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Mass Communication Research in Latin America: Views from Here and There

By Steven H. Chaffee, Carlos Gomez-Palacio,
and Everett M. Rogers

Somewhat different pictures of communication research in Latin America emerge from parallel surveys of journals and scholars in that region, and of interested U.S. researchers. Latin Americans cite Europeans and influence one another more than U.S. scholars realize. By far the most cited author in the period 1960-84 was Armand Mattelart, a European critical theorist who lived in Chile until 1973; his influence is underestimated by the U.S. scholars surveyed. The study is based on analysis of eight Latin American journals and interviews with more than 100 scholars in Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, Peru and the United States.

►North American scholars have evinced an interest in Latin America's academic progress in journalism and mass communication for at least six decades.¹ Still, North-South contact between researchers is infrequent, constrained by barriers of language and distance. Latin American work in a particular tradition is summarized from time to time, such as Nixon's 1970 report on education for journalism, and the Atwood-McAnany volume on critical analysis.²

For the most part, however, the images that U. S. mass communication researchers hold of the work of their counterparts to the south come from the experiences of a few dozen scholars who cross that boundary in either direction each year for teaching and research purposes. There is little direct contact between the two academic communities. The present paper collates the views of Latin American mass communication research that are held by U.S. scholars who have conducted studies in that region, and compares these views to (1) a similar

►This study is based on part of the dissertation research of Carlos Gomez-Palacio at Stanford. An earlier version was selected as a top three paper at the Intercultural and Development Communication Division at the 1990 convention of the International Communication Association, in Dublin, Ireland. The research was conducted in the Institute for Communication Research at Stanford University, where Professor Chaffee is Janet M. Peck Professor of International Communication. Dr. Gomez-Palacio is strategic insight manager for Colgate-Palmolive in Mexico and Professor Rogers is Walter H. Annenberg Professor at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Southern California.

survey of Latin American researchers themselves, and (2) a citation analysis of Latin American academic journals that specialize in communication.

In an essay contrasting the empirical and critical schools of communication research, Rogers³ concluded that each is well represented in many Latin American universities. He suggested that "a kind of hybrid school" might develop, using empirical evidence to attack critical concerns, such as the region's problems of poverty and elite media control. This synthesis of intellectual traditions into a "Latin American school" could in turn influence development of the communication field in Europe and North America, he noted, so "it is especially important to watch the future development of communication research in Latin America."⁴

Time lags in one social system's perceptions of another result from constrained social communication between the systems. Contact between groups of academics who work in different languages and different regions is no exception to this general rule of diffusion.⁵ To examine how "up-to-date" North American researchers are in their conception of Latin American mass communication study, we broke down the citation analysis in the present study into an early period (1960-76) and a more recent (1977-84) period (see below).

We are interested here especially in the intellectual schools of work that are represented in communication research in Latin America. In an empirical study such as the present one, such broad outlines are built of particulars. General approaches to scholarly research are represented by individual authors. We will proceed with analysis first of leading communication scholars, followed by a grouping of these individuals into broad categories that represent competing modes of communication scholarship.

This article compares the following bodies of data:

1. A survey of U.S. researchers who have published on Latin American communication topics, to determine who they consider to be the leading scholars in the region.

2. A survey of Latin American communication scholars, also to determine who they consider to be the leading scholars.

3. A survey of Latin American communication journals to determine which authors were cited most often in the two periods of study, 1960-76 and 1977-84.

These components, parts of a larger project that included extensive analysis of journal article content⁶, were developed in an order somewhat the reverse of that listed above. Data collection and analysis of each component was, however, affected by preliminary findings of these and other bodies of data, as detailed below.

1. J. Edward Gerald, "Aspects of the Journalism of Chile and Argentina," unpublished master's thesis, University of Missouri, 1930. J. Edward Gerald, "Aspects of Journalism in South America," *Journalism Quarterly*, 8: 213-223 (1931).

2. Raymond B. Nixon, *Education for Journalism in Latin America* (New York: Council on Higher Education in the American Republics, 1970). Rita Atwood and Emile McNaney, eds., *Communication and Latin American Society: Trends in Critical Research, 1960-1985*. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986).

