

Sino-Latin American Relations: A Comparison of Expert and Educated Youth Views of Latin America

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Abstract: In this study we explore Chinese views of their country's rapidly growing ties with Latin America. We adopt a dual approach in this project. First, we examine the Chinese expert's views of Latin America. Our analysis indicates that China's overwhelming focus is on the country's economic relationships with Latin America, while seeking to avoid overt political entanglements. Trade and investment opportunities appear to dominate published accounts of this relationship. Second, we conducted an original survey of educated youth in a relatively large city in Eastern China. In general, we find educated youth also place great emphasis on economic relations, though as expected experts are far more engaged in Sino-Latin American relations. Educated youth positively evaluate relations, but express greater caution and skepticism. Both experts and educated youth value large and/or growing trading partners far more than small/stagnant relationships or trading rivals.

Introduction

Traditionally, China occupies an important role as a regional power in Asian international relations. China's international relations focused on its immediate neighbors and bilateral relations with world powers like the United States and the European Union. However, China's rapid rise into a global economic power has led to a far more active, self-confident China. For the first time in the history of the People's Republic the government is showing a strong interest in and capabilities to move beyond Asian, U.S., and European relations. The government is using these newfound powers to engage in multiple regions and global challenges simultaneously, supplementing traditional bilateral diplomacy with multilateral approaches that adapt and adjust as necessary. However, the extant literature is only in its early stages of exploring China's new approach to international relations.

This lack of understanding is particularly evident when exploring China's embrace of regions that are distant and peripheral to the traditional Chinese diplomacy, but nevertheless critical to the construction of China's "new" diplomacy. Latin America represents a good case in point. Until recently, Latin America as a region seldom appeared on China's diplomatic radar screen, though a few countries in the region such as Cuba have enjoyed longstanding relationship with the country. This has changed rapidly given the region's increased economic significance to China, its attractiveness in cross-cultural exchanges, and

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as an object lesson in the dangers of the “middle income trap.” However, developing stronger ties in regions such as Latin America poses a special challenge to China. What will guide relationships with few road maps? Will the Chinese public support the government’s agendas in a region about which the public knows little? Is there a dominant narrative regarding China’s growing ties with the region that sells both internally and externally?

In this paper we will explore how both experts and educated youth view Sino-Latin American relations, given the challenges mentioned above. Because of lack of precedents, road maps, and direct personal contacts at top levels, expert’s views—especially quality analyses—are crucial in advising the Chinese government on the best course to take in dealing with Latin America and various countries in the region. Similarly, to develop a sustainable relationship with Latin America, China also needs a general public that understands the stakes involved, that is supportive of its initiatives, and that actively engages the region beyond official channels. Without either one, China’s efforts to create a new brand of image and diplomacy using the window of opportunity presented itself in Latin America could be far more difficult than its leadership desires. We thus try to address three separate, but related issues in this paper: 1) the importance of Latin America and its countries in the eyes of Chinese specialists or experts on Latin America; 2) how China’s educated youth view Latin America; and 3) what the implications of China’s views of Latin America are for China’s current and future relations with the region.

We will focus on three key areas of foreign policy of any major power: economics, politics, and culture. China’s economic relationship with Latin America has expanded nearly exponentially over the last 15-20 years. China is now a leading destination for many of the region’s major exports including foodstuffs and minerals, while Latin America represents a growing market for Chinese manufacturers. However, China’s growth has had deleterious effects on some manufacturing sectors in Latin America. Similarly, state visits between Chinese and Latin American officials have captured headlines in recent years and China designated several countries in the region “strategic partners”. The People’s Republic also joined a number of regional organizations like the Inter-American Bank and the Organization of American States (observer status), while engaging in some military exchanges and arms purchases. Finally, China has encouraged cultural exchanges of students, opened Confucius Institutes, encouraged tourism, and sought closer ties with ethnic Chinese communities in Latin America. In our paper we examine how both Chinese experts and a sample of educated youth view this rapidly expanding, but still inchoate relationship.

The paper is organized as follows. First, we review the extant literature on the growth in interest and relations along our three areas of interest and develop expectations regarding elite and educated youth views of Latin America. Second, we present our analysis of Chinese experts' views of Latin America in general, as well as analysis of particular countries. Third, we discuss our original survey of educated youth and test our hypotheses regarding how Chinese view their country's relationship with Latin America, particularly comparing Latin America with China's neighbors, the United States, and Europe. We find the data largely support our predictions. Both experts and the educated youth view the region favorably, and that economics and politics dominate their understanding. However, there are considerable gaps in level of understanding and sophistication in views of the two groups. The educated youth express cautious optimism, but also far greater uncertainty than experts. The final section concludes and offers ideas for further research.

