

L A T I N A M E R I C A N S T U D I E S I N  
T H E U N I T E D S T A T E S :  
A Critique and A Proposal\*

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In this paper I present the views of a Latin American sociologist, partly trained in the United States, on Latin American Studies in this country. This is not a research paper but a frank and open presentation of my impressions, however opinionated. The aim is to stimulate reflection and debate, not to appease or to compromise. Implicit in all this are the following beliefs: (a) The training of Latin Americanists in the United States today is generally poor; (b) much of the research on Latin America carried out in the United States today is second-rate; (c) this situation can be improved; and, most important, (d) it is to Latin America's advantage, and not to its disadvantage, that such improvement take place.

THE DISCIPLINARY AND UNIVERSALITY PRINCIPLES

Teaching in North American universities is organized around what may be called the "disciplinary principle": Teaching and degrees are offered in departments that follow subdivisions of human knowledge by discipline, such as chemistry, sociology, political science, etc. Area studies were a later development and usually gathered specialists from different disciplines with an "interest" in the region in question. More often than not, these studies were conducted by centers or institutes, not departments in their own right. Seldom did they grant advanced degrees and, when they did, degree holders were unable to find adequate jobs. Area studies have been more intimately connected with the social sciences than with the natural or exact sciences; even a cursory examination shows that the majority of directors of area centers and institutes come from economics, history, anthropology, etc. But major degrees continue to be offered by disciplinary departments, not by area centers.

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For a variety of reasons, relatively few have asked if this organizational principle is adequate, i.e., if it should *be* a principle. This has seldom been seriously discussed; many academicians behave as if this organization of knowledge simply reflected the "natural order." That this is *not* so is shown by the continuous reshuffling and subdivision of older departments: Often, a department of social sciences six or seven decades ago is now the departments of sociology, anthropology, political science, etc. But these subdivisions have retained the disciplinary principle without incorporating a regional dimension into their reorganization. There is no department of Latin American sociology that I know of, but there is a department of sociology and a center for Latin American studies. Why? The answer, I believe, lies in the "universality principle," or, for all practical purposes, the belief that theories and methods in the social sciences, *as they exist now*, are universally valid "at all times and everywhere."

This universality principle assumes, often without so stating, that what is happening in Latin America today can be explained by reference to the past or present of industrial societies. It tends to grossly overestimate the similarities among nations and social systems. More important, however, it proceeds as if Latin American social formation and historical development could be understood using the *same concepts* that are applied to Western Europe and the United States. The absurdity of this assumption is patent: It reduces a vast matrix of many different social formations, through hundreds (and sometimes thousands) of years of existence, to the narrow submatrix that embodies two or three hundred years of Western European and North American history. As a result, we witness many futile debates, such as the one between those who characterize the Latin American agrarian social structure as feudal and those who characterize it as capitalistic, as if these were the only two possibilities. Thinking in terms of combinatory analysis, ethnocentric Western observers expect the same combinations, the same syndrome, of the same elements to reappear in Latin America, and are distressed by the historically new combination of the same "old" elements as well as the emergence of new ones. But ethnocentrism is difficult to overcome, and an unwarranted effort is made to use the same old concepts; thus, Peronism and Varguism become "fascism of the lower class" or "progressive fascism," and the binomial latifundio-minifundio becomes "feudalism with factor mobility," and so forth. The universality principle is a strong force against the creation of new concepts that would capture specific aspects of Latin American reality. Those who, consciously or not, are guided by this principle assume that all the possible creations of history were exhausted by the experience of a few countries in a few centuries.

The universality principle has made impossible a sociology of Latin America, a political science of Latin America, an economics of Latin America. Latin America was seen as a specific instance of a general course of events already studied and fully comprehended in the experience of Western Europe and the United States. By the same token, the Latin Americanist was not interested in discovering the intricate specific laws of the historical development of various Latin American social formations, but merely applied already discovered "universal" laws, instruments, and methods to the specific instance of Latin America. Under this myopic optic, there was no room for the formation of a Latin Americanist as a specialist in his own right. What was needed was to train these individuals in the "universal" theories that existed; to train universal sociologists, and universal political scientists, and interest them in Latin America. The study of Latin America, therefore, had limited contributions to make to existing universal theories, for the important things were already known. Several comparative studies in the 1950s and 1960s show this: They had a strong similarity and convergence bias. Differences were underplayed and thought of as temporary nuisances that tended to disappear. Furthermore, social and political systems were studied *as if they were independent*, the presence of one having no perceptible effect on the other. The rejection of the universality principle on the part of Latin American scholars is apparent in the widespread acceptance of dependency, itself a heuristic principle which precludes historical linearity.<sup>1</sup> Dependency, however, has gained little ground in the United States: In the 1975 meeting of the American Sociological Association, not one of the hundred-plus sections and panels dealt with dependency.

