

Discussions of US Imperialism in Latin America and the Pacific in Historical Writing

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Introduction

The Spanish-American War, or as historian Michael Gonzales-Cruz more accurately entitles it, the Spanish-Cuban-American-Philippine-Puerto-Rican War of 1898, often marks the starting point in scholarship about the nature of US imperialism in Latin America and the Pacific.¹ Tensions over Spanish rule in Cuba combined with the yellow journalism of the late nineteenth century and the sinking of the American battleship Maine in Havana Harbour, arguably led to the necessity of war. The Treaty of Paris, the concluding agreement between the two countries, assigned the Spanish colonies of Puerto Rico, the Philippines and Guam to the US, essentially bringing an end to the Spanish empire and spawning an American one. Cuba was put under temporary American control and Spain was remunerated for its losses. The war and subsequent treaty sparked long-lasting debate in the popular press about the idea of an imperial American state, and since then, historians have focused a great deal of attention on both the causes of the war and the nature of the control that the US had and has over the countries that were the spoils of it. The war signified the emergence of the United States as an externally focused world power. It left the US with a physical and commercial empire and the impetus for American nation-building activities in countries like Haiti and the Dominican Republic.² The presence of formal American control over former Spanish colonial possessions forced historians to ask questions about American influence abroad that had never previously been required. How was this new international activity to be defined? Was the US now an empire? How was intervention in what would have been sovereign countries justified given the anti-imperial sentiment of domestic popular opinion? These questions form the basis of the historiography about US imperialism. The tendency in the literature to begin in the 1890s and to focus on either Latin America or the Pacific is due to the consequences of the Spanish-American War. The war has also directed historians in large part, to regard imperialism as an extra-continental venture. They look first to foreign countries to examine the nature of American power and only more recently have begun to consider its effects on inhabitants of the continental United States.

This paper will pay particular attention to the historical writing concerning Puerto Rico, Cuba, Haiti, the Philippines and Hawai'i. It will ask about the nature of US imperialism and how the definition of imperialism by historians has changed over time. It will also examine the changing questions that scholars have asked about imperialism, where they have sought the answers and with which sources they interact to draw their conclusions.

As early as the nineteen thirties, historians such as Julius William Pratt sought an explanation to the 'new imperialism' of the late nineteenth century, namely the territorial gains for the US following the Spanish-American war. They tended to focus on domestic political factors. Racist expansionism, ideas about hemispheric defence and public opinion were the spaces in which American power could be defined and explained. Imperialism was direct political control, government documents were the primary source of information and intervention in Latin American and Pacific countries was discussed in the context of domestic politics. Historians of

¹ Gonzalez-Cruz, Michael, *The U.S Invasion of Puerto Rico: Occupation and Resistance to the Colonial State, 1898 to the Present Latin American Perspectives*, Vol: 25, Issue: 5, 1998, p 7

² Edgerton, Robert, B., *Remember the Maine: To Hell with Spain: America's 1898 Adventure in Imperialism* (Edwin Mellon: New York, 2005), p 3-9

the nineteen sixties and seventies then complicated that understanding of US involvement in Latin America and the Pacific.³ Those later scholars (of the Wisconsin School) led by William Appleman Williams, sought to understand US imperialism in economic terms, arguing that it was the need to secure an open market for American natural resources and goods that characterized US intervention in foreign countries. The nature of American power could also be economic, they argued, and that kind of imperial power functioned through the emerging global marketplace.⁴ The commonality in both of these explanations lay in the assumption that imperialism was necessarily characterized by direct military and political intervention. The contentious issue for both Pratt and Williams was the driving force of US imperialism rather than the nature of the 'on the ground' functionality of it. Both scholars are representative of the time period in which they were writing and illustrate an expansion of the definition of imperialism in the historiography. And though they assigned the impetus for American expansion to different factors, they both prioritized the search for its explanation.