3. Everett M. Rogers, "The Empirical and Critical Schools of Communication Research," in Michael Burgoon, ed., *Communication Yearbook 5* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1982) pp. 125-144.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

5. Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations, Third Edition* (New York: Free Press, 1963). For a constraints model of the diffusion process, see Steven H. Chaffee, "The Diffusion of Political Information," in Steven Chaffee, ed., *Political Communication: Issues and Strategies for Research* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1976), pp. 85-92.

6. Carlos Gomez-Palacio, "The Origins and Growth of Mass Communication Research in Latin America," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Institute for Communication Research, Stanford University, 1989.

Survey of Latin American Scholars

The first major stage of data collection was a survey of 50 Latin American communication scholars, many of them identified from a preliminary reading of the Latin American communication journals (see below). Each interview was conducted personally from a fixed schedule of open-ended questions, by a Latin American communication scholar.⁷ Interviews were conducted in 1985 at various meetings and institutes in Mexico, the U.S., Brazil, Colombia, and Peru. This procedure resulted in some over-representation of Mexican (N=27) respondents. There was also doubtless an overrepresentation of scholars oriented to North American modes of research, since the survey was sponsored by a U.S. university.

The interview dealt with factors that have affected the development of communication research in Latin America, obstacles to growth of the discipline, and recent or anticipated changes. Respondents were also asked about research methods, theoretical concerns, institutions, journals, and their own careers.

Questions that generated data for our present analysis here were (in approximate English translation): "Which authors, researchers or scholars have influenced more positively the growth of the discipline in the region?" "On the other hand, who has exerted more negative influence in the growth of communication research in Latin America?"⁸ and, "Who has exerted the most positive influence on your career as a researcher?"

Scholars named in the open-ended responses to these questions were later categorized (see below). The first set of questions, dealing with influence on the communication discipline at large, mostly elicited responses to the query about positive influences. There was no negatively phrased version of the last question, which deals with influence on the respondent personally.

Journal Citations

Ten journals published in Spanish or Portuguese in Latin American countries were included in the present study. Following, in order of their first year of publication, are each journal's title, location, years of publication, and number of articles with citations for the present analysis: *Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional (CEREN)* (Chile, 1967-73, 21 articles); *Comunicacion y Cultura* (Chile, 1973, Argentina 1973-76, Mexico, 1976-85, 73 articles); *Lenguajes* (Argentina, 1974-75, 9 articles); *Cuadernos de Comunicacion* (Mexico, 1975-84, 90 articles); *Serie Comunicacion Social y Desarrollo* (FUDECO, Venezuela, 1976-83, 11 articles); *Revista/Cuadernos ININCO* (Venezuela, 1977-83, 28 articles); *Cuadernos de TICOM* (Mexico, 1979-83, 26 articles); *Comunicacao e*

7. The authors thank those who served as interviewers, including Regina Festa in Brazil; Eulalio Ferrer, Pedro Hernandez-Ramos, Abraham Nosnik and Celina Rodriguez in Mexico; Eliana Villar, and Rafael Roncagliolo and his staff at IPAL, in Peru.

8. This unusual negatively phrased question was included in the open-ended probes in the Latin American survey only. Its purpose was to elicit names of scholars that the respondent considered prominent but whose work represents a school of thought to which the respondent is opposed. Division of communication research into competing camps is common among Latin American scholars, and this item yielded a number of names that were not volunteered in response to the preceding, positively phrased question. Both sets of names (i.e., both positive and negative influences) were then incorporated into the master list that was used to construct the fixed-alternative question battery (below) asking the North American respondents how "influential" each scholar had been in Latin America. No reference to negative influence was made in the latter questionnaire.

Sociedade (Brazil, 1979-84, 81 articles); *Chasqui* (CIESPAL, Ecuador, 1981-85, 46 articles; issues 1972-80 were unavailable to us); *Cadernos Intercom* (Brazil, 1982-84, 30 articles).

Our time division of the 415 articles between the two time periods, 1960-1976 and 1977-84, was not arbitrary. The founding in Quito of the Center for Advanced study of journalism in Latin America (CIESPAL) in 1959 was cited by most of our respondents as the starting point of indigenous communication research in Latin America. The year 1976 was also a pivotal one in the history of Latin American communication research according to the scholars surveyed there. Events of 1976, such as the Costa Rican conference on communication policy, the Argentine coup d'état, and the founding of ILET (Instituto Latinoamericano de Estudios Transnacionales), were cited more often than those of any other year as milestones in the development of the field. The debates in UNESCO on the New World Information Order, on the other hand, date from about 1977 and thus fall into the second phase of our citation analysis. Of the ten Latin American communication journals analyzed, one-half were started in the former period, the other half in the latter.