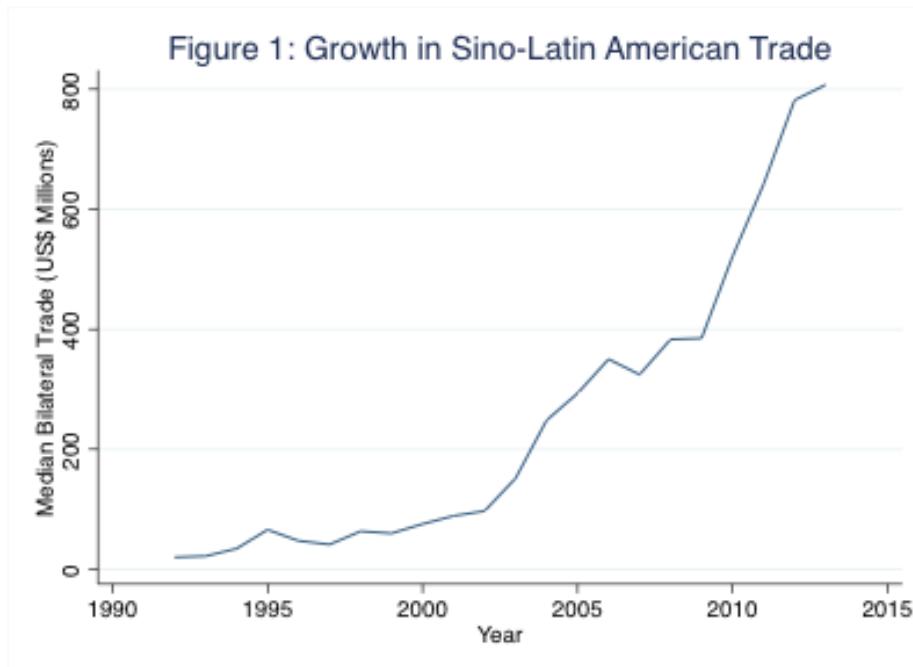
Literature Review

The growth in China's economic, political, and cultural relations with Latin America has been widely noted in the academic literature, popular press, and even in the halls of the United States Congress. Scholars in Latin America were particularly concerned with the relationship. China's economic fundamentals, namely its need for raw materials and new export markets, led to a rapid expansion of trade, and scholars argued whether this burgeoning relationship was good or bad for Latin America (Lora, 2007; Rosen, 2003; Blázquez-Lidoy, Rodríguez, and Santiso, 2006; Shambaugh and Murphy, 2012). Similarly, press stories focusing on Sino-Latin American relations also skyrocketed. *Latin American Regional Report* and the *Latin American Monitor* reported just 27 stories in 2002 and 2003, while this number grew to 71 by 2011 and 2012 (authors' count). Committees in the United States Senate and House held multiple hearings relating to Sino-Latin American relations, paying particular attention to China's expanded trade in the region and its focus on securing access to raw materials, especially oil (Johnson and Wasson, 2011). Hence, we see that scholars, the popular press, and others are paying close attention to Sino-Latin American relations.

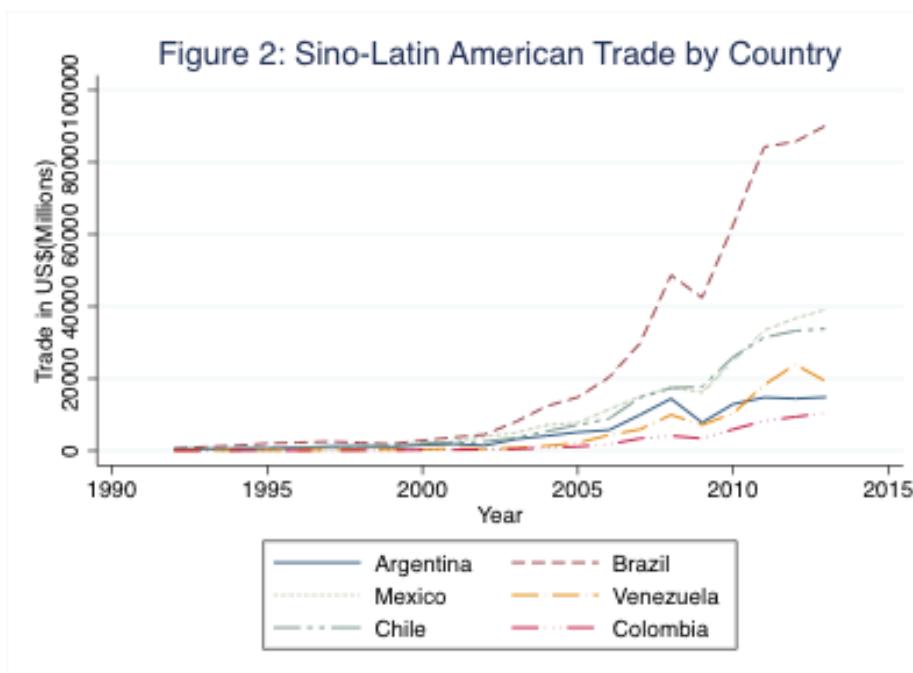
While these relationships have drawn increased scrutiny, much of the extant literature focuses on these relationships from only three viewpoints. The Chinese government has largely focused on expanding trade and investment opportunities in Latin America, while downplaying or ignoring conflict with the United States (Ellis, 2009; China's Policy Paper on Latin America and the Caribbean, 2008). The Latin American literature focuses on whether

China's rise is good, bad, or mixed for the region's economies (Domínguez, 2006; Gonzalez-Vicente, 2012; Armony, 2012; Hillebrand, 2003; Mesquita Moreira, 2007). Similarly, the American literature focuses on whether China's presence in the region is good or bad for the United States and her national interests, not only her economic interests, but also her national security (Johnson, 2005; Johnson and Wasson, 2011; Paz, 2006). Unfortunately, relatively little of this work has systematically examined how experts and educated youth within China view these relationships.

The vast majority of the literature on Sino-Latin American relations focuses on the growing economic relationship (see Figures 1 and 2). Trade between the two regions skyrocketed during the 2000s, and much of this trade involved the export of primary products from Latin America to China, and the export of manufactured goods from China to Latin America. China is Brazil and Chile's largest export market and Argentina's second largest (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2014). China imports increasing amounts of Venezuelan oil, Chilean copper, Peruvian fishmeal, and Colombian and Costa Rican coffee (Ellis, 2009). This led to high growth in commodities-based sectors throughout Latin America (Santiso, 2006). China has also sought to diversify its export markets, selling greater quantities of manufactured products ranging from textiles to electronics (Shambaugh and Murphy, 2012), sometimes at the expense of Latin American manufactures themselves (Gallagher, Moreno-Brid, and Porzecanski, 2008; Jenkins and de Freitas Barbosa, 2012; Mesquita Moreira, 2007). The most concrete sign of China's long-term plans are the Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with Chile, Peru, and Costa Rica (Shambaugh and Murphy, 2012). By any measure Sino-Latin American trade increased markedly during the 2000s.