Moving chronologically closer to the present in the scholarship of the field, historians such as Emily Rosenberg are important as they began to look to other actors, seeking a more nuanced definition of imperialism. Private business and individual citizens, Rosenberg argued, could also exercise power that was not only political or economic, but cultural.⁵ This cultural definition of imperialism and the identification of historical actors outside of government who had a role in its practice have recently led to some extremely interesting scholarship and have allowed the field to expand broadly. The questions that historians now ask about US imperialism cover a wide range of both geographic spaces and theoretical and empirical scopes. This paper will trace the changing definition of imperialism through four phases in the historiography. It will show that questions asked about US imperialism have changed drastically over time, from a focus on how the domestic American context spurred international intervention, to asking about the nature of that intervention, to analyzing US imperialism through the lenses of race or gender or from the perspective of the country that had been subject to it. Without the expansion of the term imperialism to include cultural and economic dominance as well as political control, historians currently would not be able to ask the more expanded and nuanced questions that they are. The first three historiographical phases in the study of US imperialism have allowed the fourth, the current scholarship, to work with the expanded definition to examine US foreign policy in ways that would not have been possible had political control been its only litmus test.

Understanding 'new imperialism'

Writing from the vantage point of the interwar period, scholars of the 1930s sought to explain the changed nature of American foreign policy, the 'new imperialism' that they were experiencing. Greatly differing from the concept of imperialism as something that only traditional European colonial empires such as Britain, undertook; historians recognized that the government being in control of the former colonies of Spain and sending personnel to at least 8 Latin American countries represented imperialism, but of a new kind.⁶ Historians wanted to know how America

³ Pratt, Julius W., *The Expansionists of 1898: The Acquisition of Hawaii and the Spanish Islands* (Johns Hopkins Press: New York, 1936), p 2-33

⁴ Williams, William A., *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (Dell Publishing Co.: New York, 1959), p 12-16

⁵ Rosenberg, Emily, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890 – 1945* (Hill and Wang: New York, 1982), p 230-231

⁶ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/imperialism>, December 23, 2010, 11:01 am

had come to exercise so much power outside of its continental borders. US imperialism in both Latin America and the Pacific was obvious; there were troops on the ground in Puerto Rico and political control of Hawai'i had become so absolute that the country was annexed and given statehood in the union. Historians of this time wanted to know why and how the US had come to act as an imperial power. Their question was: what drove US intervention in these countries?

Julius William Pratt's book *The Expansionists of 1898* provides a representative example of the trends in the historiography surrounding US imperialism written in the nineteen thirties. The book focuses on American involvement in Hawai'i. Pratt sought to "trace the rise and development in the United States of the movement for over-seas expansion...specifically the Hawaiian question."⁷ To explain the rise, he looked to the motives of the various politicians and diplomats involved in the decision making process. Taken for granted was the fact that American power abroad was exercised through the military and that the forces that propelled the military westward were intimately intertwined with the domestic political culture of the time.⁸ Pratt's definition of imperialism was very narrow, including only the exercise of political power, usually enforced by a military presence. He understood foreign policy as something that was driven by politicians, and because politicians were responsible to their constituencies, he sought an explanation for their motives in the domestic political culture of their time. If there was popular support for an initiative, like the annexation of Hawai'i, than to understand why politicians had annexed the country, one needed to understand the nature of the popular support.

Pratt's explanation for the rise of the movement to annex Hawai'i rested on an interconnected set of political ideologies, the first of which he termed the "new manifest destiny".⁹ This new ideology was based in the old; that Americans were, by virtue of their superior skills at governing, destined to expand across the North American continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. The new version had taken on a more aggressive, outward-looking focus. Pratt credited John Burgess's treatise on political science as defining the new manifest destiny and as one justification used by politicians, and endorsed by the public to validate the new imperial ambitions of the United States.¹⁰ Burgess argued that based on the historical success of the empires of Teutonic nations, descendants of Teutonic peoples in the hierarchy of race, stood at the top. Due to their natural superiority, they alone were qualified to "assume the leadership in the establishment and administration of states."¹¹ Pratt argues throughout *Expansionists* that this idea of the new manifest destiny spawned a racist expansionism in American public opinion, and that politicians were driven toward expansionist policies partly due to the popularity it found.

