on broader meaning, with featured articles covering intellectual history, literary analysis, some political and economic history, and in the 1970s and 80s, increasing social history. Many essays traced the historical influence of political and economic concepts and/or the impact of a given individual on events of a given period. Articles on U.S.-Latin American relations and on contributions of Indians and Afro-Americans to the region's cultural history also appeared quite frequently. And as noted in the forward to the 1991 cumulative index, the most notable change in the journal's content over time was the increased number of contributions by and on women, a trend which began in the 1980s.

Contemporary Challenges to Latin American Studies

Despite all of the noteworthy contributions discussed above, Latin American studies still comes under attack, as do most area studies, for "ghettoizing" itself from the disciplines of the North American academy. This is particularly the case within Economics, Political Science, and Sociology, which tend to be the boldest in making universal claims about human behavior based on United States and European observations. Sociologist Alejandro Portes notes that "sociology in the United States has never regarded the Third World studies as a priority area or particularly encouraged its practitioners."⁹⁴ Sociologists specializing in Latin America have thus foregone economic and professional rewards. Economists, for their part, have in general steered clear of all inter-disciplinary endeavors, "both fearing the anarchy that (doubtless) reigns there and cherishing how much has been learned by pushing ahead with the canonical principles. [W]hat trade in ideas there has been between economics and the other social sciences has largely been one way, through missions established to sociology, political science, and the academic discipline of law."⁹⁵

Within Political Science, few articles on Latin America (or on other "developing regions") have graced the pages of disciplinary journals, and we suspect that the same is true in the leading venues in the other disciplines. As John Martz has shown, from 1960-1987, only 2.3% of the articles appearing in the top five U.S. Political Science journals dealt with Latin American politics.⁹⁶ Instead, most of the works mentioned above were published as chapters in

⁹³See the cumulative index for 1959-1989.

⁹⁴Portes, "Latin American Sociology," 126.

⁹⁵David M. Kreps, "Economics--The Current Position," *Daedalus* 126:1 (Winter 1997): 59-85 at 59-60.

⁹⁶Martz, "Political Science and Latin American Studies," 69.

edited volumes, as collaborative multi-authored books, and/or as articles in area or alternative thematic journals. Perhaps as a result, a debate has been raging in the pages of major Political Science journals and newsletters regarding the quality of contributions by area specialists.⁹⁷

This is not to say, however, that Latin America area scholars are somehow second-rate. The paucity of area-studies articles in the most prestigious disciplinary journals could conceivably be a reflection of the parochialism or even low quality of those journals. An SSRC survey of its 1970-1985 JCLAS postdoctoral grantees revealed that the 220 respondents (in a variety of disciplines) "had published a total of 866 books, 5,527 articles and book chapters, and 5,774 other works including reports, papers published in conference proceedings, and the like."⁹⁸ In addition, "they enjoyed a large measure of success in their careers, as measured by the large proportion of the non-tenured who achieved tenured positions after receiving the award."⁹⁹ Thus, while there may be a gulf between some Latin Americanists and the agenda-setters of their respective disciplines, it is clearly not a gulf of competence, creativity, or productivity. Why, then, the assault on area studies?

Probably the most basic characteristic of all area studies is that, in emphasizing extensive knowledge of cases gained through field work, they group social scientists and humanists together and encourage cross-fertilization. Although "the heavy disciplinary focus of much of American graduate education" means that "few students [including area specialists] actually distribute the courses in their training very far from their major discipline," and while even "the set of scholars who have a long-term professional concern with a particular part of the world" tend to have a "perspective bound by [their] discipline," area specialists will often choose topics in "domains where the methodological and conceptual superstructure of disciplines is less intrusive."¹⁰⁰ Because "area specialists who are in the social sciences are likely to have a great deal more contact and shared intellectual activity [via field work and conferences] with humanists than do most of their non area-oriented disciplinary colleagues," their work tends to be at the non-technical or so-called "soft" end of the social scientific spectrum.¹⁰¹ While this is viewed as "immensely enriching" by area scholars themselves, for those social scientists "at the 'hard' end of the spectrum, the close ties of area studies with the humanities reinforces their perception that area studies is not a scientific activity."¹⁰²

The latest such critique has been launched by Harvard political scientist and noted Africanist Robert Bates, who argues that comparative political scientists should follow the lead

⁹⁷For a summary of this debate, see Christopher Shea, "Political Scientists Clash Over Value of Area Studies," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 10, 1997, A13.

⁹⁸Coatsworth, "International Collaboration," 38.

⁹⁹Ibid, 39.