Source: United Nations Comtrade (2015).



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Table 1: Deepening Economic Ties between China and Latin America
Unit: million US\$

Country	China's FDI to Latin America (2011)	FDI from China (Percent of Total, 2011)	Latin America's FDI to China (2011)	FDI from Latin America (Percent of Total, 2011)
Latin America	11,935	15.99	12,054	10.78
Brazil	126	5	43	0.06*
Mexico	41		45	
Argentina	185		7	
Venezuela	81		2	
Chile	13		17	
Colombia	33		0.01	
Virgin Island	6,208**		9,724***	
Caiman Islands	4,936**		2,241***	

Sources: *Yellow Book of Latin America and the Caribbean (2012-2013)*, Social Sciences Academic Press (China: Beijing), 2013.

* As % of Brazil investment overseas

** Investment from Chinese entities registered in the island(s).

***Investment from companies registered in the island(s).

While trade has been the central focus, the literature also discusses Chinese investment in the region (see Table 1). Latin American leaders excitedly anticipated a tsunami of Chinese investment after state visits from Chinese leaders and investment did increase. Almost half of China's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) outflows in 2006 went to Latin America (OECD, 2008), while China accounted for about 10 percent of total foreign investment in Latin America by 2010 (Shambaugh and Murphy, 2012). Gonzalez-Vicente's (2012) case study of Chinese investment in Peruvian mining showed that markets, rather than political factors, determines Chinese investment strategies. Nevertheless, Chinese investments have been a point of some contention. Brazilian leaders in particular have complained about the relative lack of investment, going so far as to complain that Brazil had been "deceived" by Chinese promises (Johnson and Wasson, 2011). China has also been criticized for "phantom" investments, with Chinese companies hiding profits in Caribbean tax havens rather than investing in more productive economic sectors (He, 2008). Regardless, the literature's focus on the dynamic economic relations between China and Latin America occupy center stage in the extant literature.

While Sino-Latin American economic ties have grown substantially, the relative value of the region to China is still relatively small (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2014). Given the relatively recent nature of the relationship and the fact that Latin America only accounts for about 7-8 percent of China's imports and exports, we expect experts and educated youth will be somewhat cautious when evaluating Latin America. In an innovative

study using Chinese netizens, or members of China's online community, Shen (2012) finds Latin America occupied a minor topic. In fact, he finds that China's regional rival Japan is addressed about 100 times more in online forums than Latin America is, even though he sampled forums around the time of top Chinese leaders such as Hu Jintau and Wu Bangguo's visits to Latin America. Surprisingly, many Chinese internet posters saw Latin America as nearly as poor as Africa, despite the fact that Latin America's per capita GNI of \$9314 actually outstrips China (\$6560) (World Bank, 2014). However, netizens correctly identified the enormous gap between rich and poor in Latin America, as well as the region's history of financial crisis. Taken together, the growth in economic ties combined with uneven knowledge of the region's economies will influence attitudes.² Namely, we expect Chinese experts to be relatively positive about Sino-Latin American economic relations, while the respondents in our planned survey will display cautious, yet positive attitudes. Furthermore, experts and our respondents will prioritize China's major trading partners, especially Brazil, when reflecting on relations with Latin America.

While the literature's primary focus has been Sino-Latin American economic relations, much of this discussion takes place in the shadow of changing political relations. Over 100 Latin American and Caribbean heads of state have visited China and multiple Chinese leaders have visited Latin America in recent years (Johnson and Wasson, 2011; Shambaugh and Murphy, 2012), including President Hu and President Xi. China was able to convince Costa Rica to switch its diplomatic recognition from the Republic of China to the People's Republic (Ellis, 2009) and other Central American and Caribbean states were likely to follow, at least until Taiwan's government and Chinese leaders tacitly agreed to table this competition. Many Latin American leaders see China's rise as an antidote to U.S. domination, though China has been very cautious on this front. China sought and gained observer status in the Organization of American States and the Latin American Parliament, as well as sponsoring exchanges between the CCP and parties in Latin America (Shambaugh and Murphy, 2012). The Chinese military has quietly increased military sales and education exchanges (Watson, 2010), but has maintained a relatively small footprint in the region.

Interestingly, this stands in sharp contrast to the desires of many nationalist sentiments found in China's online forums (Shen, 2012). These netizens tend to have a decidedly Realist world-view and see political and military links as an important

² A small, but growing literature examines whether public opinion, especially online posts, influences specific Chinese foreign policies. Early evidence suggests these online posts can shape government policy. See Wang (2012), Lei (2011) and Zhao (2014).

counterbalance to U.S. attempts to isolate China from its Asian neighbors. Furthermore, online forums mentioned the late Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez, longtime Cuban leader Fidel Castro, and famed revolutionary Che Guevara far more than any other Latin Americans. Consequently, we expect experts to largely follow the government's cautious, pragmatic attempts to expand political links with Latin America, while our respondents will likely adopt more Realist, or even aggressive nationalist attitudes toward expanded political relations with Latin America.

