

Research Note

Scholarly Research on U.S.-Latin American Relations: Where Does the Field Stand?

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ABSTRACT

This article draws on a new dataset to depict the scope, objectives, and methods of research in the field of U.S.-Latin American relations over the past quarter-century. The key findings are that the study of U.S.-Latin American relations focuses largely on foreign policy analysis, is mainly descriptive, relies overwhelmingly on qualitative methods, and is fairly detached from the main research trends in international relations. In light of this assessment, the article emphasizes the need to pay more attention to issues of theory development and explanation in this subfield of international relations.

This article focuses on, and presents an assessment of, the academic field of U.S.-Latin American relations.¹ The analysis, based on works published during the period 1989 to 2008, seeks to shed light on the empirical content, purpose, and methodology of research on U.S.-Latin American relations. It is concerned with three key questions about the contributions of this field of studies to knowledge: knowledge about what? knowledge for what? and how has knowledge been generated?

The assessment is based on an analysis of journal articles published in 15 leading international relations (IR) and area studies journals: *International Organization*, *International Security*, *World Politics*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *Review of International Studies*, *Review of International Political Economy*, *Journal of Latin American Studies*, *Latin American Politics and Society*, *Latin American Research Review*, *Foro Internacional*, *Desarrollo Económico*, *Estudios Internacionales*, *Contexto Internacional*, *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, and *Análisis Político*—and of nonedited books identified through a perusal of reading lists of U.S. professors and review essays.² In all, 341 works were selected (174 articles and 167 nonedited books) and coded along the lines of 19 variables.³

The limitations of this sample should be noted. Research on U.S.-Latin American relations appears in a myriad of journals in history, economics, and other political science outlets, as well as in edited books catalogued under a variety of topics. It

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would be ideal to know the universe of works on the matter and to have included works from those sources. However, I know of no way to locate all the relevant articles and nonedited books produced by scholars interested in the study of U.S.-Latin American relations. Therefore I use a sample of the universe of work in the field that, although limited, does include publications from seven different countries in three different languages. Admittedly, the U.S.-Latin American relations research published in other outlets could diverge systematically from the sources I review. Nonetheless, the works herein considered are published in what are widely regarded as the leading sources that set the collective standards for IR research in general and the study of U.S.-Latin American relations in particular.⁴ Thus, my choice of journals and books is suited to the goal of providing a characterization and assessment of the current state of research on U.S.-Latin American relations.

This analysis, it bears highlighting, is not conducted in a vacuum. Rather, it places the study of U.S.-Latin American relations in the context of IR, the disciplinary domain to which this research largely belongs. It explicitly analyzes patterns in the study of U.S.-Latin American relations from the perspective of the salient substantive, theoretical, and methodological trends over the last quarter-century in IR (and, where appropriate, in the neighboring field of comparative politics).⁵ A major goal in amassing this information is to advance some proposals regarding the possible redirection of research on U.S.-Latin American relations in ways that could most enhance the study and intellectual rigor of this subfield.

The article is organized as follows. First, it presents an overview of the scope of research on U.S.-Latin American relations. To this end, the literature is characterized in terms of the subject matter or issues it covers; where relevant, information about the empirical scope or cases studied is provided, and research patterns of U.S.-based scholars and Latin American-based scholars are compared. To place this literature in context, trends in world politics and research in the fields of IR and comparative politics are considered.

The article then explores the objectives and methods of research on U.S.-Latin American relations. It makes a distinction between research objectives based on theory generation and those most concerned with empirical analysis. It also classifies the works at hand according to whether they are “descriptive,” “causal,” or “prescriptive.” Descriptive research advances propositions about what the state of the world is; causal research articulates propositions about why the world is as it is; and prescriptive research argues how the world should be. This analysis of research methods discerns between qualitative and quantitative methods of empirical analysis.

Third, the article identifies opportunities for the future advancement of the study of U.S.-Latin American relations. In doing so, it highlights the fruitful but still latent convergence of substantive interests between U.S.-Latin American relations studies and IR research. Moreover, it considers whether a new research agenda in this subfield is in the making by emphasizing some works that exemplify the combined focus on theory and explanation that, the data show, is largely lacking in this literature. The findings are summarized and the suggestion is made that the challenges facing the study of U.S.-Latin American relations are not insuperable hurdles.

A central argument of this assessment is that certain changes in research practices are needed for this field to live up to its potential. In particular, students of U.S.-Latin American relations have been slow to contribute to the generation of theories and explanations, as opposed to descriptions. This article is not meant to detract from the considerable achievements that have already been made regarding the description of substantive policy issues of U.S. and Latin American foreign policies. Nonetheless, it seems likely that future payoffs in this subfield will require closer attention to explaining and theorizing, versus simply describing, the phenomenon of U.S.-Latin American relations in the twenty-first century. This said, the need to explain and theorize is emphasized more as a means of furthering current understandings of U.S.-Latin American relations, bringing U.S.-Latin American relations studies closer to IR, and helping to establish a mutually beneficial empirical and theoretical exchange among scholars interested in international relations in general and U.S.-Latin American relations in particular.

SUBSTANTIVE AND EMPIRICAL SCOPE

This section maps the subfield of U.S.-Latin American relations by addressing the substantive and empirical body of research included in my database. The substantive dimension pertains to research questions addressed by students of U.S.-Latin American relations, whereas the empirical dimension pertains to the spatial and temporal range of work on U.S.-Latin American relations.

Subject Matter: Some Gaps and Missed Opportunities

Students of U.S.-Latin American relations have focused on an array of subject matters and research questions. Nonetheless, an overwhelmingly large number of articles and nonedited books focus on the study of foreign policy. Indeed, 94.6 percent of the scholarly works produced since the end of the Cold War are foreign policy analyses. Less attention has been devoted to international political economy (IPE) and intermestic issues—only 26.3 percent and 16 percent of the works published, respectively, focus on these subjects. The study of security, broadly defined, is also a relatively overlooked issue in U.S.-Latin American research (see table 1).