Many North American and European scholars repeatedly voiced the opinion that "science is universal" and "a theory of Latin America is nonsense." They have something at stake here: If it is demonstrated that Latin America is a specific case, their theories will be shown to be specific too, and their validity confined to time and place, to historical-structural conditions yet to be perfectly delimited. They confuse the desirability of the universality of science with the reality that existing theories are specific. Obviously, this Comtean position is behind the disciplinary principle that provides the organizational framework of teaching in twentieth-century universities.

The universality principle is more prevalent in some sciences than in others. I believe that it affects the daily work of anthropologists and historians far less than sociologists, political scientists, and economists. The former disciplines have remained more concerned with case studies and an ideographic tradition. Anthropological theory, above all, has been heavily influenced by empirical research in preindustrial societies and, if anything, may have the opposite bias.<sup>2</sup>

It is my contention that the disciplinary and universality principles have conspired against the quality and academic status of Latin American studies in the United States. Let me make it clear that I am not against nomothetic science, or against the desirability of universal theories; I simply claim that in the social sciences they do not exist, and the existing theories, techniques, and concepts have very narrow historical-structural validity.

#### THE QUALITY OF THE LATIN AMERICANIST

It does not take much to become a Latin Americanist in the United States (or in Europe, for that matter). The language barrier and its related academic isolation partly account for these low requirements: Many totally ignore the professional literature in Spanish and Portuguese; thus, the few who have done even a little reading receive Latin Americanist status. Quite often, departmental standards are such that a graduate student who has taken two or three courses on Latin America and who is writing his dissertation on Latin America usually qualifies as a Latin Americanist.<sup>3</sup> Often he has had little or no living experience in Latin America, and frequently his experience has been limited to a data-collection period that seldom exceeds one academic year. More often than not he reads Spanish *or* Portuguese well, but is not fluent in either. Furthermore, his training is a product of the “disciplinary” and “universality” principles. It is likely to concentrate heavily on the specific discipline in which he majored and include only a fraction of the Latin American literature in his own discipline (and even less in others). From the standpoint of a trained Latin Americanist, he has little to offer beyond experience on his dissertation topic.

Sometimes these young faculty offer advanced graduate courses on Latin America. Quite frequently, among their students there are one or more well-trained Latin American graduate students who know less about disciplinary theories but more about Latin America, particularly their own countries.<sup>4</sup> The more specific training and greater experience of the Latin American student, compared with his young North American professor, sparks difficult classroom problems. In institutions that normally attract a substantial number of qualified Latin American students, the results of these confrontations are readily felt. Therefore, the young professor is seldom used for graduate teaching. He is redirected towards undergraduate general survey courses on Latin America or disciplinary courses, such as introductory sociology, social stratification, etc., that consume precious time that could be used to improve his training on Latin America. Thus, a vicious circle is established.

Most competent Latin Americanists in the United States acquired their competence from professional *experience* rather than formal training. For a variety of reasons, often fortuitous ones, they spent enough time in *Latin America to grasp the local culture, to read the literature in their fields of specialization, to become acquainted with the sources, and to establish personal ties with local specialists.* They return frequently to Latin America, strengthening these ties. As a result, they are able to follow the various changes in the interests of Latin American scholars—from nation to region, from disciplinary to interdisciplinary, from individual to aggregate, from cross-sectional to longitudinal, from universal to specific. Thus, they are able to look at Latin America from a Latin American perspective. But they are relatively few by comparison with those who only have “an interest” in Latin America.

#### THE QUALITY AND CUMULATIVITY OF RESEARCH

Looking at research that is carried out in the United States, three characteristics bewilder the Latin American observer: (1) The quantity of individual research projects; (2) the atomistic, isolated, noncumulative character of these projects; and (3) the ethnocentric theoretical and methodological orientation of most of them. Each of these points deserves brief comment here.

First, the amount of research on Latin America carried out in the United States is impressive. Although I have no data on this, I believe it far exceeds that carried out in any individual Latin American country. Two decades ago it probably surpassed the total effort of all Latin American countries. This costly research, dispersed over a large number of small centers, institutes, and individual faculty members, suffers from lack of coordination. This leads us to the second characteristic—the noncumulative aspect of this massive effort.

Latin American institutions have had, I believe, far less individualistic research policies. Many university departments retain the nineteenth-century European tradition that each researcher must have a work plan, covering a fairly large number of years. Also, there are departmental projects as such. Some, like the well-known Projeto Economia e Sociedade, chaired by Florestan Fernandes at the Universidade de São Paulo, were extremely productive and resulted in a series of relatively well-integrated research books on major aspects of industrialization in São Paulo, in spite of a considerable variance in theoretical and methodological orientations among the participants.