While economic and political relations dominate coverage of Sino-Latin American relations, some research also examines changing cultural links. Ethnic Chinese communities are found throughout Latin America, with approximately 1 percent of survey respondents self-identifying as "Asian" according to the Latinobarometer (Latinobarometer, Various Years). Not all who identify as "Asian" in these surveys are ethnic Chinese, yet ties between these China and Diaspora communities have been the focus of CCTV broadcasts (CCTV, 2013). China has opened a number of "Confucius Institutes" in Latin America and Chinese tourism and student exchanges have grown (Shambaugh and Murphy, 2012). Furthermore, the growing popularity of football (soccer) in China and the awarding of both the World Cup (hosted summer 2014) and Olympics to Brazil likely increased Chinese interest in and knowledge of Latin America. In short, we expect experts and educated youth to value increased cultural relations in addition to economic and political ties.

Chinese Experts

The lack of historical ties and the vast distances between China and most of Latin America mean Latin American experts are traditionally rare in China. However, just as Sino-Latin American economic relations rapidly expanded, a growing circle of research institutions and researchers focus on the country's relationships with Latin America. The two main research bodies, the Latin American Institute of China's Social Science Academy (CSSA) and the Latin American Institute of Research of Contemporary International Relations, and more than a dozen top universities research institutions on Latin America give ample opportunity to study Chinese expert views of Latin America. Furthermore, China's expanded economic ties with Latin America caused a number of central government ministries and large state-owned companies to establish their own research arms to assist policy analysis of the region. These experts provide frank assessments of the relationship—seeking to better understand not only trade and investment, but also the middle-income trap and the region's diversity.

Furthermore, these experts often have the ear of Chinese policy-makers (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2012).

As expected based on the extant literature, experts examine the growing economic ties between Latin America as a region, as well as ties with particular countries. This is especially true of trade relationships (Wu, Liu, and Cai, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014; Wu 2013). The Latin America Institute of the CSSA's *Yellow Book of Latin America* consistently details the relationship between China's overall strategy for international economic cooperation and Latin America. First, experts argue the government seeks to secure access to energy resources and raw materials. Second, they state that the government seeks to enhance the position of Chinese companies in the global value chain (Wu, 2013). The latter gained emphasis as the largest state-owned enterprises have become more competitive with Western multinationals. Third, these experts argue Latin America's continued growth during the late 2000s recession that gripped the United States and the European Union offered a new and expanding export market for Chinese wares (Economic Daily, 2012). In short, China's leading experts on Latin America view the region as important to sustaining China's economic growth and expanding its role in the global economy, calling the 2000s a "golden decade" in Sino-Latin American trade relations (China News Net, 2012).

In addition to their focus on the region as a whole, Chinese experts also emphasize bilateral trade relationships with key Latin American partners. As expected, experts paid attention to both the scope of economic ties, and to whether trade was expanding or contracting. For example, Brazil is China's leading economic partner, and predictably received the greatest attention by experts. Similarly, while Argentina's economy is nearly twice the size of Chile's, trade with Argentina stagnated over the last few years, while trade with Chile nearly doubled (China's Statistics Yearbook, 2013). Chinese researchers described the relationship with Argentina as "experiencing ups and downs" (Wu, Liu, and Cai, 2011: 189) or "steady" (Wu, Liu, and Cai, 2013: 169). Conversely, researchers characterized the relationship with Chile as "continuing enhancement" (Wu, Liu, and Cai, 2011: 241) and "moving up to the next level" given the expanded number of trade deals (Wu, Liu, and Cai, 2013: 222). Researchers positively noted rapidly expanding trade ties with Brazil, as well as a series of free trade agreements with Chile, Costa Rica, and Peru. However, they also worry about trade disputes in the WTO with Mexico and the perception that Mexico and China are competing over similar export profiles. This mirrors concerns found in the Latin American-centered literature (Lora, 2007; Rosen, 2003; Shambaugh and Murphy, 2012). Both show that experts understand the implications of these economic variations on bilateral trade relations

across the region. In sum, Chinese expert opinions regarding trade largely fit the extant literature's expectations regarding bilateral relations.

While trade relations occupy experts' main focus, as we predicted, Chinese investment in the region also received substantial attention. The financial crisis of the late 2000s left global markets shaken. Many Chinese companies invested in infrastructure and large industrial projects throughout Latin America, offering generous terms endorsed at the highest level of government (CNTV News Network, 2013). However, experts note that treating Latin America as a top destination for Chinese investors is not without risk. Much of the investment is tied to "mega" projects that require huge financial commitments. With the vast majority of Chinese investment going to energy and infrastructure projects experts worry that the Latin American public rarely sees the benefits of Chinese investment in these projects (Li, 2012).

Experts tend to view investment in particular Latin American countries in the same fashion they view trade relationships. For example, experts perceived Brazil as instrumental in helping expand China's reach into regional financial institutions. Similarly, evaluations of Chile grew due to increased trade; investment deals boosted the importance of Chile in the eyes of China's experts (Wu, Liu, and Cai, 2013). Again, expert views of Chinese investment in Latin America largely track their views of trade, and both support our expectations based on the extant literature.

In addition to evaluations of economic relations, Chinese experts also address changing political relationships between China and Latin America in ways consistent with the extant literature. First, experts see Latin America as a testing ground for China's newfound international influence. The region allows the People's Republic to test an omni-directional policy far beyond China's traditional sphere of influence. Second, China's expanding trade with and investment in Latin America received far less political scrutiny and international backlash than similar moves in Africa (see Aklilu, 2014). Third, Chinese experts see expanding economic and political relationships as a way to shift international power to the Global South, as well as a way to contain Taiwan (Wu, 2013). Taken as a whole, experts argue expanded political ties offer China numerous opportunities to test the country's political muscle.