The fact that 26.3 percent of articles and books focus on IPE might appear to underestimate the extent to which the literature on U.S.-Latin American relations is concerned with IPE. After all, the implementation of Washington Consensus policies throughout Latin America and the move toward free trade schemes, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), during the 1990s stirred a lot of debate in the Americas. And readers might wonder whether this low number is due to the exclusion of outlets that focus attention on IPE from the sample used in this study. But this is actually not the case. In fact, the top three IPE journals (*International Organization*, *World Politics*, and *International Studies Quarterly*), which together account for almost 70 percent of all IPE research published in IR scholarly journals, are included in this assessment (Maliniak and Tierney 2009, 13). And, it should be noted, the remaining

Table 1. Knowledge About What? I:
The Substantive Scope of U.S.-Latin American Relations Research

Subject Matter	Articles (%)	Books (%)	Both (%)
Foreign policy analysis	88.2	101	94.6
U.S.-Latin American foreign policies toward each other	42.3	60.9	51.4
U.S. foreign policy toward Latin American countries	34.7	40.1	37.5
Latin American and Caribbean countries foreign policies toward the U.S.	11.2	—	5.7
IPE	38.2	13.4	26.3
Economic integration/regionalism	22.9	7.7	15.5
Trade	11.4	2.3	7.0
Economic Development	2.8	1.7	2.3
Economic sanctions	—	1.7	0.9
Latin America's debt crisis	1.1	—	0.6
Intermestic issues	17.1	14.7	16.0
Drugs	10.9	4.2	7.6
Migration	2.8	8.9	5.8
Environment	3.4	1.1	2.3
Energy	—	0.5	0.3
Other issues	14.2	9.1	11.5
Nonstate actors	7.5	4.7	6.1
Democratization/Democracy	2.3	2.9	2.6
Transnational Actors	3.4	—	1.7
Structure of the International System (i.e., anarchy plus polarity)	0.5	0.5	0.5
Human Rights	—	0.5	0.2
Anti-Americanism	—	0.5	0.2
Public Opinion	0.5	—	0.2
Security	14.1	6.2	10.4
Security broadly defined (i.e., U.S.-L.A.'s security agenda)	7.4	2.9	5.3
Regime change/maintenance	1.7	2.3	2.0
Multilateralism (e.g., U.S.-Latin American relations within the OAS)	3.4	—	1.7
Conflict resolution	1.1	0.5	0.9
Cold War/post-Cold War Order	0.5	0.5	0.5
Total	171.8	144.4	

Note: N= 341 (174 articles and 167 books). The total percentage for the percent of articles and books exceeds 100 because individual articles and books frequently address multiple subject matters. The “—” symbol denotes that the given issue area is not represented in the literature in any significant number (or at all).

Source: Author's calculations on data on the variable Question from the Bertucci U.S.-Latin American Relations Research Dataset.

30 percent of IPE research not considered here is unlikely to reflect a meaningful substantive interest in U.S.-Latin American relations.⁶

The regional focus of IPE research is clearly tied to economically developed countries, and gives little attention to Latin America. But this does not by itself mean that research on many unanswered and unexplored questions in IPE in the study of U.S.-Latin American relations might not be fruitful. Taking the longer view, the stance of the United States with regard to the adoption of different developmental models by Latin American and Caribbean countries (hereafter LAC)—communist, socialist, free market, mercantilist—remains an interesting research question. And, looking at the more recent period, the U.S. economic integration efforts in LAC offer the opportunity to test standard theories in IPE and to contribute to theory building on the basis of cases from other regions (more on this below).

It is also notable that only 16 percent of the articles and books published since 1989 focus on the environment, migration, and narcotics, whereas 10.4 percent of the reviewed works deal with issues such as Cold War and post-Cold War security concerns (e.g., Soviet influence and deterrence in Latin America and nuclear proliferation issues), regime change or maintenance, and conflict resolution. The relatively minor attention that scholars have given to security concerns when looking at U.S.-Latin American relations is not surprising; in the post-Cold War context there have been no real security threats to the United States coming from LAC. But the relatively marginal attention given to intermestic issues is quite puzzling. Developments at the turn of the twenty-first century regarding migration, energy security, and drug-related violence, to name just a few examples, confirm the intermestic nature of the current U.S.-Latin American relationship (see, e.g., Obama 2011). But while the centrality of intermestic issues is a fact of the contemporary policy world, the data show that the scholarly attention devoted to them by students of U.S.-Latin American relations is rather marginal, as is the attention devoted to traditional security affairs. Furthermore, some intermestic issues, such as remittances, energy concerns, and public health, are almost completely ignored.

Since the data cover only the period after 1989, it is not possible to test the proposition that with the end of the Cold War, scholarly attention has shifted in relative terms from traditional security questions—e.g., deterrence of the Soviet Union and the risk of nuclear war—to intermestic issues (see, e.g., Lynn-Jones and Miller 1995, 3–14).⁷ Nonetheless, to the extent that intermestic issues currently are, as some scholars argue, at “the core of U.S. policies in Latin America” (Crandall 2008, xii), they offer a fertile ground for research. Indeed, the study of these issues constitutes an interesting locus from which to rethink the meaning of security studies in IR in the post-Cold War context (Lynn-Jones and Miller 1995, 3–14).

Something similar can be said regarding the study of the role of nonstate actors in U.S.-Latin American relations. In 1978 Jorge Domínguez highlighted the

rather recent change in [U.S. studies]: though states matter and can have autonomy, they are not the only significant actors ... multinational enterprises, churches, guerrilla organizations, etc.—have a significant impact on international relations. [Specifically,]

the behavior of multinational enterprises in Latin America has been receiving increasing public and scholarly attention in the United States. (Domínguez 1978, 93–94)

In 1992, Alison Brysk stressed that “transnational and nonstate actors are playing a growing and increasingly progressive role in interamerican relations” and also acknowledged the need for “greater scholarly attention” to nonstate actors (1992, 173–74). But this recognition of the role of nonstate actors has clearly not led to a surge in research on the matter. Indeed, over the past quarter-century, only 6.1 percent of the scholarly work published on U.S.-Latin American relations has paid attention to the role of nonstate actors—arguably as a reflection of the renewed role of Latin American states in the region’s IR work amid the neoliberal crisis of the late 1990s and U.S. unilateralism after 9/11 (Tickner 2008, 744). Regardless, the role of nonstate actors in U.S.-Latin American affairs has largely been a matter of speculation, a situation that can be corrected only through systematic empirical research.

Foreign Policy Analysis: Beyond U.S.-centric Interpretations

The overwhelming slant toward foreign policy analysis on the part of scholars working on U.S.-Latin American relations warrants closer attention. Indeed, the study of U.S.-Latin American relations is essentially the study of the foreign policymaking process of the United States: out of the 94.6 percent of scholarly works offering foreign policy analyses of U.S.-Latin American relations, 88.9 percent make U.S. foreign policy a central focus in their treatment of U.S.-Latin American relations. Almost 40 percent of the published scholarly works (37.5 percent) analyze U.S. foreign policy toward LAC or one or more of the countries in the region, while the other half of the reviewed articles and books (51.4 percent) focus on the U.S. and LAC’s foreign policy initiatives and reactions toward each other (see table 2).