During the past eight years, a major instrument of research organization in Latin America has been the Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias

Sociales (CLACSO), which has a series of working groups dealing with areas of academic interest.<sup>5</sup> Usually the first task of a group is the preparation of an updated bibliography; they then try to build a theoretical framework, often a historical-structural one, to guide their efforts. Subsequently, different members are charged with specific research projects and write papers on crucial areas. At each meeting, the papers are discussed, revised, and often, prepared for publication; then, new areas are pinpointed and new tasks distributed. It is apparent that although no one is forced to research or write on any subject in which he is not interested, neither must he approach the subject from any perspective that he does not share; there is *group* decision and a *collective* project that is basically cumulative—each new research project begins where the previous one ended. Although the accomplishments of the various working groups and subgroups of CLACSO are uneven, some, such as the subgroup on internal migrations, have advanced the frontiers of knowledge on a specific aspect of Latin American society in a relatively short time and with comparatively scarce resources. CLACSO controls a considerable share of the funding for, and promotion of, conferences, seminars, and colloquia and has been a major instrument for the encouragement and coordination of research efforts in Latin America. It also serves a very important *political* function by relocating social scientists who are being politically prosecuted. Recently, CLACSO placed over eight hundred exiles from Chile, including Chileans and non-Chileans. Remarkably, all of this is done on a core budget of about a half million dollars.

In the United States, academic research is characterized by what has been called the “New England style.” It conveys a radical view of the individual researcher’s prerogatives. Long-range research plans, to which many members of the department commit themselves, are almost nonexistent. In most departments, the basic units are the *individual researcher* and the *research project*. As I see it, the results of this practice have been duplication; waste; opportunistic research, whose existence is due solely to the availability of funds—to supplement salaries and pay for summer salaries, travel, and research assistance—and not to theoretical relevance; and an extremely high input-output ratio.<sup>6</sup> Underneath the respectability of academia are many unethical practices that have become institutionalized.

It is difficult to change these patterns. In spite of an “ideology” of cooperation, different centers and departments in the United States seldom cooperate—they exchange. It is difficult even for departments of the same university to agree on a common work plan. The very expression “work plan,” as different from research project, is unusual in the United States. Professional organizations, such as LASA, offer somewhat better

prospects, but it is unlikely that they will manage to reach a level of coordination that approaches that of CLACSO. Perhaps the greatest hope comes from fund-granting institutions. Given that a relatively small number of institutions and foundations account for a very large percentage of the total research funds dealing with Latin America, it is feasible, at least in principle, for some sort of coordination to be established and policy priorities laid down. It is here I place my hopes.

The third item that, in my belief, hinders the development of an important research contribution from this country is, again, the universality principle—the claims to *universality* of the disciplinary theories and methodologies in the social sciences. This has often translated itself into unsuccessful attempts for an *outright* application of these theories to Latin American countries. 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. This, of course, simply indicates a difference in paradigms. Unfamiliarity with the history of the country, regions, and institutions involved, as well as with the data sources, has placed narrow intellectual constraints on the outcome of this type research.

Few researchers have asked themselves where their findings will fit theoretically and what their meaning is; often the research is undertaken because there were funds available or “because nobody has done it before in this country.” I think this is not sufficient to justify a research project. This attitude may have been stimulated by decades of plenty and by the belief that research is its own justification. However, those who were raised amidst a scarcity of academic funds and are ideologically sensitive believe that research expenditures must always be justified. I maintain, further, that researchers must ask themselves the following question: Given what is known in our area, what is crucial to be known next? It is in this direction that research efforts ought to be oriented.

To sum up, I believe that a major problem in the way of a creative research effort on the part of many North American scholars (and European as well) has been the inability to think Latin, to look at Latin America from a Latin American standpoint, and to create new concepts instead of using North American and Eurocentric ones.

#### STUDIES IN THE UNITED STATES AND IN LATIN AMERICA: A COMPARISON OF TRENDS

Latin American studies programs have existed in this country for decades. Most of them originated from little more than a group of faculty members



from a variety of departments that had some interest in Latin America. Thus, from the start, Latin American studies became an assembly of individuals widely separated by their differences in training and field of specialization. This hindered the development possibilities of most centers for Latin American studies. For many years, however, even this assembly of loosely connected individuals had some clear comparative advantages over the training that could be obtained in Latin America by someone interested in Latin America. Latin America offered no alternatives. Differences in the quality of teaching and research, as well as library and computer facilities, were staggering. Even the best Latin American institutions could not compare with secondary North American universities.<sup>7</sup>

Not only were personnel, library, and computer resources vastly inferior, but there was also little interest on the part of local institutions to allocate funds to study other Latin American countries. Thus, one could not study Latin America as such in Latin America: One could study Brazil in Brazil, Mexico in Mexico, and so forth. For a variety of reasons, these differences have diminished and, in some cases, leveled off or even been reversed. Many Latin American institutions have improved remarkably over the past twenty years.<sup>8</sup> Ultimately, this stems from larger budget allocations. The following is an item by item comparison, as I see it:

*Computer Facilities* / Computer facilities are now adequate in many Latin American institutions. The actual working of computer systems in almost all of the best Latin American institutions is still behind that of a secondary North American university, but the differences in marginal productivity of the academic labor that could be accounted for by differences in the computer systems are small. In most institutions with adequate graduate training, there are computer facilities with proper statistical systems that allow Latin American scholars to process and analyze their data at home. However, many researchers who are used to highly efficient computer systems will take nothing less than the best and constantly return to the United States for this purpose.

