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North American Research on the Political Geography of Latin America

Latin America appears to offer political geographers a varied and potentially rewarding arena for future geographic research. These countries are classified generally as transitional or developing nations. In most cases, national environments include varied patterns with both traditional and modern cultural elements. Progress toward national development is a fundamental goal of most Latin American countries. Improved inter-American relationships is an important prerequisite for this goal. Much remains to be learned about how Latin American political systems interact spatially with their environments. The relationship between changing political systems and transitional environments is certainly an important orientation for future political geographic research in Latin America. This could be called a developmental approach to the interaction between political system and geographic environment.

In light of the conference theme "The Future of Geographic Research in Latin America", this paper includes the following sections:

1. A review of past American research on Latin America by political geographers, including a summary of research achievements during the decades of the 1940's, 1950's and 1960's. Also an evaluation of the utility of this research is included.
2. A review of American research on Latin America by a sister discipline, specifically political science.
3. A focus on current problems in Latin America that need urgent attention during the coming decade with a search for alternative ways of viewing them.

Review of political geographic research

During the period of 1940-1970, at least 75 articles were published by United States geographers on topics that are relevant to the subject of Latin American political geography. This list does not include the full scope of research since some theses have been excluded. Nevertheless this sample of writings appears to represent most Latin American problems and topics of concern to our field

during the past 30 years. An overview of the trend in American research on political geography for the 1940's and for the 1950's revealed a low rate of publication during each decade, only about seven and fifteen articles respectively. This limited output seems to have resulted from the smallness of the profession, particularly the few interested in the political geography of Latin America and, more generally, from the limited interest prior to World War II in Latin American affairs. Over the past 30 years of American research, another trend has been diversification toward a broader spectrum of studies on the political geography of this cultural region.

During the decade of the 1960's, an upward surge in the number of publications is noteworthy. More than 50 articles concerning some phase of political geography were published. This represents more than twice the number of articles produced during the previous two decades. This increased volume of publication coincided with the growth of our profession and recognition by the American public of the urgency for the rapid development of Latin America. The Alliance for Progress and the Peace Corps symbolized our public concern for Latin American welfare, as these nations continued their journey toward the goal of development.

The following classes have been used for this paper in the grouping of the 75 publications written by American geographers on the political geography of Latin America during the period, 1940-1970. They follow: 1. supra-national 2. nation-state 3. boundaries 4. frontiers and extra-territorial claims 5. capitals 6. regional development 7. spatial perception. American geographers published articles in the first four categories during the 1940's. Since 1950, articles have been published in all categories. Other classes than the ones selected for this paper would yield somewhat different results but any system would most likely show an increase in the kinds and quantity of American publication on the political geography of Latin America.

Supra-national studies appear commonly in the literature during the 1940's. James and Platt were concerned with geopolitical structure (James, 1941 and Platt, 1941, 1942). Another category of study during the 1940's was the nation-state (e.g. James' analysis of the interaction of opposing national forces, 1939). Griffin studied the role of regionalism in Venezuelan politics (1941). Boundary studies were more popular during the 1940's than in later decades. Platt's study of conflicting territorial claims in the upper Amazon is well known (1938). He found the Aguarunas Indians to be "blissfully ignorant" of whether they were to become Ecuadorans or Peruvians. Few papers in this category were published in the late

1930's. McBride tackled the unsolved aspects of the Tacna-Arica problem (1936). The last category of publications in the 1940's was that of frontiers. Zarur described the political evolution of the territories of Brazil that were new at that time (1944).