Also pointed to by Pratt as driving the desire of US politicians to annex Hawai'i was what he calls the "new navalism" of the late nineteenth century. Alfred Thayer Mahan is identified with this particular ideology. He stated that "sea power was the most potent factor in the making or

⁷ Pratt, Julius W., *The Expansionists of 1898: The Acquisition of Hawaii and the Spanish Islands* (Johns Hopkins Press: New York, 1936), preface

⁸ Devine, Michael J., *John W. Foster and the Struggle for the Annexation of Hawai'i*, [Pacific Historical Review](#), Vol: 46, Issue: 1, 1977, p 29

⁹ Pratt, Julius W., *The Expansionists of 1898: The Acquisition of Hawaii and the Spanish Islands* (Johns Hopkins Press: New York, 1936), p 8

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p 10

¹¹ Burgess quoted in Pratt, Julius W., *The Expansionists of 1898: The Acquisition of Hawaii and the Spanish Islands* (Johns Hopkins Press: New York, 1936), p 8

breaking of nations, that without sea power no people, however gifted, had attained or could attain the fullest measure of well being or of influence and importance in world affairs.”¹² Pratt noted that Mahan’s new navalism was another factor influencing the annexation of Hawai’i. He argued that political leaders used the idea that naval control of colonies was required for political stability to help justify not only the expansion of the navy itself, but the expansion of the territorial boundaries of the US. New navalism became the vessel through which racist expansionist ideologies could be delivered..¹³

Expansionists also provided an extremely detailed account of the diplomatic exchanges between presidents and employees at the State Department throughout the 1890s about Hawai’i, but the importance of the book in the historiography of the field lay in the questions posed by Pratt and where he looked to answer them. Pratt defined imperialism in strictly political terms. He wanted to know how it was possible that the US, after 1898, came to hold formal colonies. He looked to the motives of politicians and therefore to the domestic political culture of the late nineteenth century in his attempt to explain the trend in American foreign policy toward expansion. Pratt did not ask about the effects of US imperialism on those who lived in the American colonies, he did not question its influence on the continental United States and did not seek to understand imperialism outside of a political or military framework. He did however, lay the foundation for future scholarship – his ideas would be expanded and reworked by historians who gained their basic understanding of US imperialism from his work.

The Wisconsin School

The first and most formidable challenge to Pratt’s understanding of US imperialism in the Pacific was provided by scholars of the so called ‘Wisconsin School’.¹⁴ During the 1960s and 1970s, historians began to question whether political motivations were sufficient to explain American territorial gains and the result was a large body of writing positing the importance of economic factors in explaining the phenomenon. Fred Harvey Harrington was among the initial proponents of the idea that coming to terms with the nature of US imperialism had to include a discussion of economic influences.¹⁵ William Appleman Williams; building upon Harrington, provided a comprehensive and forceful argument outlining the belief in the primacy of economics in US imperialism.

Throughout his career, Williams dealt with the questions raised by American imperialism. Like Pratt, Williams sought an explanation for ‘new imperialism’, though he defined it more broadly. Williams expanded the definition of imperialism to include American involvement in foreign markets as well as territory. He assigned economic motives to politicians in his attempt to explain why the US had become imperial in its foreign policy. Also like Pratt, Williams’ examined domestic popular opinion in his attempt to understand the motives of American leaders, but unlike Pratt, he found that public opinion was primarily concerned with economic

¹² Pratt, Julius W., *The Expansionists of 1898: The Acquisition of Hawaii and the Spanish Islands* (Johns Hopkins Press: New York, 1936), p 12

¹³ *Ibid.*, p 145-148

¹⁴ MacDonald, Paul, *Those Who Forget Historiography are Doomed to Republish it: empire, imperialism and contemporary debates about American power* *Review of International Studies*, Vol: 35, 2009, p 49

¹⁵ Fry, Joseph A., *From Open Door to World Systems: Economic Interpretations of Late Nineteenth Century American Foreign Relations* *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol: 65, Issue: 2, 1996, p 279

growth as the answer to sustaining American influence abroad and domestic prosperity. The scholars of the Wisconsin School understood economic expansion as the vehicle through which American prosperity could be guaranteed. Sometimes criticized as economic determinism, Williams and others in the school did argue that politicians and the public saw an economic solution to all of their problems, but they were far from characterizing US imperialism as inevitability due to economic factors. The Wisconsin school's expansion of the definition of imperialism marks perhaps the most important moment in the historiography about American foreign policy as it characterized non-military power as imperial in nature, allowing later scholars to examine other kinds of non-military intervention as also imperialistic. Without this shift, historians today would still be bound by territorial discussions and would not be able to accurately gauge the power of the United States on the international stage.

