

Twenty Years of Publications by the Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers: Regional Foci, Thematic Content, and Authorship

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ABSTRACT

In the twenty years since the founding of the Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers, the organization has sponsored the publication of seventeen volumes. These include conference proceedings, special thematic publications, and the *CLAG Yearbook*. This study examines that publication effort from three perspectives. It documents the thematic content of article publication identifying overall patterns and temporal trends. Similarly, the geographic foci of research activity is presented by both country and region within Latin America. Finally, the research productivity of individuals in CLAG publications is noted. The paper concludes with observations about specific lacunae in the thematic and regional foci of geographic research in Latin America as reflected in these publications.

In 1990 the Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers (CLAG) celebrated its twentieth anniversary. The inaugural convocation in 1970 in Muncie, Indiana, brought a large contingent of geographers together to focus interests and research on Latin America. From the papers presented at that meeting, the first of what would be a succession of publications emerged. These showcased CLAG's academic efforts on the region over the next two decades. Eighteen publications have been produced since 1971 including the initial publication *Geographic Research on Latin America, Benchmark 1970* (Table 1).^(*) Geographic interests of CLAG members are varied but the unifying element for all is a consuming interest in Latin America. The authors of this paper sought to chronicle the thematic and regional preferences of those papers published in CLAG publications during the organization's twenty year history.

METHODOLOGY

The table of contents of all CLAG publications were scrutinized to document the cumulative nature of regional and thematic interests over the past two decades. Paper titles were utilized to categorize their regional and thematic characteristics. No effort was made to assess the content of articles other than by using the paper's title. Information gleaned from paper titles was divided into categories by region and/or country, thematic content, and authors' names.

Papers are categorized by sub-region or country. It seemed best to group some countries into sub-regions while at the same time considering others singly. Davidson (1980) in his *Geographical Research on Latin America* employed a similar sort of categorization. The major sub-regions used here are the Caribbean, Middle America, Andean, the Guianas, the Southern Cone, and South America. Two countries, Brazil and Mexico, are not included in specific sub-regions but are kept separate because of the amount of interest authors have shown these two. When a title indicated no special focus or listed just a Latin American theme in general, it was placed in the general category. In twenty years, 333 articles have appeared in CLAG's publications. The relationship of the regional and country categorizations is shown in Table 2.^(**)

Six major thematic groupings are used to classify the thematic content of CLAG publications. The approach is fairly traditional for identifying geography's major subfields. These include physical, economic, and cultural as well as three additional categories, methodology, education, and miscellaneous. The education category refers specifically to research or reviews on how to teach about Latin America while the miscellaneous group

represents a catch-all for papers which could not be adequately classified otherwise.

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Table 1: Research Publications of the Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers

Year	Publication Title	Editors
1971	Geographic Research on Latin America: Benchmark 1970	Lentnek, Carmin, and Martinson
1973	Population Dynamics of Latin America	Thomas
1973	Latin American Development Issues	Hill
1975	Geographical Analysis for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean	Momsen
1976	Latin America: Search for Geographic Explanations	Tata
1977	International Aspects of Development in Latin America: Geographical Perspectives	Elbow
1978	The Role of Geographical Research in Latin America; Part One: English Presentations	Denevan
1980	Función de la Investigación en la América Latina; Part Two: Spanish and Portuguese Presentations	Rucinke
1981	Geographic Research on Latin America: Benchmark 1980	Martinson and Elbow
1981	Papers in Latin American Geography in Honor of Lucia D. Harrison	Horst
1982	New Themes in Instruction for Latin American Geography	Horst and Stoltman
1983	Contemporary Issues in Latin American Geography	Lentnek
1984	CLAG Yearbook 1984	Kvale
1985	CLAG Yearbook 1985	Pulsipher
1986	CLAG Yearbook 1986	Clawson
1987	CLAG Yearbook 1987	Works
1990	CLAG Yearbook 1988	Martinson, Longwell, and Denevan
1990	CLAG Yearbook 1989	Kent and Harnapp