In the decade of the 1950's, supra-national studies were uncommon except for those concerned with the West Indies Federation (Merrill, 1958). Research interest in the nation-state was especially about land reform and institutional reform. Keller described the "Finca Ingavi -- A Medieval Survival on the Bolivian Alti-Plano" (1950). Busey compared two nations in Central America ("Foundations of Political Contrast: Costa Rica and Nicaragua", 1958). Finally Keller conducted a study on "Institutional Barriers to Economic Development Some Examples from Bolivia" (1955). Boundary studies were scarce in the 1950's (one exception was Bloomfield, 1953). Capital studies came into their own during the 1950's (Platt's Brazilian capitals and frontiers, 1955 and Carmin's "Anapolis, Brazil -- Regional Capital of an Agricultural Frontier", 1953). Another study by James and Faissol was concerned with the problems of locating Brazil's new capital (1956). Two additional categories received attention during the 1950's. Regional development and spatial perception. Representing regional development was Dozier who wrote about "Northern Parana, Brazil: An Example of Organized Regional Development" (1956). Although not apparent from the title, Lowenthal's article represents the category of spatial perception. "The West Indies Chooses a Capital" is a scholarly and delightful study that relates the perceptions of the islanders to one another as they resolved their indecisions as to where to locate their federal capital (1958).

During the 1960's, supra-national studies by American geographers were more common than in the previous decade. Interest continued in the West Indies Federation (Lowenthal, 1961). Dale interpreted the concept of the state idea as the missing prop of the West Indian Federation (1962). Other investigations considered the topics of international understanding and the Alliance for Progress (Dyer, 1962 and Augelli, 1967b). Several geographers were interested in the nation-state during the 1960's, particularly with regard to land reform and land tenure (Pearson, 1963 and Winnie, 1965). Other researchers were interested in national forces and the development of the state, Crist studied aspects of centrifugal and centripetal forces that have been operative in Latin America (1966) which focus on the progress of frontier development in the Andean countries. He recognized continuity of administrative operation as an essential

political condition for long range planning and reform. Crist noted that sectionalism results from the difficulty each Latin American finds in reconciling his enthusiasm for the *caudillo* with his own desire for freedom of expression (1968).

In the past decade, boundary studies have been less popular (however see Reyner's studies of the boundary problem of British Honduras, 1963 and Guyana's disputed borders, 1967). Interest in frontiers has been steady but unspectacular over the past three decades, e.g., the problem of "The Nationalization of Frontiers: The Dominican Borderlands under Trujillo" (Augelli, 1967a). Capitals as a subject for geographic research was restricted primarily to Brasilia during the past decade (Augelli, 1963; Snyder, 1964 and Ludwig, 1966). A striking increase in the volume of Latin American research during the decade of the 1960's dealt with the problem of regional development. The following examples provide a wide sampling of what is currently underway. Dozier studied "Mexico's Transformed Northwest: The Yaqui, Mayo, and Fuerte Examples" (1963). Stouse described "A Framework for Measurement of Development in Latin American Land Settlement Projects" (1963). Guzman-Rivas published "Notes on Mexican Regional Planning: The Region Costera, Jalisco" (1965). Miller investigated "The Guyana Region, Venezuela: A Study in Industrial and Urban Development" (1965). Elsewhere, Hoy discussed "Geography's Role in Development Planning in Guatemala" (1968). Eidt analysed the subject of "Modern Colonization as a Facet of Land Development" (1967). O'Neal (1967) told of the "Role of the Engineer Agency for Resource Inventory in International Development". Also, Winnie took a comprehensive look at development in his paper "Latin American Development: Theoretical, Sectoral, and Operational Approaches" (1967). Further interest in research on regional development has been demonstrated by Stöhr in his publication "The Role of Regions for Development in Latin America" (1967), and by Lentnek on "Spatial Aspects of the Development Process in Latin America" (in press). Recent concern has been shown for the relationship between development and agricultural colonization in Latin America. Minkel outlined, for example, the "Programs of Agricultural Colonization and Settlement in Central America (1968), and Stewart focused on "Some Problems in Development of Agricultural Colonization in the Andean Oriente" (1968). For the 1960's, spatial perception is represented by the study of Lowenthal called "Caribbean Views of Caribbean Land" (1961).

Whether on a large or small scale, studies by American political geographers have contributed to a better understanding of politically organized areas in Latin America. A study of the Alliance for Progress encompassed the continent, while another was restricted to a remote Indian village in Bolivia. Most studies have been published at the international and national scales. Few of subordinate political units or municipal governments have been undertaken.