Nevertheless, Chinese experts also note the risks inherent in political engagement with Latin America. The electoral cycle in Latin America often causes substantial shifts in foreign policies, while internal instability also contributes to uncertainty about bilateral relations (Dong, 2013; Zhang, 2013). Similarly, researchers understand that Latin America's

economic and political diversity mean China cannot follow a “one-size fits all” foreign policy in the region. However, the lack of country experts inhibits the development of country-specific foreign policies (Wu, Liu, and Cai, 2012: 63). Finally, Chinese researchers argue China needs both an overall policy to engage with Latin America *and* strategies for engaging with individual states. This dual strategy is needed because unlike earlier times the Chinese government cannot expand into Latin America without being noticed (Wu, 2013).

Interestingly, Chinese experts focusing on Sino-Latin American relations pay almost no attention to cultural exchanges. Despite the government’s move to open Confucius Institutes across Latin America, to encourage students from Latin America to study in China, and attempts to connect with Chinese Diaspora communities in the region, these moves generated little interest amongst scholars of Sino-Latin American relations.

To sum up, experts at China’s leading research institutes on Latin America view the relationship much as the extant literature predicts. The vast majority of scholars focus on economic ties, with the majority of attention paid to trade relations, though investment also takes a prominent place in discussions. Scholars view these relations with cautious optimism, and pay close attention not only to the region, but also to variations in trade and investment opportunities across Latin America. Experts also view Sino-Latin American political relations in positive, yet cautious terms. The region provides a safe place for China to flex its international influence without provoking the backlash seen in other regions such as Africa. With the exception of a lack of attention to cultural exchanges, these patterns largely reflect our *a priori* expectations based on the literature outlined in the previous section.

Educated Youth

In order to examine individual Chinese attitudes, opinions, and beliefs about Latin America we conducted a survey in Eastern China during the summer of 2013 (see Appendix). We enlisted the help of research assistants to distribute the survey to approximately 600 undergraduate and graduate students, mid-level party officials, and academics living in a provincial capital city. This sample of convenience allows us to gain insights into how relatively well-educated, middle and upper-income Chinese view Sino-Latin American relations. The only previous survey on the topic that we are aware of was conducted in 2007-2008 by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Liu, 2008). While this survey drew on a random sample of the Chinese public, it largely demonstrated that the average Chinese knows little about Latin America. Our sample has the advantage of tapping into individuals that are more likely to have knowledge and interest in China’s foreign relations, and as such gives us

insights into how influential Chinese view the relationship (Blair, Czaja, and Blair, 2014). Furthermore, Wang (2014) and others have demonstrated the efficacy of surveying educated youth in order to understand Chinese views.

To gauge the most basic levels of knowledge we start our analysis with two simple questions. First, we simply asked whether respondents knew Brazil would host the 2016 Summer Olympics. We found over 90 percent of respondents were aware of this basic fact. Second, we asked interviewees to name a famous Latin American. Only 407 respondents, or about two-thirds, named a famous Latin American though some of the individuals named were not Latin Americans. Of the individuals named nearly 90 percent fell into just two categories of persons—athletes followed closely by political leaders (see Figure 6). Interestingly, the late Hugo Chávez was the most named Latin American, showing up on nearly 20 percent of surveys, while Fidel Castro and Che Guevara were both named on just fewer than 10 percent of the surveys. The results mirror Shen's (2012) findings regarding the focus on Latin America's leftist leaders. However, international football stars Messi and Ronaldo³, FIFA Player of the Year winners, were named far more often than either Castro or Che. No other political leader is named more than a handful of times, including Simon Bolivar, while football legends Pele, Maradona, and near legend Kaká were all named repeatedly. Nobel Prize winning author Gabriel García Márquez was the only other individual named repeatedly. Regardless, these questions reveal limited understanding and focus on one of Latin America's chief exports—footballers.

³ It was unclear whether respondents were referring to Ronaldo the former Brazilian superstar and second leading scorer in World Cup history, or Ronaldo the Portuguese superstar and leader of the famed *Real Madrid* football club. Most are probably referring to the Portuguese star that is currently playing (and not Latin American), though we cannot be certain.

Figure 3: Famous Latin Americans Named According to Educated Youth

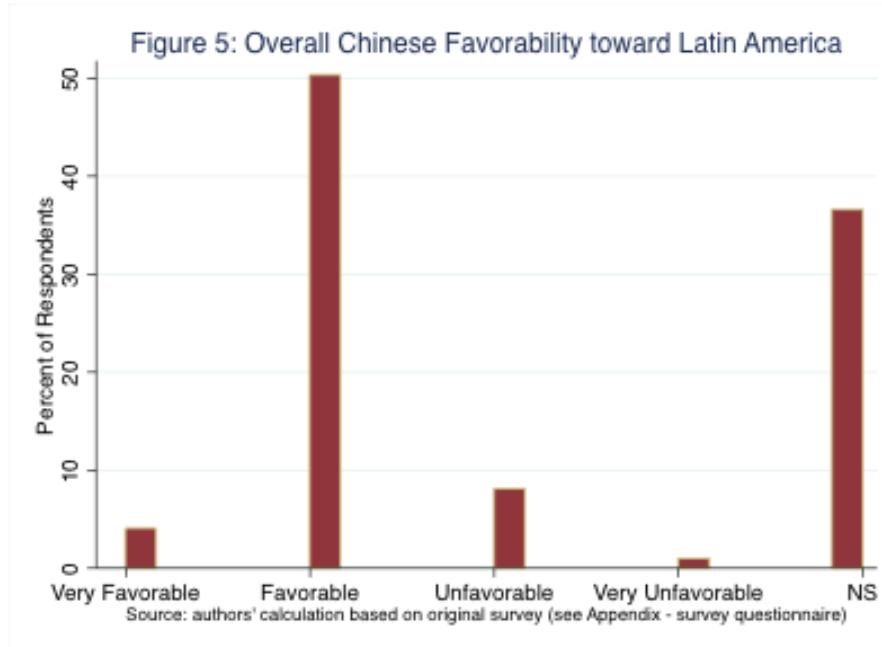
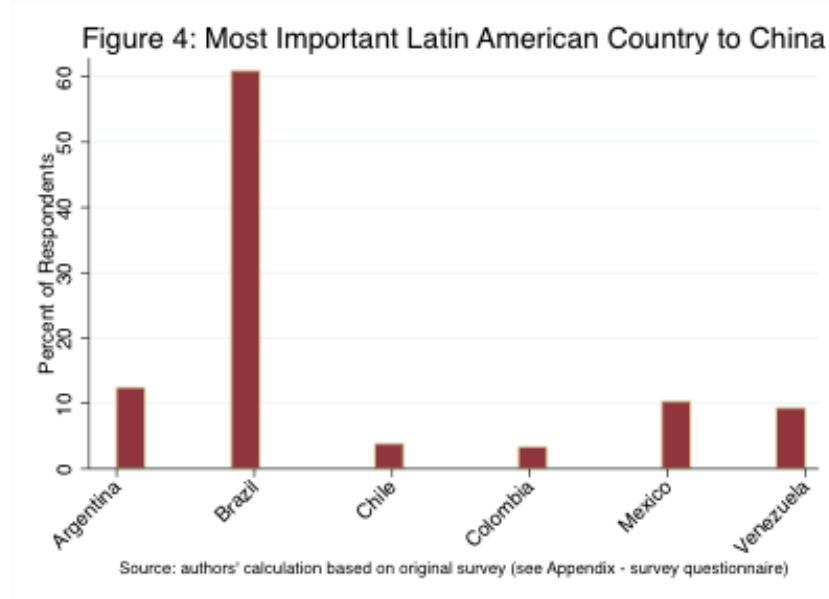