¹⁰⁰Lambert, "Blurring Disciplinary Boundaries," 718, 727, and 729. Lambert notes that the core disciplines in area studies are Anthropology, History, Literature, and Political Science, and that "it is precisely at their juncture point -- a kind of historically informed political anthropology, using materials in the local languages -- that much of the genuinely interdisciplinary work in area studies occurs. History operates as a swing discipline, facing both the humanities and the social sciences, and the principal thrust of a particular research theme determines where in the spectrum it will lie" (p. 730).

¹⁰¹Ibid, 731.

¹⁰²Ibid.

of many specialists in U.S. politics who use rational choice and game theoretic models to produce testable hypotheses and strive for universalizable conclusions. He and those who share his convictions view area studies in the same way their behavioralist predecessors did: as primarily descriptive, largely atheoretical, and (above all), methodologically soft and hence unanalytical or unscientific.¹⁰³ Given that Political Science has become one of the dominant disciplines within Latin American studies, this latest attack is particularly troubling for Latin Americanists.

Moreover, this iteration of the "war on area studies" is complicated by the emergence of a comprehensive critique of area studies from within the humanities as well, specifically from the postmodernist (or "cultural studies") camp. In an attempt to challenge prevailing terms and categories, and to "decenter" the Western, white, male, colonialist/imperialist subject, postmodernist analysts pose such questions as: Why are "areas" our objects? What defines an "area?" How can "we" presume to understand "them" given our cultural biases and the politics that drive theorizing? Who, really, are "we" and "them?"¹⁰⁴ Such a critique is usually driven by empathy with historically subordinated and marginalized groups, and is often part of a more general attack on positivist social science which has objectified these groups and defined the terms by which they are studied by scholars and understood by society at large (the state, the nation, development, modernity, nature, etc.).¹⁰⁵

This postmodernist critique is also connected to what Immanuel Wallerstein identifies as the emergence of a "new form of 'area studies'," namely of women's studies and ethnic studies programs.¹⁰⁶ "Women's studies and the multiple variants of 'ethnic' studies had bottom-up origins. The represented the (largely post-1969) revolt of those whom the university had 'forgotten.' Theirs was a claim to be heard, and to be heard not merely as describers of particular groups that were marginal, but as revisers of the central theoretical premises of social science."¹⁰⁷

While these movements and the programs they produced represent a welcome and necessary innovation within the university, they add a new dynamic to the debate over area studies. On the one hand, they pose a challenge to the traditional disciplines in terms of theoretical and epistemological differences. Their interdisciplinary thrust and methodological openness thus render them in many ways intellectual allies of more traditional area studies

¹⁰³See Robert H. Bates, "Area Studies and Political Science: Rupture and Possible Synthesis," Ms. 1997 and "Letter from the President: Area Studies and the Discipline," *APSA-CP: Newsletter of the APSA Organized Section in Comparative Politics* 7:1 (Winter 1996): 1-2, as well as Christopher Shea, "Political Scientists Clash."

¹⁰⁴For an example, see Rafael, "Cultures of Area Studies."

¹⁰⁵As Fernando Coronil explains, these scholars "reject...master narratives of modernism and opt for the more modest goal of illuminating social reality through partial glimpses, attentiveness to localized context, and sensitivity to multiple stories and protean symbolic systems" ("Foreword," Joseph et al., *Close Encounters of Empire*, 3). See for example Florencia E. Mallon, "The Promise and Dilemma of Subaltern Studies: Perspectives from Latin American History," *American Historical Review* 99 (Dec. 1995): 1491-1515; Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

¹⁰⁶Wallerstein, "Unintended Consequences," p.227.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*

scholars. Indeed, it could be argued that the vigor of the present attacks from the hardcore disciplinary specialists is a reaction to the critiques made by postmodernists and the threat that the "new form" of area studies poses to the mainstream of the disciplines. On the other hand, the more extreme postmodern critiques of scientific inquiry and academic standards frequently do not sit well with more traditional area experts, who maintain extensive interests in and loyalties to their respective disciplines.

Moreover, it remains unclear what effect the expansion of the new programs will have on traditional area studies in the competition for university resources. For example, as more students become interested in Latino studies, demand for more traditional Latin American studies may decline; on the other hand, as we suggested above, synergies with ethnic studies might cause it to rise. Indeed, in some places, the melding of Latina/o Studies and Latin American Studies is arguably succeeding at revitalizing and reshaping the field for the 21st century.