The ability of American geographers to contribute theoretical and applied knowledge to the political geography of Latin America is a general measure of the meaningfulness of our research. When considering the current usefulness of previous American research, it is inevitable that some types of past research have declined in importance while other categories remain relevant to today's problems in political geography. For example, boundary studies were very popular in the 1940's but interest has waned partly because boundary conflicts have declined in frequency and seriousness. Wherever they arise, new disputes will attract attention. Yet boundary conflicts as serious as that between El Salvador and Honduras are likely to be infrequent because most boundaries pass through sparsely settled or unoccupied country.

Political geographic studies of spatial perception have increased somewhat in recent decades. Their usefulness is great, especially when integrated with other types of research such as studies of regional development. It is important for American researchers to be acquainted with the Latin American way of life and system of values. This cultural framework conditions the views of reality held by their political leaders.

National development has become a widely accepted goal of Latin American governments since World War II. Therefore the usefulness of the study of regional development has increased greatly. As political geographers contribute to better understanding of the spatial attributes of national development in Latin America, the findings of their research are likely to be useful as well as practical to geographers, planners and to government administrators.

Review of political science research

During the decade of the 1960's, political scientists published many articles that can be grouped in the same classes as have been used previously for political geography. Supra-national studies have been a popular category for political scientists. Some typical studies are included here, beginning with the relationship

between Latin America and the United States (Ellender, 1967; Guntharp and Oliver, 1969). The nation-state has also been a popular category of study during the 1960's. The interests of political scientists have included subjects like armament (Lieuwen, 1960), politics (Alexander, 1964; Tomasek, 1966 and Horowitz, de Castro, and Gerassi, 1969), nationalism (Whitaker and Jordan, 1966), and the middle classes (Johnson, 1961). With regard to boundaries, political scientists have become interested primarily in the legal aspects of disputes (Child, 1950 and Fenwick, 1957). The subject of extra-territorial claims has had some following among political scientists (Fishe, 1959). In regard to capitals, Bamberger analysed "A Problem of Political Integration in Latin America - The Barrios of Venezuela" where he discussed how politicians seek to fill the role of patron in the lives of the squatters (1968).

During the 1960s, studies that can be classified under the class of regional development have increased in number over previous decades. The Inter-American Development Bank published an investigation on "Institutional Reforms and Social Development Trends in Latin America" (1963). Hirshman produced an oft quoted work entitled *Journeys Toward Progress -- Studies of Policy-Making in Latin America* (1963). Urquidi considered *The Challenge of Development in Latin America* (1964). Little has been published by political scientists with regard to population control. However, Stycos has published a paper called "Population Growth in Latin America: Paradox of Development" (1967). In the theme of development, Lauterback interpreted the subject "Government and Development: Managerial Attitudes in Latin America" (1965). Furnish studied the relationship between law and development in Peru (1969). He concludes that the thrust of the Peruvian Executive's powers is difficult to grasp for a United States-educated lawyer. The Executive is directly responsible for originating and carrying out most development measures. Finally, Veliz edited a book called *Obstacles to Change in Latin America* in which eleven Latin Americans discuss problems that face their country today (1969). Another topic about which little research has been undertaken in Latin America is that of voting behavior. Soares and Hamblin analyzed "Socio-Economic Variables and Voting for the Radical Left: Chile 1952" (1967).

Research problems in the coming decade

In searching for current Latin American problems that need urgent attention during the coming decade, political geographers should keep in mind this comment by a Uruguayan president: In Latin America, the problems travel by jet

while the solutions go by oxcart. Finding solvable problems that concern political geography is a worthwhile pursuit, although it may become difficult for Latin American governments to implement the solutions. Academia and government should draw closer together and coordinate their attack on the many urgent yet tractable problems that face Latin Americans today. A useful method for researchers is to select a broad problem that can be linked to a closely related series of highly specific problems. Such problem-clusters may be used in discovering how Latin American governments bring about changes in their environments. Some general kinds of research that are amenable to study by political geographers are discussed below.