Table 2: Regional Focus of Articles in CLAG Publications, 1970-1990

	Number of Articles	Percent of Total
Latin America (General)	155	46.5
Middle America (General)	9	2.7
Honduras	7	2.0
Costa Rica	6	1.8
Guatemala	5	1.5
Panama	4	1.2
El Salvador	1	0.3
Belize	1	0.3
Mexico	29	8.7
Caribbean (General)	19	5.7
Puerto Rico	4	1.2
Trinidad/Tobago	3	0.9
Jamaica	2	0.6
Barbados	1	0.3
Dom. Republic	1	0.3
Bahamas	1	0.3
St. Lucia	1	0.3
St. Vincent	1	0.3

Cuba	1	0.3
South America (General)	1	0.3
Peru	11	3.0
Colombia	7	2.0
Argentina	6	1.8
Ecuador	4	1.2
Chile	4	1.2
Bolivia	3	0.9
Guyana	3	0.9
Venezuela	3	0.9
Brazil	<u>40</u>	<u>12.0</u>
Total	333	99.4

* Not equal to 100 percent due to rounding

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Table 3: Thematic Content of Articles in CLAG Publications 1970-1990

	Number of Articles	Percent of Total
Methodology		
Cartography/Remote Sensing	10	3.0
Statistical Techniques/Research Directions/Biographical	<u>24</u>	<u>7.2</u>
	34	10.2
Education	7	2.1
Physical		
Ecology-Environmental Problems - Pollution - Hazards	17	5.1
Biogeography	10	3.0
Geomorphology-Hydrology	9	2.7
Climatology	<u>2</u>	<u>11.4</u>
	38	22.2
Economic		
Extractive	9	2.7
Agriculture and Farming	45	13.5
Trade and Marketing	10	3.0
Economic Development and Regional Planning	30	9.0
Urban	23	6.9
Industrial	9	2.7
Transportation	<u>5</u>	<u>1.5</u>
	131	39.3
Cultural		
Aboriginal-Indigenous-Pre-Historic	14	4.2
Historical	2	0.6
Population-Migration-Settlement	48	14.4
Political	20	6.0
Tourism/Recreation	13	3.9
Health-Diet-Nutrition	8	2.4

Religion	<u>2</u>	<u>0.6</u>
	107	32.1
Miscellaneous	<u>16</u>	<u>4.8</u>
Total	333	99.9

The appropriateness of these particular categories and subcategories for classifying thematic content is surely open to some debate. However, similar schemes have been used with relative success in other studies seeking to analyze or categorize the content of geographic research and publication (Kent and Tobias 1990; Noble and Harnapp 1983).

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Four of the thematic content categories are further divided into a total of 20 subcategories. Methodology is divided into two subcategories, cartography/remote sensing and statistical techniques/research directions/biography. The physical category is subdivided into ecology/environmental problems/hazards/pollution, biogeography, geomorphology/hydrology, and climatology. The subcategories for the economic and cultural thematic categories are the most numerous, seven each. The economic category is comprised of subcategories for extractive, agriculture/farming, trade and marketing, economic development and regional planning, urban, industrial, and transportation. Aboriginal/indigenous/prehistoric, historical, population/migration/settlement, political, tourism/recreation, health/diet/ nutrition, and religion represent the subcategories within the cultural category. The thematic categories and subcategories are listed in Table 3.

RESULTS

Regional Foci

The categorization by sub-region or country is seen in Figure 1. It seemed best to group some countries into sub-regions while at the same time considering others singly. The Caribbean, Middle America, Southern Cone, Andean countries and Guianas formed coherent groups. As mentioned previously, Brazil and Mexico were kept separate.

At a regional level the following countries were most important. In Middle America, Honduras, Costa Rica, and Guatemala each accounted for nearly two percent of total articles in two decades. In the Caribbean, Puerto Rico, Trinidad/Tobago, and Jamaica were the top three with 1.2 percent, 0.9 percent, and 0.6 percent, respectively, of total articles. Finally, in South America, Peru, Colombia, and Argentina -- after Brazil -- were the most frequently written about with 3.0 percent, 2.0 percent, and 1.8 percent, respectively, of all articles.

Nearly half the articles are on topics about Latin America in general with the other half being more place specific. To refine this further individual countries were considered (Figure 1). In the Middle America/Mexico realm, Mexico was written about 29 times. This may not be surprising given the juxtaposition of the United States and Mexico and the high amount of interaction. There were 7 articles on Honduras, 6 on Costa Rica, and so on. It is interesting to note that in two decades of publishing there is not one article specifically devoted to Nicaragua.