In *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, Williams identified his central thesis: that almost all Americans “held the firm conviction, even dogmatic belief...that domestic well-being depends upon...sustained, ever-increasing overseas economic expansion.”¹⁶ Williams emphasized the nature of US imperialism as conscious, aggressive, expansionist and self-interested economic policy. Characterizing the acquisition of new territory after the Spanish-American War as a side-effect, rather than the goal of the war, Williams argued that what really drove US intervention in Spanish colonial affairs was the desire to secure markets for American goods, or to secure an “informal empire”.¹⁷ The idea that imperialism, or empire could exist as something other than day-to-day military and political control, that economic control could be characterized as a form of American power felt abroad, is an important conclusion drawn by later historians from Williams' work. According to *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, there was a consensus formed by politicians and the public around the aggressive pursuit of foreign markets. The Open Door policy governing foreign trade would ensure that overproduction for domestic markets could be avoided, thereby avoiding the negative results of unfavourable economic conditions, such as the Populist movement.¹⁸

Out of this national consensus, Williams argues that given the circumstances of the late 1890s, war with Spain was inevitable. There was a depression in the 1893, further solidifying the consensus about foreign markets, China had become an important target for American goods, President McKinley had formed a partnership with American businessmen regarding foreign trade, there was fear that US corporations were being shut out of the international market, and the tension and disorganization wrought by the Spanish-Cuban issue left an important US trading partner unstable. Williams argued that given these circumstances, and even though McKinley did not want war, it was considered necessary to restore international order, and by extension, trade with Cuba and the possibility of trade with China. The resulting annexation of Hawai'i, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines was not a move by the US to secure a territorial empire, but rather a step taken to safeguard the existence of an economic one.¹⁹

¹⁶ Williams, William A., *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (Dell Publishing Co: New York, 1962, revised ed.), p

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¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p 14

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p 54-55

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p 93

Though Williams was a key player in the Wisconsin School, he was not the only historian identified as working within it. Richard Van Alstyne, Walter LeFaber and Howard Beal were all important contributors to the scholarship concerning US imperialism in both Latin America and the Pacific.²⁰ Critics also emerged on the heels of Williams' frequent publications, including historian Paul Holbo. Holbo pointed out some of the major points of contention in *Tragedy* when he wrote *Economics, Emotion and Expansion: An Emerging Foreign Policy* for H. Wayne Morrison's collection entitled *The Gilded Age*. Holbo noted that most American exports of the time went to Europe, not China, that the connections Williams referred to between American businessmen and the government were far from well-established, and posited that the annexation of the former Spanish colonies and Hawai'i after the Spanish-American war was not an attempt to secure markets, but was rather an attempt to protect from the possibility of European intervention into countries (with the exception of the Philippines) so geographically close to the continental United States.²¹ There are also many instances of historians both in Williams' time and in the present that question the economic determinism of his thesis. While Holbo's work and the more general criticism of the nature of the thesis are valid, Williams' book remains a classic in the field. The historiographical importance of Williams' *Tragedy* lay in the expansion of the idea of US imperialism, particularly in Latin America and the Pacific, to include economic control. One of the first instances when a historian questioned the assumption that imperialism necessarily meant military or political control and one of the first attempts to see beyond political figures in explaining a domestic impetus for expansion, Williams' paved the way for more abstract forms of American power to play an important role in explaining American imperialism in Latin American and the Pacific.

The Cultural Turn

The revisionist history of the Wisconsin School continued to be written through the 1980s. US imperialism was debated and studied from many angles, there were disagreements as to whether the term 'empire' was suitable to describe American power and about how American power controlled - militarily, economically and politically. Out of this tradition of revisionism emerged, in the mid-1980s, Emily Rosenberg's book *Spreading the American Dream*. Rosenberg though, moved past the standard critique of diplomatic history that included an analysis of economic expansion and its ideological rationalizations to include an examination of US imperialism in the Pacific and Latin America in terms of *both* economics and culture.²²

Rosenberg contended that American expansion was dominated by an ideology of "liberal developmentalism".²³ This ideology, she argued, was characterized by ideas about the supremacy of America's political development, faith in private enterprise and the free market and the role of the government as promoter of American business internationally.²⁴

