

Final Report
Faculty Research Grant, Summer 2006
Submitted by Hayley Froysland
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Description of Grant-Supported Activity

The ultimate objective of this research project is to complete a manuscript that will contribute to the historical literature on nation-building in Colombia, and Latin America in general, by analyzing the essential, but overlooked, social and cultural dimensions of the nation-building process. Rather than conducting a more traditional analysis of the political and economic characteristics of nation-building, this project is unique in its approach to the questions concerning nation formation and the attempt to form a national identity and national community. It is an intellectual, social, and cultural history which fills a void in the existing scholarship by analyzing the gendered, moralized, and medicalized elite discourse on progress, poverty, citizenship, and nation in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Colombia. Central to the study is an analysis of the relationship between social classes during a period of rapid urbanization and modernization when various elites reassessed the meanings of poverty, the poor, their relationship to the poor and what these signified in terms of the national body. Thus, this study also uncovers the experiences of the marginal poor. A central argument is that the creation of a more moral and harmonious social order through charity, public health, and moral reform was deemed as fundamental, and perhaps more critical, to progress and nation than material concerns, though they have received little attention from historians.

This project is based on my Ph.D. dissertation, completed at the University of Virginia. In order to submit the manuscript for publication, I proposed to use the funds from the Faculty Research Grant to engage in a more complete reading and analysis of several secondary works, conduct primary research, and write an additional chapter during the summer of 2006. The reading and analysis of numerous secondary works was designed to allow me to enhance the study by further contextualizing the themes of poverty, Catholic morality, reform, charity, and public health by making comparisons with the experience in other Latin American countries, Europe, and the United States. As mentioned, I also proposed to engage in an analysis of primary documents from the period 1918-1936 that were collected on a previous trip to Bogotá in order to write one additional chapter. This chapter is necessary to expand my original discussion of public health and Catholic Social Action from 1918-1936 following an influenza epidemic that would significantly improve the manuscript as a whole by permitting me to better analyze continuities and changes in social assistance practices, the influence of medical doctors on state practices, the ideological differences between Liberals and Conservatives, and the changing roles, or changing expectations of those roles, of the church and the state in social assistance.

Status of the Project

With the generous assistance of a Faculty Research Grant, I was able to make some progress on what I realized was an overly ambitious project for the summer months. I proposed to accomplish two large tasks that I now realize should have been divided into two separate projects to be carried out over two summers. Nonetheless, I did achieve some of my objectives.

First, I read several secondary sources, primarily in the fields of public health, reform, and charity in Latin America. Many of these were books I had previously read, but needed to review in order to better contextualize these themes in a comparative framework and contend with other interpretations offered.

Others were books that were published after the dissertation was written. Secondly, I also spent some time reading and analyzing a number of primary sources in order to better determine the role of medical doctors and their influence on state practices, in particular. Though I did not yet write the additional chapter as proposed, this work is allowing me to better analyze the continuities and changes in social assistance practices, the changing roles, or changing expectations of those roles, of the church and the state in social assistance, the ideological differences between Liberals and Conservatives, and, in particular, the role and influence of medical doctors on state practices.

Finally, though I need more time to write the additional chapter, a related project did emerge from the research completed over the summer. I made progress working with primary sources written by medical doctors and elite politicians in the early twentieth century (additional sources I realized I needed to read as I progressed with the project). The results of this work and the ideas formulated will be articulated in the additional chapter of the manuscript, but they will also appear as a conference paper. Though not originally proposed, as a result of the work completed over the summer, I submitted a paper proposal as part of a panel for the Latin American Studies Association conference that will be held in Montreal, Canada in October of 2007. The paper and panel were accepted. Thus, the project will indeed result in the production of a conference paper and, in the near future, a book manuscript once I am able to write the additional chapter.