This relatively U.S.-centered understanding of U.S.-Latin American relations is reinforced by the small percentage of articles and books with an empirical focus on the foreign policies of Caribbean countries, South American countries (including, most notably, Brazil), or even Mexico toward the United States. There is evidence, for instance, that Central American countries successfully achieved a critical degree of foreign policy autonomy from the United States in securing a peaceful resolution of the region’s civil and international conflicts during the 1980s (e.g., Karl 1989; Roberts 1990). Also, it has been shown that in LAC the “hegemonic management of conflict [by the United States] is a myth that dies hard. It is based on wishful thinking (e.g., the Monroe Doctrine); a selective reading of history (e.g., a focus on interventions to overthrow governments with which it disagreed); and a theoretical argument (as the only great power in the region no one can long contest its views on fundamental issues)” that the historical record systematically refutes (Mares 2001).⁸

Still, only 0.3 percent of all the sampled works address the foreign policies of Central American countries toward the United States. Moreover, even though the United States currently faces migration, drug-related, and energy security threats that, due to their intermestic nature, are likely to be solved only through sustained

Table 2. Knowledge About What? II:
Foreign Policy Analysis Case Studies in U.S.-Latin American
Relations Research

Countries	Articles (%)	Books (%)	Both (%)
U.S. and other Latin American country or subregion	42.3	60.8	51.4
U.S.-Mexico relations	8.6	17.3	12.9
U.S.-South America relations, minus Brazil	12.0	12.5	12.3
U.S.-Latin American and Caribbean relations in general	8.6	9.6	9.0
U.S.-Caribbean countries relations	6.9	8.4	7.6
U.S.-Central American relations	2.8	10.1	6.4
U.S.-Brazil relations	3.4	2.9	3.2
United States	34.7	39.5	37.5
U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean in general	11.5	13.2	12.3
U.S. foreign policy toward Central America	5.1	10.8	7.9
U.S. foreign policy toward the Caribbean	8.6	2.9	5.9
U.S. interventions	1.7	3.6	2.6
U.S. foreign policy toward South America, minus Brazil	4.0	1.1	2.6
U.S. foreign policy toward Mexico	1.1	2.3	1.7
U.S. hegemony and Latin America and the Caribbean	1.7	1.1	1.5
U.S. foreign policy toward Brazil	0.5	1.7	1.2
U.S. imperialism	0.5	1.7	1.2
U.S. grand strategy and Latin America and the Caribbean	—	1.1	0.6
Mexico and Brazil	8.5	—	4.3
Mexico foreign policy toward the U.S.	4.5	—	2.3
Brazil foreign policy toward the U.S.	4.0	—	2.0
South America	1.7	—	0.8
South American countries' foreign policies toward the U.S.	1.7	—	0.8
Central America	0.5	—	0.3
Central American countries' foreign policies toward the U.S.	0.5	—	0.3
Caribbean	0.5	—	0.3
Caribbean countries' foreign policies toward the U.S.	0.5	—	0.3

Source: Author's calculations on data on the variable Question from the Bertucci U.S.-Latin American Relations Research Dataset.

cooperative efforts with countries like Mexico and Brazil, the foreign policies of these countries toward the United States are understudied. Only 12.9 percent of the reviewed articles and books focus on U.S.-Mexico relations and only 2.3 percent focus on Mexico's foreign policy toward the United States. Similarly, only 3.2 percent of the sampled literature analyzes U.S.-Brazil relations and no more than 2.0 percent addresses Brazil's foreign policy toward the "Colossus of the North." These are all marginal levels of attention in light of the fact that the combined population

of Mexico and Brazil is almost that of the United States and that the combined GDP of these two Latin American countries almost doubles that of the rest of the region (ECLAC 2009).

To be sure, the above discussion should not be taken to mean that all students of U.S.-Latin American relations equally sidestep the study of Latin American foreign policies. In a comparison of U.S.-based and Latin American-based scholars, the two featured significantly different proportions of articles on the following questions: studies of U.S. foreign policy toward LAC ($t(172) = 4.893$, $p = .0000$); studies of LAC foreign policies toward the U.S. ($t(172) = 3.555$, $p = .0005$); studies of economic integration and regionalism ($t(172) = 4.567$, $p = .0000$); and studies of U.S.-Latin American foreign policies toward each other ($t(172) = 2.168$, $p = .0315$). The differences in proportions in research patterns in all other subjects (i.e., intermestic, security, and other issues) were found not to be statistically significant (see table 3).

Indeed, the data show that U.S.-based scholars (i.e., scholars who, at the time of publication, were associated with a U.S.-based institution) address LAC foreign policies toward the United States only very rarely, in just 3.1 percent of their publications. Moreover, almost all (86.7 percent) of the foreign policy analyses conducted by U.S.-based scholars working on U.S.-Latin American relations put the United States at center stage of the analysis, and U.S.-Latin American foreign policies toward each other are addressed in only one-third of their published research.⁹

The implication of this pattern is clear: seeing U.S.-Latin American relations from the perspective of the United States is practically a matter of ontology for U.S.-based scholars. And the academic and policy impact of this choice should be recognized. Above all, the common wisdom that the best way to make sense of U.S.-Latin American relations is to understand, first and foremost, the U.S. foreign policy-making process has led U.S.-based scholars of U.S.-Latin American relations to be almost completely silent regarding the foreign policies of LAC countries toward the United States when advancing their views of U.S.-Latin American affairs. Such a gap prevents scholars from treating the relative influence and initiative of countries in the Americas as a vital empirical question. Clearly, an unexplored and potentially fruitful avenue for research on U.S.-Latin American relations for U.S.-based scholars concerns the foreign policymaking processes of Latin American countries toward the United States.

The dominant focus on U.S. foreign policymaking toward LAC is neither surprising nor a characteristic only of the literature under consideration here. IR scholars almost invariably put the United States at the center of all discussions and address the LAC standpoint only very rarely, in approximately 10 percent of all published IR research.¹⁰ In the subfield of U.S.-Latin American relations, it has been argued that this U.S.-centric approach is driven by “the predominance of a theoretical model in which the United States [is] the actor and Latin America, the dependent, defenseless object” (Pastor and Long 2010, 263). It could also be the product, to be sure, of a lack of reliable and easily accessible information on Latin American, Central American, or Caribbean countries’ foreign policies. Even with the Internet,

Table 3. Knowledge About What? III:
Comparing U.S. and Latin American Research Patterns
on U.S.-Latin American Relations