²⁰ MacDonald, Paul, *Those Who Forget Historiography are Doomed to Republish it: empire, imperialism and contemporary debates about American power* *Review of International Studies*, Vol: 35, 2009, p 57

²¹ Holbo, Paul S., *Economics, Emotion, and Expansion: An Emerging Foreign Policy*, in H. Wayne Morgan (ed.), *The Gilded Age* (Syracuse University Press: New York, 1970), p 199–220

²² my emphasis

²³ Rosenberg, Emily, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890 – 1945* (Hill and Wang: New York, 1982), p 7

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Spreading the American Dream examines the boot and shoe industry, as well as the Singer Sewing Machine Company's activities in Latin America and the Philippines to argue that both the American government and American business used the liberal developmental ideology of peace and democracy to "Americanize the world in the name of modernization."²⁵ Rosenberg's first stage of American expansion is set in Latin America between 1890 and 1914, this first stage, called the "promotional stage" was the moment when government aided the expansion of private business through the creation of a large navy (Mahan is credited here) and use of protective tariffs. This analysis of US imperialism in Latin America is not unique to this period in the historiography. As noted earlier, Julius Pratt spoke of navalism and its role in imperialism and Rosenberg falls in step with Williams in citing the economic nature American intervention. Original to Rosenberg's take on the nature of imperialism is that she included the cultural implications of both territorial and economic expansion in her analysis. She spoke of culture as "Americanization", the idea that consumer goods and American groups imparted more than their practical function, they also transmitted the American-ness of where they were made. Though she had been criticized for simply splicing culture with commerce, rather than examining them as independent or interdependent, she was the first historian to really probe the tangible effects of the export of US economic and political control.²⁶ Important to the historiography is the fact that Rosenberg further expanded the scope of the definition of imperialism to include the cultural nature of some of the economic and political acts of intervention, she wondered about the nature of American power, how it functioned and what drove its insertion into foreign countries. For the answers, she looked to governmental actors, to business and aid organizations and to any organized group; imperialism for Rosenberg was Americanization.²⁷

Also following the cultural turn that the field took were Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease with the collection of essays that they edited, *Cultures of United States Imperialism*. Published approximately ten years after Rosenberg's book, *Cultures* expands greatly on the idea of culture as imperial. Kaplan, in the introductory essay notes that the purpose of the book is threefold, she wants to bring culture into the study of United States imperialism, to make empire a central figure in the study of American culture, and to introduce the United States into the field of postcolonial studies that she argues had previously been dominated by Europeanists.²⁸ That Kaplan saw the need to examine the role of empire in American culture was an original contribution to the historiography, signalling that imperialism acted not only outside of the US, but within it, shaping the very notion of what it meant to be American. Kaplan's other contribution to the text deals with the Spanish-American War and serves as a representative essay of one of the themes of the book as a whole. The idea that America's imperial ventures in Latin America and the Pacific helped culturally, to consolidate domestic national identity and that the racial politics and cultural symbolism of the Battle of San Juan Hill helped to construct and stabilize what it meant to be American at a time when domestically, the country was still recovering from the failure of reconstruction and fears of immigration and miscegenation, was Kaplan, and, though placed in other geographic spaces, Priscilla Wald and Richard Slotkin's

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p 20

²⁶ For critique see Iriye, Akira, *The Americanized Century*, *Reviews in American History*, Vol: 11, Issue: 1, 1983

²⁷ Rosenberg, Emily, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890 – 1945* (Hill and Wang: New York, 1982), p 97 (specifically referring to communications cables and newsmen)

²⁸ Kaplan, Amy, *Left Alone with America: The Absence of Empire in the study of American Culture*, in Kaplan, Amy and Pease, Donald (ed.) *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Duke University Press: London, 1993), p 5

essential thesis.²⁹ The examination of the cultural importance of US imperialism to the domestic sphere is also a major change from what had previously been the focus of historian's questions. Never before had the foreign policy been seen as doing work in the domestic sphere as well as the international one and that change in focus begged questions not previously considered. If imperialism served a purpose domestically in the US, how did interacting with US imperialism in foreign countries affect their domestic development?