*Library Resources* / Although the difference in library resources is great,<sup>9</sup> this is less important to teaching than to research. Updated materials are usually adequate and not too far behind those found in an average North American university library; but back issues and historical materials are amazingly lacking. Latin American libraries hinder, above all, the historically inclined scholar and the comparativist, for even today, libraries are well equipped with national materials but have scarce holdings on *other* Latin American countries. Given the turn of the Latin American social sciences towards a historical-structural approach, as well as a growing concern with Latin America, these library shortcomings become crucial. Most Latin American social scientists, when writing a more ambitious



publication, require a period abroad, with access to a good library.

*Personnel* / There is no difference in the availability of qualified personnel, and, in some cases, the situation in Latin America is better. The geographic location of universities is important in this regard. Latin American scholars make extensive use of immediate (in the same city) external academic and intellectual resources. Thus, before 11 September 1973, the human resources available to scholars in Santiago, Chile, extended far beyond the limits of any one academic institution. There were several international organizations (at one time, sixteen), most of which were *regional* institutions that dealt specifically with Latin America. The number of Latin American students and faculty was extremely high and made Santiago a heaven for anyone interested in studying Latin America as such, in spite of severe computer and library shortcomings. During the past few years, other countries, especially Mexico, have been building a strong human potential on Latin America. Mexico City attracts Latin American scholars of various countries and academic interests whom I deem are far superior to those found anywhere else in the world, including such traditional centers of learning as New York, London, or Paris.<sup>10</sup> Other places, like San José (Costa Rica), Lima, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo, are developing substantial human resources on Latin America, far in excess of what is normally found in an isolated, small town, North American university. I refer to those individuals who are professionally competent and who have had extensive training and experience in one or more Latin American countries.

I feel, however, that the improvement of Latin American institutions is not the sole explanation for the shrinking gap between North American and Latin American institutions. I believe that there has been a sharp deterioration of academic standards in North American universities from the mid-1960s to the present. My very superficial impression is that this stems from several sources: (1) A reduction of funds that seems to have hit the social sciences harder than the exact sciences and, within the social sciences, has weighed heavily on Latin American studies; (2) a shift in the emphasis in many departments from research to teaching and, above all, to undergraduate teaching; (3) the existence of quota systems for minority groups, regardless of training, that have counteracted long-standing distortions in their representation but have had the unwanted effect of lowering academic standards both among faculty and students; (4) the lowering of academic demands, such as language requirements, qualifying exams, M.A. thesis, etc.; (5) the reduction of Latin American studies to a minor area of interest so that each department usually has "its" Latin Americanist but few have two; and (6) a large number of second-rate universities offering higher degrees in the social sciences.

These changes have had a strong impact upon Latin American scholars who are becoming wary of sending their top students to North American universities for further training.<sup>11</sup> Many are recommending that their students attend institutions in England or in France<sup>12</sup> that have more flexible course and other academic requirements for the doctorate. Some institutions are offering the doctorate at home, with a postdoctoral period at a good North American university to make use of the superior library and computer resources.

This course of events has been facilitated by the parochialism of a large number of North American institutions that fail to realize that there are important differences in training and aspirations between a Latin American graduate student and a North American one. Among these, some are extremely important:

1. Individual qualities aside, the serious, beginning Latin American graduate student has had *far more specialized training* in the behavioral sciences than his North American counterpart. By the same token, he knows less about other areas.
2. A master's degree in a Latin American institution takes almost *two* years of continuous academic work, rather than one, and usually requires a thesis. These differences are in *addition to* those of undergraduate training. Thus, it is utterly parochial and formalistic to demand the same course requirements and residence credits for a Latin American graduate student and a North American one.<sup>13</sup>
3. If the purpose of graduate work is to provide the student with the best possible training for his *future* career, rather than a monolithic uniform training regardless of its inadequacy for the student's future, flexibility becomes crucial. Latin American students do not need to know the same things as North American students in order to be proficient in their careers, but need to know others. The refusal to adapt the student's work plan during his stay at the North American university is a result of parochialism, university isolationism, or both, and reflects a view of the university as a self-sufficient institution with the same fixed amount of training to offer all persons in the same department, *regardless of their future needs*. Unfortunately, many of these rulings derive from the graduate schools on which the regulation of graduate programs still heavily depends; more often than not, centers for Latin American studies have little to say in these academic-administrative matters and have been prevented from offering foreign students a training that is more adequate for their future professions.