By comparison with Mexico and Middle America, the Caribbean received somewhat less scrutiny (Table 2).^(**) The Caribbean in general was most frequently written about with 19 entries followed by Puerto Rico with 4, Trinidad/Tobago with 3, and then several with just one article. However, Cuba being the largest and most populous island in the Caribbean had only one entry, the same as tiny St. Vincent or St. Lucia, for example. It is obvious that political realities in Cuba have stifled field excursions there since 1959 and other data are hard to acquire, but we had expected that it would have gotten more attention than it did.

The final area of investigation was South America (Figure 1).^(1*)

On the continent Brazil gained attention more frequently than any other country, nearly as much as all the others combined. Peru was the next most popular country for research and publication, followed by Colombia and Argentina.

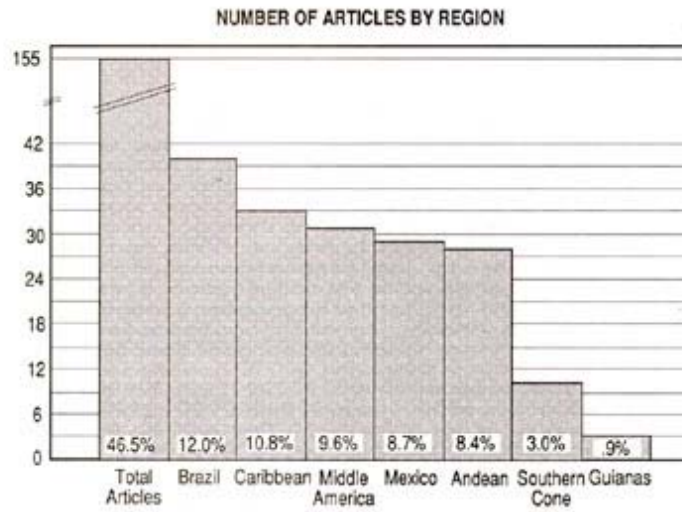
Latin Americans and Latin American issues in North America received scant attention. Only four papers, around one percent, examined such themes. Considering the historic importance of Mexico and Mexicans in the United States, the large numbers of Hispanic-Americans, and the flood of recent migrants from Guatemala and El Salvador, this is somewhat surprising.

Thematic Content

The contents of CLAG's publications during the past 20 years has been dominated by papers on economic and cultural topics. Together these two thematic categories account for over 70 percent of all published papers (Figure 2). Economic themes command first place with nearly 40 percent of the total followed closely by cultural topics representing 32 percent. Papers on physical geography and methodology issues place a distant third and fourth in the rankings with 11 and 10 percent of the content, respectively. Accounting for a small proportion of all published papers, the miscellaneous and education categories represent only five and two percent, respectively.

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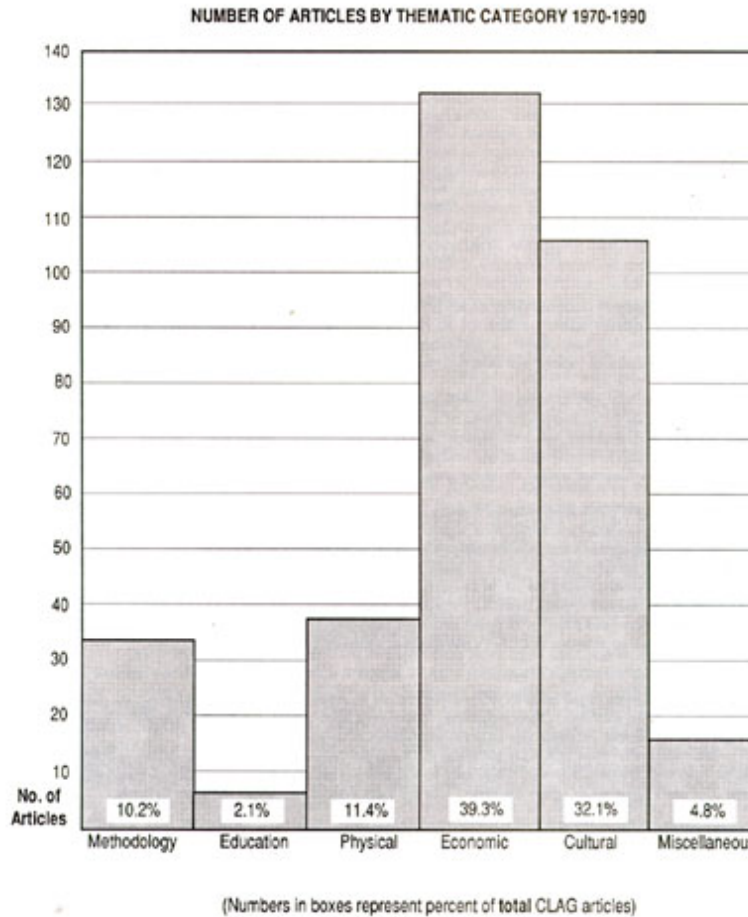
Figure 1