U.S.-based scholars	Articles (%)	Latin American-based scholars	Articles (%)
Foreign Policy Analysis	89.8	Foreign Policy Analysis	87.3
U.S. foreign policy toward LAC	51.8	U.S. foreign policy toward LAC	16.2
U.S.-Latin American foreign policies toward each other	34.9	U.S.-Latin American foreign policies toward each other	51.2
LAC foreign policies toward the U.S.	3.1	LAC foreign policies toward the U.S.	19.9
IPE	21.0	IPE	58.6
Economic integration/regionalism	9.5	Economic integration/regionalism	38.7
Trade	7.4	Trade	16.2
Economic development	3.1	Economic development	2.5
Latin America's debt crisis	1.0	Latin America's debt crisis	1.2
Intermestic issues	14.7	Intermestic issues	13.6
Drugs	7.4	Drugs	8.7
Migration	4.2	Environment	3.7
Environment	3.1	Migration	1.2
Security	15.7	Security	12.5
Security broadly defined (i.e., U.S.-L.A.'s security agenda)	5.3	Security broadly defined (i.e., U.S.-L.A.'s security agenda)	10.0
Multilateralism (e.g., U.S.-Latin American relations within the OAS)	4.2	Multilateralism (e.g., U.S.-Latin American relations within the OAS)	2.5
Regime change/ maintenance	3.1	Regime change/ maintenance	—
Conflict resolution	2.1	Conflict resolution	—
Cold War/post-Cold War order	1.0	Cold War/post-Cold War order	—
Other issues	12.6	Other issues	11.2
Nonstate actors	7.4	Nonstate actors	7.5
Transnational actors	4.2	Transnational actors	2.5
Public opinion	1.0	Public opinion	—
Structure of the international system (i.e. anarchy plus polarity)	—	Structure of the international system (i.e. anarchy plus polarity)	1.2
Total	153.8	Total	183.2

Note: N = 174 (94 articles by U.S.-based scholars and 80 articles by Latin American-based scholars). A U.S.-based scholar is defined as an author who, at the time of publication, was affiliated with a U.S.-based institution. A Latin American-based scholar is defined as an author who, at the time of publication, was affiliated with a Latin America-based institution. The total percentage for the percent of articles exceeds 100 because individual articles frequently address multiple subject matters. The “—” symbol denotes that the given issue area is not represented in the literature in any significant number (or at all).

Source: Author's calculations on data on the variable Question from the Bertucci U.S.-Latin American Relations Research Dataset.

gathering reliable data on the actual foreign policy calculus of states south of the Rio Grande (as opposed to officials quoted in the news media) could be a very time-consuming effort and may necessarily entail field research; and, unlike in the United States, political memoirs are rare.¹¹ Be this as it may, it is important to bear in mind that, as discussed above, the U.S. hegemonic management of policy issues in the Western Hemisphere is a theoretical presupposition systematically debunked by the historical record. And the relative influence of the United States regarding that of Latin American countries on U.S.-Latin American relations issues should be treated as an empirical question not be ruled out *a priori* as a matter of (often implicit) theoretical fiat.

It is interesting that research patterns by Latin American-based scholars in U.S.-Latin American relations appear as somewhat more balanced but no less parochial than those of their colleagues in the United States. Indeed, in their analyses of U.S.-Latin American relations, Latin American scholars put their own countries' foreign policies at center stage of their studies in 71.1 percent of their published articles; they address U.S.-Latin American foreign policies toward each other in roughly half of their publications; but they consider U.S. foreign policy toward LAC as the salient empirical focus of their analyses in only 16.2 percent of their work.

That is to say, whereas U.S.-based scholars tend to equate the study of U.S.-Latin American relations with the study of U.S. foreign policy toward the region, Latin American scholars approach the analysis of U.S.-Latin American relations paying more attention to both the U.S. and Latin American foreign policy initiatives and reactions toward each other, although they also tend to disregard the analysis of U.S. foreign policy initiatives toward LAC as the primary focus of their studies.

Added to this are significant differences in U.S.-based and Latin American-based research patterns pertaining to IPE. Whereas economic integration and regionalism issues are covered in less than 10 percent of journal publications by U.S.-based scholars, these same issues are the focus of almost 40 percent (38.7 percent) of the journal articles published by Latin American scholars. This shows Latin America's concern with regional integration efforts at both the hemispheric (e.g., Free Trade Area of the Americas and FTAA-MERCOSUR interactions) and subregional levels (e.g., NAFTA), two topics that have been at center stage of policy debates on economic development in the region since the early 1990s. One reason for these differences in research patterns could be related to what Arlene Tickner has aptly called "the primacy of *lo práctico*"—the tendency of IR studies in Latin America to be shaped by their involvement in the political domain rather than by self-referential scholarly dynamics similar to those operating largely in U.S. "ivory towers" (2008, 745).¹²

In short, the evidence presented in this study suggests that it might still be premature to conclude that "scholars in the United States have become more attuned over time to the idea that the study of U.S.-Latin American relations is not synonymous with U.S. policy" (Weeks 2009, 256), or that "new scholarship" on U.S.-Latin American relations "seeks with increasing success to explore and understand both the American and Latin American sides of these interactions" (O'Brien 2009, 258).

Rather, the data suggest that current understandings of U.S.-Latin American relations could substantially benefit, primarily in the United States but also in Latin America, from more empirical work on how international, transnational, and national factors help produce foreign policy outputs toward each other.¹³

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

What researchers study is obviously a keen concern in any assessment of a research field. But as current debates about theory and methods in IR and political science suggest, it is essential to consider two key questions: for what purpose is knowledge being generated, and how has a given researcher set about this task? Within the parameters of these two questions lie important distinctions: between theory generation and empirical analysis; between descriptive, causal, and prescriptive goals; and between qualitative and quantitative approaches. This section considers each of these issues as part of the overall characterization and assessment of research on U.S.-Latin American relations.

Research Objectives: On the Need to Theorize and Explain More

Starting with the distinction between theory generation and empirical analysis, table 4 shows that every publication aims to provide an empirical analysis. But the interesting datapoint is the 4.6 percent of articles and books that, in addition to providing an empirical analysis, seek to contribute to the generation of theory. As mentioned earlier, in the literature on U.S.-Latin American relations there is little development of theoretical concepts specifically crafted to better understand the processes and outcomes of U.S.-Latin American relations.

Some articles and books make use of concepts or theories to offer a better sense of why the state of U.S.-Latin American relations has been or is as it is; however, there have been virtually no efforts to assess the shortcomings of theoretical constructs, let alone efforts to overcome these shortcomings through the development of new theoretical approaches. The bulk of the scholarly work on U.S.-Latin American relations since 1989—actually 95.3 percent of the reviewed articles and books—consists of empirical analyses that, at best, make acritical use of theories and concepts.