How can nationally sponsored family planning programs be initiated, developed, and implemented in Latin America? Population control is a fundamental problem in Latin America with ramifications that relate to all areas and to all sectors of national development. High rates of population growth place relentless stress on their national environments. Swelling populations overcrowd the educational systems; they migrate steadily from rural areas into congested fetid urban slums; they create food shortages, and they overcrowd the already inadequate housing, hospitals, and public facilities. Furthermore, a huge expanding pool of underemployed and unemployed workers exist. It is questionable whether a satisfactory level of development can be achieved or sustained in most nations of Latin America without population control. The problem of family planning is associated with the following cluster of specific problems. They form a sample of the kinds of auxiliary questions that might be raised.

Where is family planning most urgently required from the standpoint of improvements needed in 'living conditions?

Can the U.N.H.O. or the O.A.S. or other international organizations help to initiate and assist in the implementation of family planning?

Can knowledge about operational problems in India or Pakistan be transferred successfully to family planning in Latin America?

What special interest groups in a particular country might be able to influence the government to adopt a family planning program?

Which groups in the existing power structure oppose family planning?

How can their objections be overcome?

What is a realistic estimate of the cost of a nationally sponsored program?

What goals are both realistic and desirable for fertility control and for the rate of population growth?

How soon could significant results in population reduction be expected from a fully implemented government program?

What are the practical obstacles that must be overcome to implement such a program?

How much public promotion would be necessary to generate widespread interest in family planning?

Without a government sponsored program of family planning, what is the population projection for the coming decade, and what increased demands are likely to be placed on the quality of life and on the environment of these people?

The second example of the problem-cluster approach to research on Latin America follows. How do military governments act upon their environments as they attempt to carry out development programs? This political geographic problem is increasingly important because the number of military takeovers has increased during the past decade, until now nearly two-thirds of the Latin Americans live under military regimes. Military governments are certain to bring about different changes in their national environments than did their civilian predecessors. The following cluster of specific questions delves into the particular kinds of impacts that military governments may make on their environments.

Which goals for national development have been adopted by military governments? Which goals were obtained from the former civilian government, and which goals are original with it?

Have promises of change in long standing problems like agrarian land reform and the nationalization of extractive industries been realized swiftly?

Is the military government sufficiently stable to carry out its plans for development?

What position does it take with regard to the formation of a national program for family planning?

Is the military government investing heavily in costly weapons for the army, navy, and air force?

Has it destroyed civilian political party organizations or suppressed their existence?

Does the military government stress flashy projects in the economic sector of development, or does it strike a balance between economic and social development?

How much genuine concern does it show for primary, secondary, and higher education?

Finally, is the military government involved in civil engineering projects, using the armed forces as the labor force to improve the infrastructure of the nation?

A third example of this approach is to explore the problems that face Latin American governments as they seek to guide and control the accelerating forces of change. Adjustment mechanisms that automatically maintain balanced growth do not exist among these forces of change. Therefore, Latin American societies expect their governments to plan and regulate the programming of urban, regional, and sectoral development. In their capacities as innovative systems, these governments seek the diffusion and adoption of planned and purposeful changes that will lead more rapidly to the goals formulated by their national planning departments. A cluster of more specific questions that link to this broad problem are raised below.

Which source area, Europe or North America, has been most important for the kind of innovations adopted by Latin Americans in recent years?

What role do international organizations play in the diffusion and adoption of innovations by Latin American nations?

What is the impact of the innovation-diffusion-adoption sequence on the sectoral development of Latin American states?

What is the impact of the innovation-diffusion-adoption sequence on urban,

rural, and regional development of states in Latin America?

What is the impact of the innovation-diffusion-adoption sequence on the growth or expansion of population, public organizations, or private enterprises within Latin America?

What is the impact of the innovation-diffusion-adoption sequence on the natural resources and the natural environment of Latin American States?

What kinds of innovations have been created in Latin American states, and what types of barriers discourage innovation there?

What are the barriers to the diffusion of innovations within Latin American states?

What are the barriers to the adoption of innovations within Latin American states?

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