

Building a Career in Latin America Do Southern Scholars Have to Please Northern Gatekeepers?

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All fields of academic endeavor maintain deliberately constructed barriers to advancement. In part, these barriers are created to ensure the competence of the profession's practitioners, in part to provide incentives to the creative production of scholarship, and in part to allow dominant scholars and institutions to reproduce their standing and dominance by populating the field with individuals who think, teach and write like they do. The following *On the Profession* essays add the North-South relation to the discussion of barriers to career building in Latin America. These essays examine some of the barriers faced by Southern scholars—and some of the related pressures experienced by their U.S. and European colleagues—as they try to build careers in Latin American Studies. The essays recognize that while some of these barriers are deliberately imposed, others are structurally, and/or inadvertently created by North-South relationship.

One of those barriers is language. The North-South divide is reflected in, and exacerbated by, the preferred and rewarded language of scholarship: English. In this sense, the North-South divide is reproduced within the community of scholars who study, among other things, the North-South divide. The discipline replicates what the discipline studies: the hegemony of North America and its principal language.

There may be little the discipline, as such, can do about this. Over the past year, for example, spanning issues 44.2 through 45.2, LASA's flagship publication, the *Latin American Research Review* (LARR) has published or accepted for publication six articles written by Brazilian scholars. Of the six, four are written in English, one in Spanish and only one in Portuguese—this despite LARR's (like *LASA Forum's*) well-known official policy of accepting articles for publication in English, Spanish or

Portuguese, without prejudice. The decision of these Brazilian scholars to publish in English (or in one case, Spanish) is logical: in the hegemonic language, their work will find a much larger and more influential readership. For reasons outlined by Rory Miller and Miguel Tinker-Salas, publication in English is more likely to lead to a successful career in Latin American studies. And since within the discipline's institutions, Spanish is more widely read and understood than Portuguese, a Portuguese speaker's decision to publish in Spanish makes sense as well.

Language is not the only barrier. Northern universities, research centers, public policy institutes, foundations, publishing houses and academic journals currently dominate the field of Latin American studies. This situation makes access to Northern scholarship imperative for all those who wish to remain on top the most recent research findings and analytical debates, and in the loop of recognized and sanctioned scholarship.

This is the way that the North influences the research agenda of the South. The desire to stay current is not just a case of not wanting to spend time trying to discover what has already been discovered, but rather, stems from the realization that, if one wants to advance in Latin American studies, one can't spend the bulk of one's professional time studying questions the field considers irrelevant or of minor importance, or making use of research methodologies the field considers unproductive. It is in this context, as demonstrated by Miller and Tinker-Salas, that the South's widespread lack of access to current Northern research presents a major barrier to career advancement.

This is the case, as Carlos Salas points out, even in subfields that dissent from Northern

wisdom. Even in critical or dissenting communities of scholars, like Salas's field of heterodox economics, the mode of discourse and the paradigm of understanding that inform research and scholarly analysis, both North and South, require constant monitoring and communication with like-minded colleagues. Access to current arguments and scholarship is thus vital.

Meanwhile, as Miller reminds us, dominant approaches to scholarship, especially in the social sciences, have become increasingly narrow and exclusionary. Work across disciplines has become more difficult, and scholars—especially young scholars—feel pressured to study, write and teach within the circumscribed areas that their discipline's dominant forces consider to be useful and appropriate. Those dominant forces—both personal and institutional—are typically based in the North. ■