Other essays in the collection deal with the construction of identities through cultural exchange. Vicente M. Diaz argued that cultural imperialism was not a one way process that flowed from the powerful US to subjugated Guam, but rather was a more fluid exchange among the multiple historical actors including Americans (government, business or unaffiliated citizens), leftover Spanish influence and the citizens of Guam themselves.³⁰ Novel in this contribution is that the historical actors of a country where imperialism is present are given agency. They were no longer considered by historians as acted upon, but as interacting with the culture of United States imperialism that is forced upon them for consideration. Also unique to these essays are their use of race and gender as categories to analyze US imperialism and though they only examine the cultural aspects of that imperialism, this volume set a precedent taken up by future historians for understanding the interactions between cultures through many different lenses.³¹ Scholars moved from understanding imperialism as an essentially inert policy to recognizing and trying to understand the gendered and racialized implications it has had.

The cultural concerns of Emily Rosenberg, Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease really expanded the historiography of US imperialism in Latin America and the Pacific (and among other places in the case of both books). American power could take the form of a military occupation, of political control, of economic control or influence or of cultural control or influence. To understand American intervention in places like Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam or the Philippines the historian has to grapple with the effects of that intervention on the United States itself as well as on the country that it occupies. What did imperialism mean to citizens in the US? Did imperialist policies perform a cultural function in the US or other countries? Did imperialist intervention betray any domestic gender or racial norms? How did countries under US control interact with American power? Rosenberg showed that diplomatic history can deal with questions of culture and Kaplan and Pease clearly demonstrated that culture can act independently of the economy or military. The cultural turn in the historiography of imperialism in Latin America and the Pacific saw not only the expansion of the definition of imperial activities but new questions about the nature of those activities in both the domestic and international spheres. It paved the way to the present focus of the field and provides a clear set of questions that future historians will need to address in their discussions of Latin American and Pacific imperialism.

²⁹ Kaplan, Amy, *Black and Blue on San Juan Hill* in Kaplan, Amy and Pease, Donald (ed.) *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Duke University Press: London, 1993), p 228-233 (see also Wald, 59 and Slotkin, 164)

³⁰ Diaz, Vicente M., *Pious Sites: Chamorro Culture Between Spanish Catholicism and American Liberal Individualism* in Kaplan, Amy and Pease, Donald (ed.) *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Duke University Press: London, 1993), p 316-323

³¹ For an example of a racial analysis see Gaines, Kevin, *Black Americans Racial Uplift Ideology as 'Civilizing Mission': Pauline E. Hopkins on Race and Imperialism* in Kaplan, Amy and Pease, Donald (ed.) *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Duke University Press: London, 1993), p 433

Changing Focus

The more recent historiography of US imperialism in Latin American and the Pacific has shifted gears in some ways. Historians have begun to examine different sources in the attempt to understand US intervention abroad, they have also begun to pose their questions about American power to smaller groups than in the past, wanting to know its effects on the daily encounters of individuals, rather than on entire groups. Conversely, and in another example of the enormous change in the focus of analyses of imperialism, historians have also sought to synthesize the various aspects of imperialism in an effort to tell a more complete story about its implications for the formation of national identity. The next four books briefly described will show the range in scope of the history being written today about US imperialism in late nineteenth and very early twentieth century Latin American and Pacific countries.

In *On Becoming Cuban*, Louis Perez asked how American intervention shaped Cuban national identity. Though still focused on the larger historical actors of previous scholarship, Perez was unique in his examination of US intervention into Cuba in that he sought to understand the interconnection of American troops, American business and American culture with the nature of an already forming national identity.³² He wrote about imperialism entirely from the perspective of Cuba. Perez did not want to know why the US had become involved in Cuban affairs and was uninterested in how that involvement affected any part of America. He understood imperialism in economic, political and cultural terms with reference to the American government, business and private citizens and wanted to understand how the presence of America in Cuba shaped Cuban domestic affairs politically, economically and culturally. Perez also examined an enormous array of sources, including music, oral histories, magazines and movies. He considered how Cuba's anti-Spanish nationalism allowed Americans a foot in the door economically (with American ownership of many sugar plantations) and how that Anti-Spanish sentiment later morphed into anti-Americanism.³³ Perez traced US imperialism in Cuba through its many transformations until the rise of Castro and the eventual embargo in 1960. This book contributes an extraordinarily detailed account of the nature of US imperialism in Cuba; it traces the give and take of the imperial currents and most importantly, incorporates the conclusions of previous scholars about the nature of American power and complicates them.