This may be a crucial development, since traditional area studies is facing strong challenges from outside the academy. The end of the Cold War has meant the demise of the general "national interest" justification for funding area studies programs. The issues that affect U.S. security interests are increasingly understood as global problems, better handled by issue experts rather than area experts.¹⁰⁸ In such a scenario, Latin American studies may be particularly vulnerable, given the low tendency of Latin Americanists to pursue studies with clear policy relevance, or, perhaps more accurately, the (not undeserved) association of Latin American specialists with causes often at odds with those of the Washington policy community.¹⁰⁹

Relatedly, the global expansion of U.S. power in the 1990s, both economic and political, as well as the great leaps in communications technology of the last decade, have fed the notion that the world is becoming increasingly homogeneous. English has become the lingua franca of the international business and political worlds, and more and more countries have accepted and even embraced the "Washington consensus" on neoliberal economics and procedural democracy. As a result, emphasizing dissimilarities and urging an understanding of differences among the cultures, histories, and languages of the countries that make up "the global village" is regarded as passé in many powerful circles in the United States. More appropriate, from this perspective, is the development and exportation of universal theories and "tool-kits" which can be applied uniformly around the globe, irrespective of historical and cultural differences.¹¹⁰

In Defense of Area Studies

Despite these challenges, we contend that there are still strong intellectual and practical reasons to nurture area studies. To begin, the kind of mid-level theorizing¹¹¹ which has become

¹⁰⁸See Heilbrunn, "News from Everywhere," 50.

¹⁰⁹One study revealed that Latin Americanists, of all area specialists, authored the lowest percentage of publications with any clear policy relevance: 11% compared to a high typically of 22% among East Asian scholars. (Lambert, *Beyond*, 156-167, 363-364.)

¹¹⁰Such an attitude is particularly salient within the international economic and financial community. See discussions in Paul Drake, ed., *Money Doctors, Foreign Debts, and Economic Reforms in Latin America from the 1890s to the Present* (Wilmington: SR Books, 1994); Adam Przeworski et al., *Sustainable Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); J. Sirowiecki, "Dr. Shock: Jeffrey Sachs has a cure for every sick economy. Is he coming to a country near you?" *Lingua Franca* 7:5 (Jun-Jul 1997): 61-73.

¹¹¹On mid-level theorizing, see Rogers Smith, "Still Blowing in the Wind: A Quest for a Democratic, Scientific Political Science," *Daedalus* 126:1 (Winter 1997): 253-287.

the hallmark of Latin American and most area studies should not become the victim of "social science wars."¹¹² As noted above, the present round of attacks on area studies from within the Academy comes from two sides: from the hard social science camp which views area studies as overly ideographic, on the one hand; and from the post-modern camp which sees area studies as too closely tied to the totalizing and (falsely) "scientific" discourse of the traditional disciplines, on the other. The former lauds abstract, deductive models and large cross-national studies, while the latter "doubt[s] the value of causal explanations altogether and thus of conventional social science theorizing...."¹¹³ For opposite reasons, then, both perspectives dismiss (and at times disparage) the kind of analysis most common to area studies scholars: a mid-level, theoretically informed empirical study of one or more countries.

It is precisely such analysis, however, which is the great strength and contribution of research fostered by area studies programs and/or area specialization. Within Latin American studies, for example, it was the familiarity of Latin Americanists with particular historical and structural features of Latin American societies which allowed the universalist assumptions of modernization theory to be challenged and produced the highly influential dependency approach in the 1970s. As dependency itself came under fire, it was a close empirical analysis by Latin America area experts which produced the concept of "dependent development" and led to the elaboration of theories of state-led development around the world. In the fields of democratization and social movement theory, it has been transcontinental and transdisciplinary cooperation by Latin America experts which have produced some of the most significant recent works.

For those who believe in science, then, we would argue that area studies is fully justifiable on its scientific merits. Area studies is not an agenda of research; rather it is an intellectual and institutional construct which supports deep knowledge of cases through field work and encourages inter-disciplinary cross-fertilization. As noted above, most "area studies" scholars are strongly anchored in their respective disciplines. Without area studies, however, we could not capture the universe of cases to test the validity of discipline-specific theories. In addition, we would lose sight of new empirical puzzles that require theoretical explanations and that generate hypotheses. Exhaustive data collection and comparative analysis are at the heart of the scientific method, since in their absence, generalizations are difficult to make and hard to sustain. For those who are suspicious of the scientific project, we ask simply whether channeling resources away from language-learning, field research, and transnational cooperation is really the solution to promoting better understanding of and empathy with the "other?" Indeed, if the fruitful ties established over the past thirty years between U.S. and Latin American scholars are not nourished, we risk returning to the kind of isolated and parochial theorizing which is so much the subject of postmodernist critique.