Source: Authors' calculation based on original survey
(See Appendix—survey questionnaire).

Moving on to gauge Chinese attitudes regarding overall Sino-Latin American relations, we asked two questions. First, we asked respondents to rank order the importance of Latin America to China when compared with nine other regions of interest including: the United States/North America, N.E. Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, Europe, Africa, Australia and Oceania, the Middle East, and S.E. Asia. Despite the rapid expansion of trade ties between China and Latin America, this relationship is recent. Consequently, we expected respondents to rank Latin America as much less important than the government or experts. Second, we asked respondents whether they had a favorable or unfavorable view of Latin America. Here we expected respondents to adopt a cautiously optimistic stance, given both the government's and the experts' views of Latin America.

In general, we find Chinese rank Sino-Latin American relations as relatively unimportant and hold mostly positive views of the region. On a ten-point scale, where 1 is the most important and 10 is the least important, our respondents ranked Latin America a 6.90 on average (see Figure 3). Respondents ranked relations with the United States (1.75), N.E. Asia (3.20), and Europe (3.76) as far more important to China, and only Australia and Oceania (7.17) was rated as less important on average. Similarly, about half of respondents viewed Latin America favorably, though with nearly 40 percent expressing uncertainty, respondents

are far less sure than the government or the experts (see Figure 4). In sum, Chinese in our sample see Latin America as less important compared with region experts, despite expanding economic ties.



While results offer key insights, we are also interested in how Chinese view individual countries in the region. China has nurtured ties throughout the region, but as mentioned in the literature review and in the section on expert views, Brazil occupies a central focus of Chinese foreign policy. Similarly, Argentina, Chile, and Venezuela provide key exports that help fuel Chinese growth, while Mexico and Central American states are in much greater economic competition regarding export markets (Johnson and Wasson, 2011). Given these

ties we expect respondents to view Brazil as the most important country in the region for China, and that favorability towards individual countries will track with trade relationships.

Here we find respondents' attitudes meet our *a priori* expectations. Over 60 percent of respondents ranked Sino-Brazilian relations as the most important, with Argentina, Mexico, and Venezuela each ranked as most important by only about 10 percent of respondents (see Figure 5). In our analysis of *negative* Chinese attitudes toward specific Latin American countries, we do find that trade links seem to affect attitudes with one key exception. Fewer than 7 percent of respondents held negative views of Brazil, and only about 10 percent held negative views of Argentina and Chile (see Table 2). Similarly, Mexico's export profile often puts it in direct competition with China and over 30 percent of respondents viewed Mexico unfavorably. Surprisingly, over 25 percent of respondents viewed Venezuela negatively despite increases in fuel imports and the late President Chávez's desire for closer ties. Taken in combination with our respondents' emphasis on Sino-United States relations, this puzzling finding makes more sense. Chávez had a famously rocky relationship with the United States, and while Chinese leaders were keen to gain access to Venezuelan oil, they were unlikely to support Chávez if it threatened relations with Washington, DC. This indicates that nationalism expressed in online forums (Shen 2012) may be outweighed by Realism within educated youth. In short, Chinese appear to view countries in Latin America largely in terms of strategic economic ties, but also appear to take politics into account.