(Numbers in boxes represent percent of total CLAG articles)

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Figure 2



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The economic category is dominated by papers falling in the subcategories of agriculture/farming, regional planning/economic development, and urban, with 45, 30, and 23 papers published in the corresponding categories. Considerably less attention has been placed on publication on extractive, trade, and marketing, industrial, and transportation. No more than 10 papers have been published in any of these thematic subcategories during the 20 year period studied.

The thematic subcategory focusing on population/migration/ settlement dominates the content of those papers in the cultural category, accounting for a total of 48 published papers, well over twice as many as any other subcategory. Four subcategories received modest attention over the 20 year span, political, aboriginal/indigenous/pre-historic, tourism/recreation, and health/diet/nutrition, with 20, 14, 13, and 8 papers, respectively. Few published papers on historical geography or the geography of religion in Latin America appeared, only 2 in each subcategory.

Physical geography publication reflected a predominance of studies on the broadly defined subcategory of ecology/environmental problems/hazards/pollution with a total of 17 papers.

Nevertheless, writers also paid significant attention to biogeography and geomorphology/hydrology, publishing 10 and 9 papers in each subcategory, respectively. Almost no attention has been given to issues related to climatology in CLAG publications, with only 2 papers having been published during the 20 year period.

Publication on methodological issues is focused primarily on the research methods/statistical techniques/biography subcategory and a total of 24 papers have been published on these topics. Cartography and remote sensing have received modest attention in CLAG's publications, a total of 10 papers.

Authorship

Some comments on authorship of papers in CLAG publications can be made. In 20 years of publishing, the names of 260 people appear, some only once, others repeatedly. Whenever a name appeared as being a contributor, it was so noted regardless of whether the paper was authored individually or co-authored.

The individuals who most frequently published in CLAG are listed in Table 4. Eight authors published four or more times over the past 20 years. There may be a correlation between longevity in CLAG membership and frequency of one's name on an article masthead. The top eight authors are charter members of CLAG.

Table 4: Authors Most Frequently Published in CLAG 1970-1990

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Number of Times</u>
(1)	Carl Johannessen	6
(2)	Robert Thomas	5
(3)	William Denevan	5
(4=)	James Parsons	4
(4=)	Barry Lentnek	4
(4=)	Donald Hoy	4
(4=)	Josh Dickinson	4
(4=)	John Augelli	4

CONCLUSIONS

In evaluating these data two caveats are necessary. First, it is useful to reiterate that these data mirror only the efforts of those writing in CLAG's publications and hence cannot be projected or used as a surrogate for the publication efforts of Latin Americanist geographers in general. Second, the approaches to regional and thematic [end p. 356] categorization employed here reflect the authors' own idiosyncratic view of the Latin American regions and the thematic structure of geographic study. Nearly half of those papers published in CLAG's publications focus on "Latin America" as a whole. This generic Latin American focus may be attributable to the survey nature of several of CLAG's publications, notably the Benchmark volumes published

every ten years. Fully one-quarter of those papers surveyed came from the two Benchmark volumes published in 1970 and 1980. The predominance of titles with a general Latin American focus may reflect some author's efforts to exaggerate the significance of their paper with a broad title rather than providing a more accurate title indicating the fact that the paper may actually be a case study or other more narrowly focused piece.

While many papers have the broadly framed Latin American focus more specific regional foci are not nearly as common. About 6 percent of the papers focused on the Caribbean region as a whole while slightly less than three percent examined problems related to the Central American isthmus. Surprisingly only one paper (0.3 percent) considered all of South America as a region, and no papers centered on smaller regional areas on the continent such as the Andean region, the Guianas, or the Southern Cone.