Laura Wexler provided an excellent example of how the field has become more open to cultural interpretations when she wrote *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of US Imperialism*. The book took a fresh look at the domestic impetus for US expansion abroad through an examination of the visual culture associated with the Spanish-American War. Building on the questions that William Williams had asked fifty years prior, Wexler sought an explanation for the popular domestic demand for territorial expansion. Wexler identifies a set of photographs ("domestic images") that she argues signified the domestic realm of the US.³⁴ She argues that these photos served the interest of US imperialism in the late nineteenth century as they signified a "discourse of domesticity" that was used to justify expansionist policies as part of a virtuous,

³² Perez, Louis A., *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality and Culture* (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 1999), p 1-35

³³ *Ibid.*, p 345-370

³⁴ Wexler, Laura, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of US Imperialism* (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 2000), p 21

civilizing process.³⁵ Initially similar to Julius Pratt's notion of an ideologically driven analysis of the impetus for imperial expansion, Wexler expands her argument to address the gendered nature of the ideology. She notes that the domestic images were extremely potent as they were taken by women, and that allows her to discuss gender more directly than if she had chosen a different source. *Tender Visions*, because it uses such a unique source, is able to more clearly examine imperialism for the perspective of gender studies. Though it did not shape her definition of imperialism, it did shape her analysis of imperialism in the domestic context. Wexler's notion that ideologically charged photography helped bolster a domestic culture of imperialism is very compelling; it also shows that newer historical writing about US imperialism in the domestic realm, especially with reference to Latin America, has changed focus drastically over time, from political and economic factors, to a combination of those with cultural ones.

Gendered analyses of foreign relations have also become a key component in the understanding historians have of US imperialism. In her recent book *Fighting for American Manhood*, Kristin Hoganson examined the Spanish and Philippine-American wars through the lens of manliness in a kind of gendered diplomatic historical reading of her sources. She traces the gender formations that shaped the moral compass and political beliefs of American leaders (all men) and then argues that domestic politics, fused with foreign policy became the area where these men would act out the gender roles they had learned, namely the hyper-masculinity of the late nineteenth century.³⁶ Hoganson, in a new kind of revisionist history, goes back to look at political figures through a gendered cultural lens, an important addition to the historiography of US imperialism in former Spanish colonies.

The final shift in the historiography to be pointed out is the changed scope of inquiry that some writers are working within. Still seeking the nature of American power and looking into how American power functioned, historians now are taking into account the more broad definition of imperialism (military, economic, political and cultural) and applying it to the intimate rather than the public. Questions about how US imperialism in Latin American and Pacific countries affected the daily interactions between Americans and others on the ground are quickly becoming the focus of new historical studies. Mary Renda, for example, in her groundbreaking book *Taking Haiti*, frames all 400 pages with one question: "How does a man imagine himself when he is about to pull a trigger?"³⁷ Renda sought to explain US imperialism in Haiti by examining the daily interactions of US marines with Haitian citizens. She asked questions about the psyche and wanted to know about individual identity formation and the effect that imperialist discourse had on behaviour, on an individual level. How did a marine about to shoot a gun come to the conclusion that it was necessary? Was a man affected differently by American interventionist ideology than a woman, a Caucasian versus an African American? Did physical interactions between soldiers and civilians affect US foreign policy? She looked at how cultures of US imperialism affected the marine's behaviour on the ground and at how that culture, acting through the bodies of the men, affected and was affected by intimate or personal interactions with both Haitian military officers and citizens. She also looked at how, when the Marines

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p 28

³⁶ Hoganson, Kristin, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1998), p 42

³⁷ Renda, Mary, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of US Imperialism, 1915-1940* (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 2001), p 3

returned from Haiti, their experience of US imperialism affected mainstream domestic attitudes about expansion and empire.³⁸ Also advocating the examination of imperialism in the intimate realm are race scholars Ann Laura Stoler and Laura Briggs. Stoler, though she writes about the Dutch in Indonesia, has laid out much of the framework of this new approach.³⁹ Briggs, writing about Puerto Rico is an excellent example of an application of the idea of examining the intimate to explain the nature of US imperialism when she discusses birth control pill testing in 1960s Puerto Rico in *Reproducing Empire*.⁴⁰ Briggs is just one of many historians now thinking about imperialism in intimate terms as the entire field is quickly finding new ways to apply old techniques to this new scope of inquiry.