To put this pattern in context, it should be highlighted that few atheoretical articles were published in IR journals during the period 1995 to 2005, and that since 1980, the number was never greater than 15 percent of all published IR articles. Thus, “theoretically informed research is not only more prominent, but virtually a necessary condition for publication in a peer-reviewed [IR] journal” (Long et al. 2005, 25). Moreover, a comparison with a neighboring field, comparative politics, reveals a similar contrast. Indeed, the generation of theory was the goal of half (50.2 percent) of publications in leading journals between 1989 and 2004 (Munck and Snyder 2007, 11).

Table 4. Knowledge for What?
The Objectives of U.S.-Latin American Relations Research

Objectives		Articles (%)	Books (%)	Both (%)	Aggregate Options	Both (%)
Theory and empirics	Both theory generation and empirical analysis	7.4	1.7	4.6	Theory and empirics	4.6
	Empirical analysis	92.5	98.2	95.3	Empirical analysis	95.3
	Total	100	100			
Description, causation, and prescription	Descriptive	56.8	43.1	50.1	} Mainly descriptive	77.3
	Primarily descriptive, but also causal	21.8	32.9	27.2		
	Primarily causal, but also descriptive	7.4	17.3	12.3	} Mainly causal	15.8
	Causal	5.7	1.1	3.5		
	Prescriptions	8.0	5.3	6.7	Prescription	6.7
	Total	100	100			

Note: N = 341 (174 articles and 167 books). A theory is understood here to consist of a proposition or set of propositions about how or why the world is as it is. An empirical analysis is understood here to consist of an inquiry based on observable manifestations of a concept or concepts about what the state of the world is. A study making use of a theory or theories or concepts to help make better sense of what the state of the world is, but that does not engage with broader theoretical debates and developments, is considered an empirical analysis. Descriptions answer the question, what is the state of the world. Causal accounts answer the question, what explains the outcomes we see in the world. The term *descriptive* is not used, as is common, in a critical fashion, as when a work is characterized as being merely descriptive. Here, the term is used in a positive manner, referring to accounts of what the state of the world is that are differentiated from causal accounts that seek to explain why the state of the world is as it is. Prescriptions refer to whether policy recommendations are being offered.

Source: Author’s calculations on data on the variables Theory_Empirical and Descriptive_Causal_Prescription from the Bertucci U.S.-Latin American Relations Research Dataset.

This absence of theory development as a research goal is explained by the fact that the overwhelming majority of the members of this subfield favor practical, applied knowledge about how their own countries can be inserted more effectively in interamerican affairs in particular or the international system in general. In Latin America, this is a byproduct of how the IR field developed in the region—through the close involvement with the political domain and without the “ivory tower” autonomy that characterizes IR studies in the United States (Tickner 2009, 745). In the United States, U.S.-Latin American relations scholars appear to be more interested in engaging with the policy world than with the academic community, more comfortable appearing in *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, or even *Foreign Affairs Latinoamérica* than in, for example, *International Organization* (Bertucci et al. Forthcoming).

Still, the implication of these patterns and developments is clear. By every available measure, the study of U.S.-Latin American relations lags behind in theory

building. And as a means of deepening and broadening our understanding of why the state of U.S.-Latin American relations is as it is, it is apparent that scholars in this subfield could benefit from making explicit the theories being used (and to be used in the future), articulating their assumptions, justifying propositions, and recognizing and acknowledging their limitations.

Turning to the options among descriptive, causal, and prescriptive goals, we see in table 4 that the production of descriptions—that is, accounts about what is (or what has been) the state of U.S.-Latin American relations—has been the dominant research goal in the field. A total of 77.3 percent of the articles and books published since 1989 have aimed mainly at describing the historical trajectory and policy substance of U.S.-Latin American relations. In contrast, only 15.8 percent of the reviewed publications seek to explain outcomes by systematically identifying independent variables and constructing an argument about how they relate to the designated dependent variables.

The prevalence of descriptive over causal accounts in U.S.-Latin American relations studies also runs counter to trends in IR and comparative politics. IR research has seen a steady decline in the number of descriptive works since the 1980s. Whereas in 1980, “descriptive articles ... accounted for 42 percent of all the articles published, ... after 1986, [that figure] never moves above 30 percent” (Long et al. 2005, 25). Once again, a comparison with the neighboring field of comparative politics is no less striking: since the end of the Cold War, 48 percent of the journal articles published have had causation as their salient research goal (Munck and Snyder 2007, 11).

Thus, another way of furthering our current grasp of U.S.-Latin American relations would be to flesh out explanations of outcomes in terms of variables and to be more systematic about the chain of causal factors that produce outcomes of interest. That is, scholars can contribute substantively to our knowledge of U.S.-Latin American relations not only by further describing what the state of the world is, but by making more systematic use of available theories (or developing new ones) to illuminate the structures and mechanisms that better explain outcomes of interest.¹⁴

In this respect, the works of Peter Smith, Robert Pastor, Peter Evans, and Martha Cottam are good examples, and could serve as fruitful departure points for more theoretically and explanatory minded future research on U.S.-Latin American relations. In addition to offering rich descriptions, these works explicitly address the theoretical assumptions they build on to justify the propositions they advance. This, in turn, helps illuminate the limitations of the theoretical constructs being applied and articulates explanations in terms of outcomes and variables. Concomitantly, propositions stating why the world is as it is can be derived from those accounts in order to be tested and verified (Smith 2008; Pastor 1991, 2001; Evans 1989; Cottam 1994; see also Desch 1993; Cameron and Tomlin 2000; Borja Tamayo 2001; Levitt 2006).

Furthermore, it is worth noting that 6.7 percent of the publications under review offer prescriptions; that is, statements about how the world should be. This raises some interesting questions about the role of scholars in providing policy

advice. Although the offering of prescriptions can be an equally important research goal, and a particularly relevant one if it is helping states to achieve specific policy outcomes, prescriptions ought to be offered after causal arguments have been carefully developed and rigorously tested, two pursuits that have not been frequently taken up in the literature on U.S.-Latin American relations. Thus, while noting the value of prescriptive analysis, it remains an open question as to whether it might be premature for scholars in this field to be engaging in policy prescriptions.

Research Methods: The Limits of Descriptive Narratives?

Turning to methods of empirical analysis, a review of the literature reveals a clear pattern (see table 5). Since the end of the Cold War, 98.1 percent of the reviewed articles and books have used qualitative methods and only 1.8 percent have drawn on quantitative methodologies.¹⁵ Moreover, mixed methods are rarely used, as this accounts for just 0.9 percent of the publications in this sample. In short, research on U.S.-Latin American relations is overwhelmingly qualitative and thus relies almost entirely on description and narratives.