¹¹²Here we make reference to an analogous debate currently raging over the study of the (hard) sciences. See for example Paul R. Gross and Norman Levitt, *Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and Its Quarrels with Science* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); Alan Sokal, "Transgressing the Boundaries: Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity," *Social Text* 46/47 (Spring/Summer 1996): 217-252; and Andrew Ross, ed., *Science Wars* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).

¹¹³Atul Kohli, in his introduction to the symposium, "The Role of Theory in Comparative Politics," *World Politics* 48 (October 1995): 1-49 at 1.

As regards the broader challenge posed by a change in the priorities of funding agencies in the post Cold War era, we contend that support for area specialization is still a good investment. While globalization may mean that many different countries face similar problems, it does not mean that similar solutions will work everywhere. Local and regional traditions and politics will continue to influence events and outcomes in all parts of the world, and knowledge of those traditions and politics will continue to be essential for policy makers and academic theorists. In acquiring such knowledge, we should not allow nativism and xenophobia to blind and deafen us to alternative ways of viewing the world, nor can we expect foreign scholars to cooperate in data collection on international cases while refusing to let them question or "pollute" our models. If we honestly believe in "the global village," then U.S.-based institutions must accept and encourage the participation of foreigners on an equal basis and foster, ideologically and financially, a true exchange of ideas. Only this way will we produce a global community of scholars, whose perspectives can be respected and embraced both in the United States and abroad.

The great advantages of such programs as Title VI and Fulbright, as well as many of the leading private endeavors, have been their support for basic research and teaching. They have nourished a broad, heterogeneous array of area expertise, thus democratizing the marketplace of ideas. All scientific inquiry is enriched by having a multitude of competing researchers and perspectives. In contrast, more specific or targeted research programs, especially for security or corporate purposes, are arguably at greater risk of manipulation, bias, and perversion and can thus breed mistrust among researchers and between researchers and their subjects. As manifest in "Operation Camelot," as well as in debates surrounding more recent U.S. government initiatives to fund area studies through security agencies, international cooperation in research of questionable scientific intent is difficult to come by.

Moreover, the end of the Cold War actually presents an excellent opportunity for less politicized, less policy-driven, or less ethnocentric research. Scholars no longer operate in a climate in which their work tends to be categorized by many colleagues as serving either right-wing or left-wing purposes. Instead, they are freer to re-examine methodological and theoretical issues and make decisions based more on intellectual than political grounds.¹¹⁴ In addition, area studies associations and journals have come of age, such that their professional norms and criteria are much clearer than they were in the 1960s and 70s.¹¹⁵ As noted in the intellectual history section above, most scholars of Latin America have abandoned the grandiose theories of the past, have become more methodologically sophisticated, and have grown closer to the mainstream of their disciplines.

All of this is not to say that scholars should be required to limit their studies to one area, or that foundations should not encourage cross-regional studies. In fact, it is entirely reasonable for some funding institutions to switch their focus to topic areas, such as democratization/regime change, economic development, ethnic conflict, citizenship, gender relations, social movements, diasporic literatures, popular culture, etc. However, it would then be necessary and important to ensure the fair representation of diverse societies of the world (i.e., making sure that entire continents or sub-continents were not systematically excluded), to provide sufficient support to

¹¹⁴Gabriel A. Almond, "The Political Culture of Foreign Area Research: Methodological Reflections," in Richard J. Samuels and Myron Weiner, eds., *The Political Culture of Foreign Area and International Studies* (New York: Brassey's, 1992), 205-6.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 212.

allow those studying one or more foreign countries to learn the relevant language(s) well and to conduct thorough field research, and to continue to encourage and support cross-national cooperation.¹¹⁶

For if there is not a somewhat 'level playing field' in terms of case selection and professional rewards, resource-poor students and scholars will seldom choose those cases which require a greater investment and/or sacrifice, and many cases will go unstudied, if not by the generation of established scholars, then certainly by their successors. This would be most troublesome, for as political scientist Gabriel Almond has argued, "The depth and distribution of detailed and accurate knowledge of foreign countries and cultures around the world is the best single indicator of our capacity to confront and solve our urgent international problems constructively. Knowledge does not guarantee that we will solve them constructively, but lack of it makes it likely that we will not."¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶Similar concerns are noted in Coatsworth, "International Collaboration," at 50.

¹¹⁷Almond, "Political Culture of Foreign Area Research," 200.