Conclusion

Throughout the twentieth century and now into the twenty-first, historians have been consistently interested in the nature of US imperialism, particularly in the Latin American and Pacific regions as they provide such a stark example of American intervention in the domestic affairs of other countries. Often taking the Spanish-American War as the starting point of such studies because it marked the first time that the US had held official control over other countries, scholars have inquired into the nature of American power, wanting to know how it functions and what drove its expansion. The changing definition of imperialism in the historiography between the nineteen thirties and early nineteen nineties has provided the foundation for recent work. Without the inclusion of economic and cultural power, our understanding of US intervention in Latin America and the Pacific would be incomplete. At stake in the current historiography is the full impact of American imperialism, domestically, internationally, collectively and individually.

The question of motive has been taken up from the beginning of the historiography of the field and continues to be a source of debate amongst historians of imperialism. Beginning with a relatively uncomplicated version of diplomatic history, Julius Pratt placed the American impetus for expansion firmly with the motives of powerful politicians, arguing that they were influenced by various ideologies derived from prominent scholars and diplomats. Adding his voice to that theory was William A. Williams. Williams expanded upon the diplomatic trend when he argued that it was not only political but economic factors that drove US imperialism in Latin American and more specifically, into the Philippines. Williams also expanded the definition of imperialism past the traditional understanding of it as a military adventure to include economic control over foreign markets. Though sporadically criticized as economic determinism, Williams influence on the historiography of imperialism is still felt today and scholars in the field must still grapple with his conclusions and with the framework he structured his argument within.

Out of Williams' revisionism and the tradition of the Wisconsin school came Emily Rosenberg. She too expanded the definition of imperialism in her book *Spreading the American Dream*. Rosenberg argued that with economic control, went cultural influence and so imperialism was once again expanded to include, as she termed it, Americanization. Within the definition of

³⁸ The book is divided into two sections, the first set in Haiti, the second in the continental US.

³⁹ Stoler, Ann Laura, *Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and Post-Colonial Studies*, *The Journal of American History*, Vol: 88, Issue: 3, 2001, p 829- 831

⁴⁰ Briggs, Laura, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science and US Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 2002)

imperialism as cultural, there was, and is, a flurry of historical inquiry. Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease's edited volume of essays examining the cultures of US imperialism examines American cultural power from a variety of angles. There was a concern with race and gender that had not previously been prominent, and the ideas that imperialism abroad functioned to unite the domestic and that power did not flow in only one direction were important new ways of think about cultural imperialism.

These three phases in the historiography, Pratt's contemporaries in the nineteen thirties and forties, the revisionists of the Wisconsin school in the nineteen sixties and seventies and the cultural turn of the nineteen eighties have given current historians the tools they need to examine imperialism from new perspectives. To discuss Cuba's national identity formation, Perez needed to understand imperialism territorially, economically and culturally. For Wexler to provide a gendered analysis of the domestic ideology of US intervention, she needed to build upon the idea that domestic policy drove imperialism. Renda assumed that imperialism could be ideological in nature and based her analysis of the US military presence in Haiti on that assumption, already widely accepted due in large part to the work of previous scholars. Discussions of US imperialism in Latin American and the Pacific in historical writing have undergone an enormous change over time. Imperialism originally meant political and territorial control of another country. Over time, it was expanded to include economic and cultural dominance. Historians used to be concerned with how the US had come to be an imperial country but with the expansion of the definition of imperialism came the expansion of the kinds of questions that the field asked. Historians began to ask about imperialist ideology, about identity formation and national development. Now they are concerned with widely divergent aspects of imperialism, all seeking a better understanding of the nature of American power. The field continues to be relevant to contemporary scholars and policy makers, as the more nuanced our explanation of the past becomes, the better we are able to understand our place in the present.

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