This methodological preference is not, in and of itself, a problem. Although it has been argued that the rules of scientific inference in the social sciences “are sometimes more clearly stated in the style of quantitative research” (King et al. 1994, 6), qualitative methods also contribute to achieving valid inference. As Brady and Collier remind us, “*analytic* leverage can derive from a close knowledge of cases and context, which can directly contribute to more valid descriptive *and causal inference*” (2004, 12, emphasis added). Thus, there is no *a priori* reason to opt for qualitative or quantitative methods in the study of U.S.-Latin American relations in particular or international relations in general.

The mainly qualitative nature of research on U.S.-Latin American relations is puzzling. In the late 1970s, Jorge Domínguez identified “the gradual spread of quantitative methodologies in the study of interamerican affairs” as a salient methodological trend in the literature (1978, 116). And what Domínguez foresaw did actually happen in IR as a whole. Specifically, though qualitative methods were clearly dominant in IR during the 1980s, since the 1990s, qualitative and quantitative methods of empirical analysis have reached a relatively even balance in the field (Long et al. 2005, 27; Bennett et al. 2003, 375). But research on U.S.-Latin American relations during the last two decades has clearly bucked that trend. And chances are that at least among Latin American IR scholars, quantitative methods will not become any more popular in the study of U.S.-Latin American relations anytime soon. As Arlene Tickner highlights, IR texts making use of quantitative analysis are “ignored completely” in IR theory courses taught in the region (2009, 42).

Still, much as the study of U.S.-Latin American relations could benefit from paying more attention to issues of theory development and explanation, many of the questions addressed in the field easily lend themselves to quantitative analysis. As Peter Smith stresses, “statistical measures can help provide quantitative assessments of levels, degrees, and dimensions of asymmetries” between countries on both sides

Table 5. How is Knowledge Generated?
The Methods of U.S.-Latin American Relations Research

Aim of Method	Options	Articles (%)	Books (%)	Both (%)	Aggregate Options	Both (%)
Methods of empirical analysis	Qualitative	95.6	99.3	97.5	Mainly qualitative	98.1
	Mixed method, dominantly qualitative	0.6	0.6	0.6		
	Mixed method, dominantly quantitative	0.6	—	0.3	Mainly quantitative	1.8
	Quantitative	3.1	—	1.5		
Total		100	100			

Note: The N for Methods of Empirical Analysis is 325 (161 articles and 164 books). Quantitative methods are those that rely on numbers and, more specifically, on statistical tools of analysis to determine causal significance among variables on any given subject matter. Qualitative methods are those that rely on words and, more specifically, on tools of analysis, such as “process tracing,” “historical narrative,” etc.

Source: Author’s calculations on data on the variable *Method_Empirical_Analysis* from the Bertucci U.S.-Latin American Relations Research Dataset.

of the Río Grande. “Game theory can specify the terms, conditions, and extent of compliance with (or defection from) multilateral schemes.... And Bayesian algebra could help identify the conditions—or combination of conditions—that promote cooperation or defection” (Smith 2012, 345; see also Bueno de Mesquita 2002). The use of these methods could contribute to the advancement of causal inferences on U.S.-Latin American relations on par with qualitative methods.

TOWARD A NEW RESEARCH AGENDA?

Despite the important differences that exist in research patterns and trends between U.S.-Latin American relations and IR and comparative politics, a latent convergence of interests between these fields, particularly along substantive lines, is emerging. Moreover, a small number of recent studies drawing on the empirical record of U.S.-Latin American relations have also made relevant theoretical contributions to IR, thus broadening current understanding of international relations in general and of U.S.-Latin American relations in particular. Certain works signal that research in IR and U.S.-Latin American relations may not necessarily be traveling strictly parallel or disjunctive roads. A new U.S.-Latin American relations research agenda, albeit incipient, could be in the making.

A Fruitful Convergence of Interests

Patterns showing the substance of U.S.-Latin American relations research, as described in the first section of this article, run counter to substantive trends in the field of IR as a whole. During the past 25 years, and particularly since the end of the Cold War, the most studied issue areas in IR have been security and IPE studies, followed by foreign policy analysis (Long et al. 2005, 31). In light of these research patterns and trends, the field of U.S.-Latin American relations is in a good position to become a salient contributor to foreign policy analysis, albeit with the mandate that the perspective of Latin American countries must be more assertively incorporated into the research agenda. Moreover, although intermestic issues still seem to be more of a policy than a scholarly concern, the research already conducted in this issue area in the subfield of U.S.-Latin American relations could be a valuable building block for future scholarly efforts in the realm of IR security studies (Lynn-Jones and Miller 1995, 3–14). In sum, this review of the substantive and empirical scope of research on U.S.-Latin American relations shows that a mutually beneficial relationship could—and, as argued here, should—be established between this research and the research in the field of IR as a whole.

Theories, Methods, and Research

The claim that current literature on U.S.-Latin American relations is deficient in developing theories aimed at better understanding and explaining processes and outcomes of interest should be accompanied by an important caveat; i.e., that in recent years, a small number of studies on hemispheric affairs have actually made a relevant theoretical contribution to IR. This caveat signals, in terms of research goals and methods, valuable examples for future avenues of research on U.S.-Latin American relations.

For instance, studies and empirical findings pertaining to research on U.S.-Latin American relations have begun to occupy a salient role in the literature on regionalism, particularly regarding the explanation of regional free trade arrangements such as NAFTA. Some of Helen Milner's work studies U.S.-Latin American relations to, among other cases, develop a formal "model of the domestic influences on international politics" and offer testable hypotheses as to why countries cooperate with one another or not (1997, 10). Such work has become part of a scholarly debate on an important issue in U.S.-Latin American relations: the relationship between democratic foreign policymaking and international cooperation. The scholarly debate on the matter, it bears highlighting, is far from settled, particularly given that the available evidence does not support blanket statements that democracy makes international cooperation easier or more difficult, and more studies of the particular features of democracy having specific effects on foreign policy outcomes seem in order.¹⁶

Other works have also made use of the empirical record of U.S.-Latin American relations to illuminate some of the shortcomings and build on existing IR approaches to security studies. João Resende-Santos's "neorealist theory of military

emulation" (2007) is a case in point. Geared toward explaining interlocking rivalries in South America between 1870 and 1930, Resende-Santos's work highlights some of the security dynamics of U.S.-Latin American relations in general. For example, the threat posed by the potential of war between the United States and Chile at the end of the nineteenth century—or "an adverse shift in [Chile's] strategic environment" (2007, 43)—is claimed to have caused Chile to emulate the military technology and organizational structures of other (militarily successful) nations. Indeed, whether shifts in the strategic environments of some South American countries at the turn of the twenty-first century might actually explain, for example, Venezuela's and Brazil's military modernization efforts is a proposition worth exploring (see, e.g., *Time* 2007).