From the Latin American standpoint, the desirable and inevitable solution to the training dilemma is a doctorate at home. The characteristics of this degree, of course, should be dictated by the country's needs and not extrapolated from other countries. I distinguish four approaches to this problem:

1. The traditional degree-happy institutions that, for decades, have been granting scores of worthless higher degrees, only to have their graduates unemployed and/or enroll for a formally lower degree in another, more serious institution. The pressures against this practice are strong and a few countries, like Brazil, have enacted legislation that forbids un-equipped institutions from granting graduate degrees.
2. New doctoral degrees granted by well-meaning institutions *without* several years of previous experience with a master's program and without adequate personnel. A trend in this direction is apparent in Mexico. These programs are facing serious problems and I feel that they are doomed to fail. A few, like the one offered by UNAM in sociology and political science, have become completely demoralized; others, like the ones in sociology and history at El Colegio de México, are still struggling.
3. Projects to launch a doctoral program after some years of experience with a serious master's degree and a necessary build-up of the faculty. This strategy seems to prevail in Brazil and Peru; some institutions, like the University of Brasilia, are very close to having the necessary conditions for offering a serious doctoral degree (in this instance, in economics and anthropology).
4. Cooperative doctoral degrees that would enable a more rational use of available resources. CLACSO has groups studying this possibility in four countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico), but so far the results have been disheartening.

Latin American scholars trained in the United States and in Europe are coming to grips with the idea that doctoral-level training offered at North American and European universities is inadequate for the requisites of the profession in Latin America. As a result of this growing concern, efforts are being made to build adequate training locally. In some countries, this has certainly been accomplished at the master's level. This, however, is a difficult undertaking due to institutional weaknesses. In addition to inadequate library and computer resources, institutional and political instability are also important factors. During the past decade or so, political instability in several Latin American countries has destroyed a number of academic institutions,<sup>14</sup> interrupting programs and seriously damaging research work.

THE GROWING GAP

Different theoretical developments are moving the formal training of Latin American social scientists and North American social scientists farther and farther apart. At the same time that training on Latin America in the United States retains a pseudo-universalistic perspective, disciplinary work in Latin America takes on a more regional-specific character. An analysis of footnotes in two Latin American political science journals has shown that, during the past ten years, Latin American authors have switched from citing an overwhelming majority of publications by North American colleagues to citing the works of other Latin Americans.<sup>15</sup> These results confirm my own unsystematic observations. Graduate training is now tending to include Latin American materials and authors in reading lists, and is offering a growing number of courses, both in theory and methodology, that are specifically oriented to Latin America.<sup>16</sup> However, the "Latinamericanization" of training lags far behind the "Latin-americanization" of research and writing.

A comparative analysis of articles published in three Latin American social science journals, *América Latina*, *Revista Latinoamericana de Sociología*, and *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, with the *American Sociological Review* and the *Revue Française de Sociologie*, shows that the Latin American ones seldom use the individual person as the unit of analysis, the opposite being true of the *American Sociological Review* and of the *Revue Française de Sociologie*. Clearly, the Latin American journals are more concerned with macrosocial phenomena than with microsocal ones. The data handling techniques vary accordingly. Also, there is greater concern with historical changes in the articles published in the Latin American journals.<sup>17</sup> Another study, of three Brazilian political science journals, gives similar results: These publications place heavy emphasis on aggregate data units, mainly provinces and nations; tend to have a historical approach; and make extensive use of documents as data sources, far more than that usually found in specialized journals in industrial countries.<sup>18</sup>

The available evidence, however unsystematic, leaves the analyst with the clear feeling that there are quite different intellectual trends in the Latin American social sciences. These demand different training programs. If training on Latin America for Latin Americans in Europe and the United States is to continue, sharp changes must take place. Above all, the disciplinary and universality principles must be challenged. This means altering the orientation of interested departments or offering degrees by the Latin American centers.

## THE COMBINATION OF DISCIPLINARY AND AREA TRAINING

It is probably naive, however, to attempt to change the disciplinary principle that underlies the organization of teaching in the standard North American university. The disciplinary principle also prevails outside the university. The few attempts to offer a degree in Latin American studies have failed because graduates could not find suitable jobs, certainly not academic ones. Sociology departments wanted graduates in sociology, not Latin American studies. Thus, the limits of what can be done seem to have been determined by the organizational structure of the universities. It may therefore be necessary to operate *within* this structure; to accept the current departmentalization on the basis of the disciplinary principle and offer more and specialized courses on Latin America within each of the departments. This requires a minimum of three or four Latin American specialists in *each* department who, together, could offer a serious specialization on Latin America, with some six or more different courses in that discipline alone. Given the recent (and justifiable) emphasis on interdisciplinary training, it is important that *other* departments in the same university also have three or four specialists of their own.