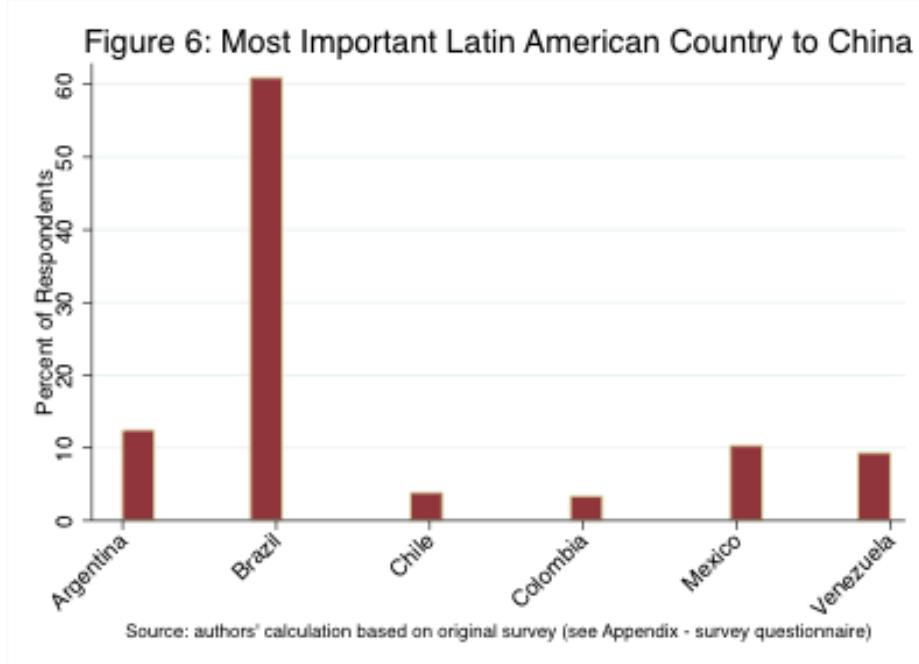


Table 3: Negative Chinese Attitudes toward Individual Countries in Latin America.

Country	Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable
Argentina	9.4	0.8
Brazil	5.5	0.9
Chile	9.3	2.1
Colombia	17.5	3.9
Mexico	26.7	6.1
Venezuela	21.4	4.9

Note: column totals represent the percentage of respondents holding negative views of a country (or respondents stating an opinion).

Source: authors' calculation based on original survey (see Appendix - survey questionnaire).

Conclusions

The growth in trade, investment, aid, state visits, and cultural exchanges between China and Latin America has led to an explosion in research on Sino-Latin American relations. China is now the leading trade partner with several Latin American countries, as the region's comparative advantage in the areas of foodstuffs and minerals has helped fuel Chinese economic expansion. The region is also increasingly a destination for a variety of manufactured goods and huge investment projects from China. Nevertheless, the recent rise in Sino-Latin American economic and political links leaves a number of questions about the scope and nature of the relationship unanswered.

The extant literature largely focuses on whether China's rise portends positive or negative economic outcomes for Latin America, or whether China threatens United States' interests in Latin America.⁴ A smaller body of literature examines how Chinese officials view the relationship. While these avenues of research inform our own investigation, we set out to explore how Chinese outside of the government view the relationship. We expected economics and political consideration to largely shape attitudes toward Latin America, with the newness of the relationship resulting in cautious optimism by the Chinese.

Overall we found the data largely supported our expectations. Chinese experts and academics largely view the relationship in strategic economic and political terms, mirroring

⁴ Several Chinese researchers recently noted the need for closer attention to the "soft-power" side of the relationship with Latin America. For examples, see Qi, (2011) or Sun (2014).

official government views. The respondents in our original survey also tend to view Sino-Latin American relations in economic and political terms, though with greater skepticism. We find that Chinese place a premium on relations with its near neighbors, the United States, and Europe when compared with Latin America. Respondents see Latin America in generally favorable, or at least neutral terms, though this varies significantly by country. Just as China has cultivated stronger ties Brazil, respondents have overwhelmingly favorable views of their fellow BRIC, while holding more negative evaluations of not only manufacturing rival Mexico, but also of erstwhile ally Venezuela. Culturally, we found that Latin America's football heroes are more famous than even the region's communist and socialist revolutionaries. Finally and perhaps most significantly, we found a large gap between the level of sophistication behind the views and perspectives of the researchers and policy analysts on Latin America and the generally lack of knowledge and understanding of Latin America among the well-educated youth included in our survey.

While the lack of emotional factors helped the Chinese researchers to reach frank and balanced views on Latin America more than they would have in writing about relations with other regions, for example, Japan, it created what we call a vacuum in Chinese public views of the region. The vacuum potentially breeds misunderstanding or misperceptions when crisis emerges in bilateral relations (for example, when the Mexican government first granted and then revoked a contract for a consortium backed by China to build Mexico's first high-speed railway). It may make China less prepared to handle the surging economic ties and growing political or even strategic relationships with Latin America. The problem was further compounded, as one Chinese expert pointed out, by the low level resources devoted to study of Latin America especially among Chinese companies doing business in the region. This tends to inhibit: 1) lasting and effective channels of communications, 2) coordination between government-funded research institutions and newly created research/study arms by universities and local governments, and 3) communication between well-qualified specialists and the general public (China.com.cn, 2013). Combined these issue may leave the government and the public ill prepared for the vastly expanded relationship with Latin America as a region and individual countries.

In future work we plan to further advance both the theory and methods used to study Sino-Latin American relations. The literature on foreign policy attitudes is somewhat underdeveloped in the field, but this is particularly true regarding Sino-Latin American relations. With the rapid pace of development in Sino-Latin American relationship, there is a need to do follow-up surveys as we did in 2013 to allow us do comparative studies in Chinese

perceptions of the Latin America over time. Though we are pleased that our survey results largely match our expectations based on the literature, we also plan to use advanced statistical methodologies to examine whether Chinese nationalism significantly influences attitudes toward Sino-Latin American relations. In conclusion, just as Sino-Latin American relations exploded over the last decade, we see ample opportunities to further explore how the government, experts, and the public view these burgeoning relationships.