Overall there is a strong focus on Latin American regions close to the United States. Almost 30 percent of all papers focus on Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. It seems apparent that proximity, reduced travel costs, and greater interaction have been strong influences in directing geographic studies to these areas. Nevertheless, Brazil is well represented in the papers published in CLAG's publication, with 12 percent of the total.

The influence of distance and travel costs are more fully borne out when the southern half of South America is considered. Coverage of Argentina, Chile, and Bolivia is thin: six, four, and three articles, respectively. No papers were published on Paraguay or Uruguay. Yet, curiously, some other areas closer to North America have received very little attention: El Salvador and Cuba with one paper each, and nothing has been published in CLAG publications on Nicaragua.

A brief comparison of this study with Davidson's (1980) survey of master's theses and doctoral dissertations is instructive. It shows that in both instances Brazil and Mexico were the dominant regional foci. Similarly, in the Caribbean region, Puerto Rico received the greatest coverage in the two studies. On the other hand, in Central America, Davidson's study found Guatemala to be the most popular country for graduate research, while in this review of published papers, Honduras dominated. In South America, both studies showed Peru and Colombia as the most studied countries after Brazil. It is apparent, and not unexpected, that research and publication after graduate school training mirrors early training.

The overall pattern of thematic emphasis is not surprising, and indeed it represents a fairly traditional pattern in American geography. This is demonstrated by a strong focus on economic geography with cultural geography running a close second and physical geography a very distant third. A study of the thematic publication foci of British or Latin American geographers writing on Latin America would very likely result in a somewhat different pattern with much less emphasis on cultural topics and a greater focus on physical geography.

What is notable with regard to the thematic focus of the papers published in CLAG's publications is that three subcategories, agriculture, economic development and planning, and population, represent nearly 40 percent of the total. Conversely, two sub-categories for which one might expect greater emphasis, historical and climatology, each accounted for only about

half of one percent of the total.

This review of the contents of CLAG's publications raises some additional questions. For instance, are the thematic paradigms or regional foci reflected in CLAG's publications significantly different from those found in the other kinds of publications in which Latin Americanist geographers publish? What kind of patterns might one encounter in an analysis of papers focusing on Latin America in major geography journals in North America, in British journals, in international English language journals, or in Spanish language geographical journals? Has the availability and type of research funding had a notable impact on the publication output of Latin Americanist geographers in North America? During the 1950s and 1960s the Office of Naval Research played a major role in getting American geographers into Latin America and may have affected their research agendas (Pruitt 1965). Have other organizations such as USAID played similar roles in the 1970s and 1980s? Finally, it could be instructive to examine how graduate school training and mentoring, particularly at the doctoral level, have and will continue to influence the agenda and directions of geographers' research on Latin America.

It seems unlikely that we can expect significant changes in the thematic and regional foci of the research of Latin Americanist geographers in the next decade and perhaps even within the next two decades. A major factor is that the pool of present and future workers is relatively limited. Simply put, there are few Latin Americanist **[end p. 357]** geographers and our numbers seem to be on the decline (Knapp 1985:21; Robinson 1989:489; Robinson and Long 1989:306-307). It also seems that in the last two decades outside funding has played and will continue to play a relatively minor role in dictating research directions and projects. This suggests that Latin Americanist geographers may be somewhat insulated from some of the more "timely" or burning issues of the day that are likely to receive funding from development agencies, national governments, or even private industry. Geographers may also be somewhat isolated from other scholars studying Latin America. The latest edition of the *Handbook and Membership Directory, 1984-1985* of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA 1985) only listed about 40 geographers among its membership and geographers seem to have published infrequently in the *Latin American Research Review* and other interdisciplinary scholarly journals focusing on Latin America (Robinson and Long 1989:306).

We suggest that the dominant factor in determining the future research directions of Latin Americanist geographers will be the training and mentoring they receive in graduate school, primarily at the doctoral level. There are comparatively few geography departments, perhaps five, with active records of producing Latin Americanist geographers and this number is not likely to change significantly in the future. Thus, it is probable that a handful of faculty members at these institutions will train the vast majority of the future Latin Americanist geographers. Their research interests, priorities and methodologies will likely determine the directions of Latin Americanist geographers' research for many years. A quick review of our own academic history illustrates the enduring influence of a few individuals on the current directions of Latin Americanist geographic research. Carl Sauer is of course the prime example. Generations of his students and their students still play a very prominent role in training Latin Americanist geographers (West 1981).

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