All of this would enable departments to offer disciplinary degrees, but focus on Latin America *from the standpoint of that discipline*. This opens the possibility of going beyond the simple disciplinary degree with a "minor" in Latin American studies, that usually translates into three or four courses in *different* departments, with the bulk of the course work still in the traditional and pseudo-universal canons of the discipline.

It could be argued that there are not enough materials for a disciplinary degree oriented towards Latin America. Can we build a program in sociology, for instance, using mainly Latin American materials? I insist that we can. The quality and quantity of published materials on Latin America has increased tremendously during the past decade; only a fraction of these materials is presently used in courses on Latin America in North American universities. There is no doubt that there are, for example, more than enough materials to offer a course on the sociology of rural Latin America or the sociology of urban Latin America (taking for granted that what is usually called urban sociology in the United States should be called sociology of urban North America). The materials published by the Centro de Estudios Urbanos y Regionales (CEUR) of the Instituto Torcuato di Tella or the Centro Interdisciplinario de Desarrollo Urbano (CIDU) in Santiago alone would be more than sufficient to fill the reading requirements of a course in urban sociology, not to mention the materials being published on urban systems in by the Faissol group and many others. As for the sociology of rural Latin America, one could design

one, two, or even more courses with no overlapping of reading materials. It is the same for most development-associated areas. I have myself compiled extensive reading lists for courses on specific aspects of Latin America, and the available materials for each course far exceeded the reading possibilities of my students during a semester. It is obvious to me that the difficulty is *not* the availability of materials, but rather one or more of the following:

1. These materials are mainly available in Spanish or in Portuguese, and not in English.
2. Most North American institutions do not have specialists in these areas. As a consequence, specialized courses (for instance, sociology of urban Latin America) are seldom, if ever, offered. The fact that there are so few trained specialists in each department usually forces them into teaching broader courses, usually of an introductory character.
3. The *demand* for courses at this level of specialization and sophistication is *very limited*.
4. The prevailing belief in various disciplines of the social sciences that existing theories are universal and that departments are training specialists in a universal discipline rather than in a specific one, has prevented most members of the academic community from realizing that a Latin American social scientist is not a social scientist "with an interest" in Latin America. He is not identical to his North American counterpart with the same theory and methodology, who applies the same science to a different area of the world.

Thus, a systematic training program focusing on Latin America seems difficult to bring about. The transition from training in a pseudo-universal science, with an interest in Latin America, to a specific social science of Latin America is crucial. One cannot understand, explain, or predict Latin American politics by applying the same methods, theories, and concepts that have proven valid in North American and Western European politics. Although I am skeptical as to how much can be accomplished, a few steps can be taken that would substantially improve the situation.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Granting that many of the problems affecting Latin American studies simply reflect broader problems at the University and national levels, a few general policy lines can still be drawn. I will not fall into the usual trap of simply recommending more funds, above all because I believe that an

excess of resources has been largely responsible for the low quality of a good deal of the research on Latin America carried out in the United States. Thus, it will be made clear that some allocations should be made at the expense of others.

From the standpoint of cooperative research and adequate graduate training, it is extremely relevant to make better use of available human resources. In accordance with one source, there were 171 Latin American studies programs in Canada, the United States, and Western Europe, 150 of which were in the United States alone.<sup>19</sup> The overwhelming majority of these programs are preposterous and simply lack the human resources needed for creative research and serious teaching. I recommend concentrating on a few promising institutions. The present HEW policy to concentrate on six institutions is a step in that direction; but it appears to me that six still is too high. I believe that this country does not have enough high-quality human resources on Latin America to support more than four or five institutions of the type prescribed in this paper. Ideally, there should be some *reallocation* of highly skilled personnel following this concentration policy, and funds should be provided to attract those now dispersed throughout many institutions in the country. Of special positive interest are departments that would be willing to offer degrees with specialization in Latin America (such as Latin American politics, rather than minors in Latin American studies), etc. At the negative end, the creation and growth of Latin American centers and institutions that do not have a critical mass to start with should be *discouraged*.

Ideally, there should be *interuniversity cooperation towards a degree* that could be officially granted by one or more of the participating institutions. If two or more universities, possibly in the same geographic area, pool their resources in order to offer a doctorate, we would have a better utilization of these resources. This is not likely to happen on a large scale, however, because it involves unprecedented steps at interuniversity cooperation in specific areas and the explicit admission of all participating universities that their capabilities in Latin American studies are insufficient to offer a broad range of choices to students. Obviously, the participation of Latin American institutions in these cooperative projects is highly recommended.