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Appendix

Authors' Survey/Questionnaire

Latin America in the Eyes of Chinese Public

中国人眼中的拉美

Part I: Personal Data (please choose one)

1. Gender: a. Male b. Female
2. Age: a. under 18 b. 19-25 c. 26-55 d. over 56
3. Education: a. High school or under b. College
 c. Master's degree d. Ph.D. degree
4. Occupation: a. Student b. Worker c. Civil Servants
 d. Professional Businessman f. Teacher
 g. Service sector h. Others
5. Has anyone (including you) in your family traveled abroad? a. Yes b. No
If yes, has him/her been to Latin America? a. Yes b. No
6. How will you describe your level of English? a. Fluent b. Not bad
 c. A little d. None
7. Average family income (per year, Yuan): a. Under 50,000 b. 50,001-
100,000 c. 100,001-200,000 d. 200,000-
500,000 e. over 500,000
8. Do you (or your family) own more than one apartment or house? a. Yes b.
No
9. Do you or your family own more than one car? a. Yes b.
No
11. Is there anyone in your family or among your direct relatives who is currently studying or
working abroad? a. Yes b.
No
12. How informed are you of current world affairs?
 a. Very informed b. Somewhat informed
 c. Not very informed d. Not informed at all
13. How informed are you of Latin America

- a. Very confident
 - b. Somewhat confident
 - c. Somewhat unconfident
 - d. Very unconfident
 - e. No opinion
4. Do you think that China is ready to become a global leader?
- a. Ready
 - b. Not ready
 - c. No opinion
5. In your view, what is the most urgent task in China's relations with other countries?
- a. Use economic ties such as trade to help China develop
 - b. Improve China's security
 - c. Secure China's energy supply
 - d. Expand China's global influence
 - e. Spread Chinese culture
 - f. Promote the "China model of development"
6. Are you satisfied with the current level of influence China has in world affairs?
- a. Very satisfied
 - b. Somewhat satisfied
 - c. Somewhat unsatisfied
 - d. Very unsatisfied
7. Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable overall opinion of the United States.
- a. Very favorable
 - b. Somewhat favorable
 - c. Somewhat unfavorable
 - d. Very unfavorable
 - e. Difficult to tell
8. Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable overall opinion of Africa.
- a. Very favorable
 - b. Somewhat favorable
 - c. Somewhat unfavorable
 - d. Very unfavorable
 - e. Difficult to tell
9. Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable overall opinion of the Middle East.
- a. Very favorable
 - b. Somewhat favorable
 - c. Somewhat unfavorable

- d. Very unfavorable
 - e. Difficult to tell
10. Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable overall opinion of Latin America.
- a. Very favorable
 - b. Somewhat favorable
 - c. Somewhat unfavorable
 - d. Very unfavorable
 - e. Difficult to tell
11. Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable overall opinion of Argentina.
- a. Very favorable
 - b. Somewhat favorable
 - c. Somewhat unfavorable
 - d. Very unfavorable
 - e. Not sure
12. Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable overall opinion of Brazil.
- a. Very favorable
 - b. Somewhat favorable
 - c. Somewhat unfavorable
 - d. Very unfavorable
 - e. Not sure
13. Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable overall opinion of Chile.
- a. Very favorable
 - b. Somewhat favorable
 - c. Somewhat unfavorable
 - d. Very unfavorable
 - e. Not sure
14. Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable overall opinion of Colombia.
- a. Very favorable
 - b. Somewhat favorable
 - c. Somewhat unfavorable
 - d. Very unfavorable
 - e. Not sure
15. Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable overall opinion of Mexico?
- a. Very favorable
 - b. Somewhat favorable
 - c. Somewhat unfavorable
 - d. Very unfavorable
 - e. Not sure

16. Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable overall opinion of Venezuela?
- Very favorable
 - Somewhat favorable
 - Somewhat unfavorable
 - Very unfavorable
 - Not sure
17. Of the six countries in Latin America mentioned above, which country do you view as the most important to China?
- Argentina
 - Brazil
 - Chile
 - Colombia
 - Mexico
 - Venezuela
18. In terms of Chinese policy toward Latin America, how important do you think each of the following is, very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important:
- Encouraging investment opportunities for Chinese business in Latin America
 - Very important
 - Somewhat important
 - Somewhat unimportant
 - Very unimportant
 - Promoting the export of Chinese goods to Latin America
 - Very important
 - Somewhat important
 - Somewhat unimportant
 - Very unimportant
 - Ensuring supply of raw materials, food, and energy to China
 - Very important
 - Somewhat important
 - Somewhat unimportant
 - Very unimportant
 - Promoting China's image and international standing in the Latin America
 - Very important
 - Somewhat important
 - Somewhat unimportant
 - Very unimportant
 - Countering the influence of the United States in Latin America
 - Very important
 - Somewhat important
 - Somewhat unimportant

4. Very unimportant
- f. Developing cultural and sporting links with Latin America
1. Very important
 2. Somewhat important
 3. Somewhat unimportant
 4. Very unimportant
19. Please tell me if you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree, or completely disagree with this statement: "It's necessary for the future of our country to be more active in Latin America."
- a. Completely agree
 - b. Mostly agree
 - c. Mostly disagree
 - d. Completely disagree
20. What is the most important barrier to China in its relations with Latin America?
- a. Language
 - b. Distance
 - c. Lack of knowledge of Latin America
 - d. Lack of interest in Latin America
 - e. Lack of common interests
21. In the next ten years, will Latin America as a region become more important to China than
- | | | |
|--------------------------|-----|----|
| a. US and North America | Yes | No |
| b. Northeast Asia | Yes | No |
| c. South Asia | Yes | No |
| d. Central Asia | Yes | No |
| e. Europe | Yes | No |
| f. Africa | Yes | No |
| g. Middle East | Yes | No |
| h. Australia and Oceania | Yes | No |
| i. Southeast Asia | Yes | No |
22. Which country will host the 2016 Summer Olympics
- a. Russia
 - b. Mexico
 - c. Brazil
 - d. United States

When you think of famous Latin Americans, who is the first person that you think of? Please write that person's name in the space provided? _____