

EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Recent trends in Latin American scholarship have increasingly highlighted the fragility of social institutions. Whether the subject is the breakdown of tributary systems in postconquest Peru, the changing character of the family in nineteenth-century Argentina, the rise and fall of regional elites producing export commodities in Brazil or the Caribbean, the disintegration of Batista's armed forces in Cuba, the replacement of Chilean democracy by dictatorship, the near-collapse of the Argentine banking system, or the reemergence of democracy on the Atlantic littoral of South America, contemporary scholarship now focuses on the conditional character of institutions rather than on their permanence. The fashionable term in Spanish to describe the current preoccupation is *coyuntura*; unfortunately, the English cognate *conjuncture* is far less felicitous.

This emphasis on the conditionality of social life in Latin America follows the concern with underlying social structures that characterized scholarly trends in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The various schools of thought that moved scholarship in a structuralist direction, such as *cepalista* economics, dependency theory, and French neo-Marxism, tended to emphasize the constants and constraints of Latin American social formations. Today, viewing the wreckage left by military efforts to reverse the economic and political consequences of a half-century of import-substitution development and left by the debt disaster of the "dance of the billions" between lending institutions and borrowers, Latinamericanists are now sadder, if not necessarily wiser, in their assessments of what can and cannot be taken for granted.

The contingencies that affect social institutions in Latin America are echoed in the contingencies that underlie the survival of both *LARR* and the Latin American Studies Association (LASA). A continuing concern of both LASA officers and *LARR* editors is that the institutional and interpersonal linkages supporting Latin American scholarship not be ruptured by the policy misadventures of governments. Another concern is that essential support for Latin American studies provided by educational and philanthropic institutions not be prejudiced for political or economic reasons.

These thoughts are occasioned by the recent move of the LASA Secretariat from the University of Texas to the University of Pittsburgh. The survival of LASA as a professional association, and hence the survival of *LARR* as the journal of this association, cannot be taken for

granted any more than the survival of other inter-American institutions. The University of Texas has provided an extraordinary service by being the first university to host *LARR* and by their recent strong support for the LASA Secretariat. Without the commitment of William P. Glade, Director of the Institute of Latin American Studies at Texas, and the energetic leadership of Richard N. Sinkin, the past Executive Director of LASA, neither the association nor the journal would have its current vitality. The willingness of the University of Pittsburgh and new LASA Executive Director Reid Reading to shoulder the responsibility for the Secretariat for the coming half-decade augers well for LASA's future, despite the fragilities already noted.

It has been customary in recent years for *LARR* to report on the status of manuscript submissions in the final number of each volume. This year's report reflects a number of changes from the pattern of the previous report. In terms of calendar years, 1985 saw the submission of 139 manuscripts, as compared with 160 manuscripts in 1984, 132 in 1983, and 110 in 1982. The precipitous growth in submissions reported previously seems therefore to have been at least moderately reversed. For the year running from July 1985 to July 1986, 143 manuscripts were submitted at more or less the same rate as during the 1985 calendar year.

Twenty-four percent of the manuscripts evaluated came from outside the United States, as compared with 22 percent for the preceding report period. Of these non-U.S. manuscripts, 43 percent were submitted from Latin America, a drop from 58 percent in the previous report. The 57 percent from other nations included submissions from Canada, Great Britain, Germany, Spain, France, the Netherlands, Austria, Australia, and Israel. Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian authors submitted 27 percent of all manuscripts. It is interesting to note that submissions by women increased from 17 percent of all manuscripts to 24 percent in the current report period.

With respect to disciplines, political science retained its traditional first ranking with 27 percent of total submissions. History submissions continued their growth trend, returning to second place with 24 percent of the total. Sociology submissions recovered from their previous decline to regain third place with 13 percent, narrowly edging out economics, which accounted for 12 percent. The percentages of manuscripts representing languages and literature and anthropology dropped slightly to 8 percent and 5 percent respectively. Other fields, such as geography, education, and communications, comprised 11 percent of total submissions.

DISCIPLINE	July 85– June 86	May 84– June 85	Feb. 83– April 84
Political Science	27%	26%	29%
History	24	18	12
Sociology	13	8	16
Economics	12	18	13
Languages and Literature	8	10	9
Anthropology	5	9	6
Other fields	11	11	15
	100%	100%	100%

The downward trend in submissions fortunately appears to have been accompanied by an increase in quality. Of the total of 143 submissions, 33 were accepted book review essays. The remaining 110 submissions entered the review process. By mid-June 1986, 14 of these manuscripts were accepted for publication, 66 had been rejected, 2 were withdrawn, and 28 are still in process. Of the 80 manuscripts for which the review process reached completion (those either accepted or rejected), the rate of acceptance was 18 percent, as compared with 12 percent for our last manuscript report. Given the higher acceptance rate among manuscripts still in process, many of which are undergoing revision at the request of the editors, it can be estimated that the acceptance rate for manuscripts (excluding book review essays) is running slightly over 20 percent, or about one out of every five submissions.

The editors continue to emphasize the peer-review process, which depends on the goodwill and free labor of our many anonymous referees, and on the hard work of our distinguished Editorial Board. Without such cooperation, *LARR* could not maintain its quality. We are most grateful for their collaboration and support.

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