An important step would be a limited number of special scholarships that would enable the student to get his master's at one institution and his doctorate at another, chosen from a list of approved institutions with recognized capability in Latin American studies. These fellowships would be given preferably to students who, as undergraduates, specialized in Latin America. The student should not take his master's and doctorate in the same institution nor should he stay where he did his



undergraduate work. Some universities, like Cornell, have excellent undergraduate training and allow their best undergraduates to take advanced courses dealing with Latin American studies in various departments. However, their best undergraduates, by making use of these facilities as undergraduates, usually nearly exhaust their possibilities before entering graduate school and therefore should pursue graduate studies in another institution. Other institutions, on the contrary, reserve their best offerings for graduate students. I would recommend the implementation of this program on an experimental basis before trying it on a large scale. Some twenty fellowships a year are easy to afford. The participating institutions, of course, must fully recognize all credits obtained under this program and transfer them without any loss to the student; ideally, they should also make some special provisions for greater flexibility in their departmental course and residence requirements. Needless to say, a reading knowledge of Portuguese and Spanish should be required of all students, and preference given to those who had extensive living experience in Latin America.

An improved version of this program would include a master's in a recognized Latin American institution and a Ph.D. in a North American one. Two years of residence in a Latin American country and a study program leading to a master's degree would greatly help in the training of a prospective Latin Americanist. Naturally, the participating institutions from North America must transfer all credit and residence units from the Latin American ones. Also, extreme care is needed in selecting the Latin American institution, for first-rate ones are not numerous. This program should be limited to persons interested in pursuing a career in Latin American studies and willing to stay in Latin America for at least two years, and could be equally useful for the training of Latin Americans in the United States, given: (a) Extreme flexibility that would allow Latin American students to pursue the program best suited to their interests, under the guidance of a Latin Americanist (and not of a disciplinary professional remotely involved with Latin America); and (b) enough manpower concentrated in a few institutions, in order to provide ample choice to the students. I would add a program of postdoctoral fellowships to this program, thus allowing Latin American students who studied elsewhere to benefit from the use of library and computer facilities at some of the best universities in the United States.

To increase the accumulation rather than dispersion of knowledge, I would suggest the creation of *long term*, sustained grants for the study of some specific aspect of Latin America—for example, its agrarian structure, or the economic role of the public sector. Institutions that dedicate themselves to specific problems with a greater cumulativeness than the

average, such as the Land Tenure Center, should be supported. By the same token, *individual* grants to scholars at institutions with limited Latin American capabilities should be reduced. Besides the grants given to established *institutions*, I would recommend grants given to *groups of scholars* firmly interested in some equally well-defined aspect of Latin America so as to enable their members to meet regularly and discuss, plan, and carry out a cumulative research program over a number of years. This could be done within the institutional realm of one of the existing associations for the study of Latin America. It is important that these groups include Latin Americans.

I would shift funding from large-scale, one-shot, expensive research—i.e., comparative surveys in different countries, with thousands of interviews—to continuous, artisan-like research, with much lower costs. The average life of the research project should be increased from what I assume to be, presently, two or three years, to five or six. This type of research is far less expensive but may not be of interest to departments because it finances few graduate students; nevertheless, I believe that its input/output ratio is far lower and that it produces much more intellectually for each dollar spent.

A program of visiting research lectureships for Latin Americans should be established. It is my view that these should be extended, i.e., have a duration of two or more years. It is my experience that several weeks are wasted with travel and living arrangements, to say nothing of the bureaucratic university and immigration requirements in both countries. For many, language and culture still present problems, and the visiting scholar only reaches a satisfactory level of productivity after his first semester. Funding agencies must realize that travel and settling expenditures are very high and that North American universities seldom pay for them. The crucial point of this recommendation is the shift from one year or less to two years or more.<sup>20</sup>

As a Latin American, I believe that the development of a research and training capacity in Latin America is a necessity—academic, political, and otherwise. Nevertheless, due to strong differences in library facilities, for some time to come many Latin Americans will continue to study in the United States. These recommendations aim at improving their training. Furthermore, I share the enlightenment bias that knowledge and understanding are good deterrents against aggression and hostility. Given the outrageous character of United States-Latin American relations in the past, I can only hope that the heightened quality of training in and research on Latin America in this country will contribute to bringing about an improvement in those relations.