Moreover, although it was also developed mainly in light of South American experiences, David Mares's "militarized bargaining" model of "the use of military force by one state to influence the behavior of another" is well suited to explain U.S.-Latin American security relations in general, as the bulk of these countries constitute a single "security complex" in which security issues other than national survival or relative positioning in the international system (e.g., massive movements of migrants, the defense of democracy, drug-related crime, etc.) are at stake (Mares 2001, 16).¹⁷ Mares's is a compelling model for better understanding why, for example, the United States did not use military bargaining tactics in its dealings with the political crisis in Honduras in 2009–10, as it did during its invasion of Panama in 1989.¹⁸

Similarly, a number of studies informed by the empirical record of U.S.-Latin American affairs have made a significant contribution to the study of the construction and evolution of international norms, a subject matter largely constitutive of the constructivist research agenda in IR. Based on insights from Latin American human rights records and policy trajectories and U.S. responses to them, Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink have foregrounded some of the conditions under which nonstate actors (i.e., human rights advocacy networks) are helping to redefine the practice and meaning of sovereignty in the Western Hemisphere (1998; Sikkink 2004). Similarly, Arturo Santa-Cruz's work highlights the role occupied by transnational advocacy networks in the emergence of the norm of international election monitoring and the extent to which this norm has helped redefine the identity, national interest, and meaning of sovereignty in the Americas (Santa-Cruz 2005).¹⁹

These are all contributions that, drawing on the study of U.S.-Latin American relations, have identified some important theoretical shortcomings in the study of world politics and have advanced explanations of both novel and existing empirical puzzles through the development of new theoretical insights. And through the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods, such works have helped broaden current understanding of U.S.-Latin American relations in particular and international relations in general. As the publication patterns identified in the previous sections make clear, however, these contributions are currently the exception rather than the rule in the field of U.S.-Latin American relations.

CONCLUSIONS

This study of journal articles and nonedited books yields the following conclusions. U.S.-Latin American relations is a subfield that makes of the U.S. foreign policy-making process its salient empirical focus of analysis; addresses substantial and pressing intermestic issues in the Western Hemisphere; has thus far produced mainly descriptive knowledge; has an active concern with policy prescriptions; has largely disregarded theory building; and relies disproportionately on qualitative methods of empirical analysis.

When juxtaposed with the salient trends in IR over the last 25 years and those of other neighboring fields, such as comparative politics, the potential for modernizing studies of U.S.-Latin American relations is apparent. In particular, the opportunity to contribute to foreign policy analysis, an issue relatively ignored in IR, stands out. But the emphasis on theory, explanation, and quantitative methods of empirical analysis generally found in IR and comparative politics research is largely lacking in the study of U.S.-Latin American relations. And there is no reason for this subfield not to benefit from those research goals and methodologies as a means of broadening our understanding of U.S.-Latin American affairs.

The contributions made by scholars to the study of U.S.-Latin American relations during the last 20 years have been substantial. This is particularly true in terms of the substance and some of the mechanisms shaping U.S., Latin American, and Caribbean foreign policies. The value of this type of knowledge should not be underestimated, and its link with theorizing should not be dismissed. As philosophers of science Stephen Toulmin and June Goodfield remind us, before we “can build a successful theory in any field of science,” we “must be clear what it is that requires explanation” (1999, 23).

This relatively U.S.-centered and qualitatively descriptive research record on U.S.-Latin American relations has its challenges clearly laid out. Advancing thick empirical descriptions of U.S.-Latin American relations phenomena is a research goal that should not be abandoned.²⁰ But the study of U.S.-Latin American relations would also benefit from closer attention to theoretical and explanatory issues. This means a more explicit statement about the theoretical choices being made, along with their limitations, and the generation of systematic arguments that explicitly state the explanatory chain at stake on a given issue. Engaging more closely with theory development and explanation as research goals should not come at the expense of pursuing descriptions. As Robert Bates put it when addressing the debate between area studies and the discipline of political science, “The issue is not whether to use the left side of the brain rather than the right. It is, rather, how to employ both” (1997, 169).

A shift toward more attention to theory development and explanation will also bring the study of U.S.-Latin American relations into line with the main scholarly trends in the study of world politics, while benefiting from and contributing to such trends. It should be noted that this shift would also help the field of U.S.-Latin American relations increase its prominence in the academic literature in general.

This has been, for example, the historical trajectory that the field of security studies (still the most policy-oriented field in IR research) has followed (Miller 2001).

The good news is that, in confronting these challenges, researchers can build on much prior research. These resources include an extensive body of empirical research on many salient aspects of U.S.-Latin American relations that serves as a backdrop against which more explanatory and theoretically informed research can be conducted. As Duncan Snidal and Alexander Wendt have observed, during the past four decades, a steady stream of interest in theory has come from a wide range of different traditions: international political theory, international relations, and international law (2009). And it is almost certain that the theories these fields are uncovering would also illuminate U.S.-Latin American relations. In sum, the time is ripe for scholars of U.S.-Latin American relations to begin paying more attention to issues of theory development and explanation. Doing so promises to reinvigorate the subfield and put the generalizability of many views in IR and comparative politics to the test.

NOTES

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1. U.S.-Latin American relations means the study of any Western Hemisphere (minus Canada) self-contained process or outcome involving the United States and at least one other state-actor south of the Rio Grande. Although it is in a sense state-centric, this working definition is actually agnostic with respect to the actors and processes involved (i.e., it is not biased toward necessarily locating U.S. policymaking processes or initiatives at center stage of research on U.S.-Latin American relations). Thus, the international process or outcomes involving U.S.-based and Latin American and Caribbean-based nonstate actors are considered constitutive parts of the texture of U.S.-Latin American and Caribbean relations and, where applicable, part of the literature to be taken into account in this study. Also, it is worth emphasizing that relations between the United States and Latin American and Caribbean countries may have a regional and even an international system-level dimension, the study of which, at the time of sampling, this definition also captures. Neither does this definition bias the findings regarding the research objectives pursued nor the preferred methods used by students of U.S.-Latin American relations. By the same token, it should be noted that there is nothing in this definition of U.S.-Latin American relations that links the study of the subject matter to that of, necessarily, any of the three main substantive research areas in IR—i.e. security studies, IPE, and foreign policy analysis—or, for that matter, to that of any other substantive research areas (e.g., race, ethnicity, and culture), which, to be sure, have all the same chances of being sampled.

Previous assessments of the state of the literature on U.S.-Latin American relations provide no explicit definition of the subject matter being addressed. Domínguez (1978) offers a partial exception to this situation, as he claims to assess the “literature on interamerican relations [items that] deal with a variety of countries . . . dealing with relations across boundaries.” In that same article, Domínguez interchangeably uses both the concepts of interamerican

relations and U.S.-Latin American relations, a move that, for the sake of clarity, this article does not follow.

2. The nonedited book sample has been construed following two criteria. On the one hand, both the undergraduate and graduate reading lists of some of the leading U.S.-based scholars working on U.S.-Latin American relations have been followed. For instance, the nonedited books referenced in Jorge Domínguez's, Abraham Lowenthal's, and Peter Smith's syllabi on U.S.-Latin American relations were taken into consideration. On the other hand, most of the nonedited books on U.S.-Latin American relations selected for review in the abovementioned journals, plus those in *Foreign Affairs's* review essays, have been included as part of the sample. (Nonedited books that, according to the reviewer, had major theoretical, conceptual, methodological, or empirical problems built into their arguments were not sampled). The overlap between the books reviewed from those different outlets and the book sample construed following the first criterion, as well as the title overlaps among different reviews, were considered as indicators of having arrived at a reasonably valid sample of the most salient nonedited books on U.S.-Latin American relations published since 1989.

3. The complete list of issue areas and categories considered in the code book but not necessarily appearing in this paper's tables, since they are not represented in the literature in any significant number or at all, can be accessed by email request at mbertucc@usc.edu. An intercoder reliability test was conducted on 5 percent of the total entries, selected at random. The coders agreed on 92 percent of coding decisions.

4. The restriction to nonedited books is due to my inability to measure content from edited volumes, particularly regarding peer-reviewed articles and single-authored and co-authored books, and also from my belief that, in general, refereed journals represent a better source of high-quality research than chapters in edited volumes. The research design herein used has been influenced primarily by Bollen et al. 1993 and Munck and Snyder 2007.

5. IR research trends are systematically documented in Long et al. 2005; Maliniak and Tierney 2009; Bennett et al. 2003; and Maliniak et al. 2007. Comparative politics research trends are systematically documented in Munck and Snyder 2007.

6. This is perhaps best reflected in the fact that the *Review of International Political Economy* has also been included in the present assessment, but since 1989, only three studies on U.S.-Latin American relations have been published in that outlet. Also, Maliniak and Tierney (2009, 23) show that between 1980 and 2006, "thirty-five percent of IPE articles contain data or cases drawn from the United States, and, with obviously some overlap, 35 percent consider data and cases from Canada and Western Europe. The third-largest region gaining attention in IPE is East Asia with 29 percent, followed closely by Global work, or those papers that use data and cases covering every country or region in the world."

7. For an articulation of this hypothesis in security studies during the last quarter-century regarding the other major IR issue areas, see Long et al. 2005, 31.

8. That is to say, even when it comes down to the high politics of security issues, the United States does not determine security dynamics in the Americas, let alone actual foreign policy behavior in the region.

9. These results are likely to hold even if we were to compare research patterns of proportions pertaining to nonedited books. As table 2 shows, studies on LAC foreign policies toward the United States in the format of nonedited books are virtually nonexistent.

10. The data cover the period after 1980. See Maliniak et al. 2007, 27.

11. I thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing this point to my attention.

12. For an excellent introduction to the issue of IR scholar-practitioner interactions in the United States, see Leggold and Nincic 2002.

13. See Pastor and Long (2010, 265) for a similar conclusion. An important and quite recent scholarly effort in this direction is to be found in the various volumes composing Routledge's Contemporary Inter-American Relations series, edited by Jorge I. Domínguez and Rafael Fernández de Castro. In this series, Latin American and U.S.-based scholars co-author books on contemporary U.S.-Latin American relations, paying attention not only to the historical evolution of the bilateral relationship at stake but also, and perhaps more important, to the salient specificities of the different foreign policy decisionmaking processes shaping those relations. (These volumes are part of the sample of the present study.)

14. My point is not that scholars of U.S.-Latin American relations should engage with theory development and explanation because these are the dominant research practices in other fields (although more attention to explanation and theory development would certainly facilitate dialogue with students of IR and comparative politics). Rather, my concern is that the study of U.S.-Latin American relations continues to be largely dominated by descriptive analyses at the expense of explaining and theorizing about why the world is as it is. If this continues, knowledge of U.S.-Latin American relations runs the risk of being constituted more by assertions than careful analyses.

15. The percentage of quantitative studies would not change much even if the sampling criterion had led to the inclusion of more IPE studies on U.S.-Latin American relations beyond those published in the journals herein sampled. There is evidence that by 2006, fully 90 percent of all published IPE articles employed quantitative methods. But there is also evidence that IPE scholars have not systematically studied the relationship between the U.S. and Latin America. See Maliniak and Tierney 2009, 19–20, 22–23.

16. See, e.g., Pahre 2006, 2008 for a bottom-up “political-support theory” of trade policy advancing propositions of why international cooperation, in times of peace, occurs or not. For a theoretically inspired, conceptually driven, and historically informed comparative analysis of the origins and efficacy of regional institutions across Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America (including the role of the United States whenever pertinent), and the Middle East, see Acharya and Johnston 2007. For a theoretically grounded analysis of the conditions under which developing countries' negotiators are likely to avoid pitfalls and negotiate more effectively with developed countries' negotiators on trade issues at both the multilateral (i.e., World Trade Organization) and regional (i.e., NAFTA) levels, see Odell 2006.

17. A “regional security complex” is defined by “states whose individual securities cannot be meaningfully separated from that of another” (Mares 2001, xi). On “regional security complex theory” in both North and South America, see Buzan and Waever 2003, chap. 3. See also the literature on “pluralistic security communities”; i.e., “a transnational region comprised of sovereign states whose people maintain dependable expectation of peaceful change,” aimed at explaining peaceful change in both North and South America, in Adler and Barnett 1998, chaps. 2, 7, and 9.

18. Also, compare Mares's “violent peace” framework to the work of IR analysts attracted to the region for its putative “long peace” (e.g., Kacowicz 1998).

19. On international norms and rules shaping state behavior and international cooperation in U.S.-Latin American relations, compare Santa-Cruz's study to, e.g., Kacowicz 2005; Domínguez 2007.

20. Indeed, description is also one of the three constitutive research goals of “usable knowledge”; i.e., policy-applicable knowledge that, together with the research goals of causation and middle-range theorizing, facilitates diagnosis and prescription, two essential tasks of policymaking. For an excellent entry point to the much-researched topic of case studies and policy-relevant theory, see George and Bennett 2005, chap. 12.

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