NOTES

1. Several Latin Americans have insisted on the specificity of the Latin American experience and have openly rejected the plain extrapolation of "universal" theories and methodology to Latin America. Among them are Anibal Pinto and Oswaldo Sunkel, "Latin American Economists in the United States," in *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 15 (October 1966):79–86; and Antonio García, *Atrazo y dependencia en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial El Ateneo, 1972), especially chap. 1. Theotonio dos Santos, although keeping himself within the Marxist framework, has also voiced similar criticisms in "El nuevo carácter de la dependencia," in *La crisis del desarrollismo y el nuevo carácter de la dependencia*, ed. José Matos Mar (Buenos Aires: Amorrortu, 1972), pp. 11–13, as does Marcos Kaplan in the introductory pages of *Formación del estado nacional en América Latina* (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1969). See also my "La nueva industrialización y el sistema político Brasileño," in *América Latina: Ensayos de interpretación sociológico-política*, eds. Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Francisco Weffort (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1970), pp. 363–85.
2. Evidence of this is given by the fact that 84.5 percent of the United States anthropologists included in a study claimed an area of specialization, as opposed to only 5.5 percent of the economists. See Richard D. Lambert, *Language and Area Studies Review*, The American Academy of Political and Social Science, Monograph 17 (Philadelphia: October 1973).
3. This explains why, in 1970, *The National Directory of Latin Americanists* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, Reference Department, 1971) considered that there were "2,695 persons in the United States whose experience and professional training qualify them as specialists in the Latin American field." These figures include only permanent residents of the United States.
4. The well-trained Latin American, who also knows a great deal about other Latin American countries is a phenomenon of the past fifteen years.
5. As of 1972, there were the following groups: Science, technology, and development; urban and regional development; education and development; dependency studies; rural studies; economic history, national development, and integration; development and population; special regional program in the social sciences; cultural development; labor movements; and employment and unemployment.
6. Their unchallenged leadership in scientific accomplishment has led many observers to believe that United States universities are extremely efficient. I challenge this belief: When one takes into account the differences in overall expenditures, universities in the United States may turn out to be rather inefficient.
7. By secondary I mean universities that are not ranked among the top twenty in overall academic and scientific achievement.
8. Several informative papers on the state of graduate teaching and research in the social sciences in Latin America were published recently in vol. 34 of the *Revista mexicana de sociología* (1972).
9. The difference in scale is impressive. For instance, Cornell University libraries add yearly to their collections approximately the total number of volumes in existence at the University of Brasilia's library.
10. There are suggestions, however, that consultation with and use of these human resources are far less extensive than they were in Santiago. Furthermore, the closed character of several Mexican academic institutions and the country's ethnocentrism and restrictive immigration laws place narrow limits on its role as an academic center for the region.
11. It is important to realize that the benign image that the critical Latin American scholar had of his North American colleague as "a good and serious scholar with the wrong theory" is being replaced by a deprecatory view.
12. Academic institutions in these countries are not without serious problems, and this is not the place to elaborate on them. But, given the state of Latin American studies in the United States, if it were not for these problems and financing difficulties (there is far

- more abundant financing for study in the United States), there probably would be a massive shift of Latin American students from the United States to Europe.
13. Obviously, I am referring here to students who graduated from a relatively small number of serious institutions in a few Latin American countries.
  14. The well known instability of Latin American academic institutions, particularly those concerned with the behavioral sciences, has been the focus of much concern. Several years ago some Latin American social scientists, myself included, were trying to build a permanent "emergency" fund that would allow any researcher subject to political prosecution and harassment simply to pack his materials and continue his work in another country and institution of his choice. The problem of academic instability in Latin America has been analyzed by Marcos Kaplan in "Vulnerabilidad de los centros de investigación en ciencias sociales: El caso de América Latina" (Working paper presented to the General Assembly of CLACSO, Mexico, November 1972).
  15. See Sonia Naves Amorim and Ivany Neiva Gonzalez "Comparação entre duas revistas de ciência política: Dados e RLCP" (Unpublished paper, University of Brasilia, 1973).
  16. Obviously, there is not a "Latin American methodology," but the research methods that are of greater use in analyzing the problems that Latin American scholars deem more important are definitely different from those that are popular in the United States. To provide a few examples: One cannot use telephone inquiries or mail questionnaires in countries where only a few have telephones and the majority of the population is illiterate, if the purpose is to reach a representative sample of the national population; given that Latin American social science is historically inclined, techniques for handling archival and documentary evidence are very important; since most historical series are incomplete, techniques for handling missing data become crucial.
  17. See E. R. Herrera, "Cinco revistas de sociología: Un estudio comparativo," *Revista latinoamericana de sociología* 70/1-6 (March 1970).
  18. Carlos Eduardo Baesse de Souza, *Contribuição a uma sociologia de ciência política no Brasil* (Master's thesis, Brasilia, 1973).
  19. See International Council for Educational Development, *Area Studies on U.S. and Canadian Campuses: A Directory* (New York, 1972).
  20. This program would operate best under an interuniversity agreement. Extended visits may hinder the visiting scholar under present circumstances: Pension plans, residence for sabbatical leaves, and continuing insurance are some of the problems involved.