Survey of North American Scholars

The starting point for the North American survey was a study (not otherwise reported here) of all articles published on Latin America in seven U.S. mass communication journals (*Journalism Quarterly*, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *Journal of Communication*, *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, *Gazette*, *Communication Research*, and *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*). Questionnaires were mailed to all of the U.S.-based authors of Latin American studies in these journals who could be located. Of 83 living persons contacted, 51 returned completed questionnaires.

Although the mail questionnaire format was mostly closed-ended, the U.S. survey was modeled very closely on that of the Latin American scholars. Questions were phrased as similarly as possible to those asked in the Latin American interviews, and the response alternatives offered included all responses that had been given by more than one Latin American respondent. Scholars who had been named in the Latin American survey or who were cited more than ten times in the Latin American journals were listed on the U.S. questionnaire following one of these questions (emphasis preserved):

"The following scholars have been mentioned by some Latin Americans as *important to communication research in that region*. Please mark the number indicating *how influential you think each has been*, based on your knowledge of the field. If you are unfamiliar with a name, mark DK ("don't know"). Ratings are from "1" for not influential to "5" for very influential." (This question was followed by a list of 30 Latin American authors.)

"Now please rate the following scholars from 1 to 5 in terms of how influential their work has been *On Latin American communication scholars*: (1=not influential; 5=very influential)." (This question was followed by a list of 51 European and North American authors.)

Coding

To enable us to identify the contributions of different schools of

thought as they are manifested through these three different bodies of data, the authors from these two lists were grouped into a small number of categories that represent coherent intellectual foci. Rather than give an exhaustive accounting of all coding decisions, however, we will explain by example here, indicating what the general categories were and how the leading authors on these lists were classified.

From the outset, though, it was clear from all of our measures that one author stands out above the rest: Armand Mattelart. This Belgian scholar taught and wrote from 1962 to 1973 in Chile, under a contract with the Catholic University in Santiago. He co-founded the *Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Nacional* (CEREN) in 1969, and was at his most prolific regarding Latin American themes during the Allende regime (1970-73). He has lived mostly in Europe since the 1973 coup d'état in Chile.

Mattelart is far and away the most-cited and most influential individual in the present survey. His name was at the top of the citation lists for both 1960-76 and 1977-84, and in the ten communication journals — including separate lists for journals from Brazil, from Mexico, and from other Spanish language South American countries when they were coded separately. He ranked first in the survey of Latin American scholars, in response both to the question about influence on the discipline at large, and to the question about influence on the individual respondent himself. Mattelart, it seems, is in a class by himself, so for coding purposes we began with the category of Mattelart and Associates. This category includes his co-authors of writings such as the landmark critical essay on cultural imperialism that in English is called, "How to Read Donald Duck."⁹

Clearly, critical theory dominates Latin American communication study by any accounting, so much so that there would be insufficient variance for us to analyze in our data if we used it as a single category. To pursue our interest in geographical orientation, we divided the critical school into two categories: European Critical Theory, and Latin American Critical Theory. (Mattelart, as a European working in Latin America, does not fit cleanly into either category, another reason for separating his group from the other two.)

The remaining three categories are clearly recognizable schools of thought: Empirical Research, Linguistic/Semiological/Structural Analysis, and Media Imperialism. Each of these three categories had substantial numbers of entries in several of our bodies of data, whereas no other general groupings of this nature did.

These categorizations are, of course, somewhat arbitrary and arguable. We classified Eliseo Veron, the Argentine scholar known as the father of Latin American semiology, in the Linguistic grouping although he could be classified as a critical scholar. Karl Marx was classified as European Critical because he is often cited by authors of the critical school and he was European. Emile McAnany was classified under Media Imperialism, a title he has used prominently¹⁰, but his methods are often empirical. Semiologists could certainly argue that the texts they analyze are just as empirical as the survey data of other

9. Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart, *Para Leer al Palo Donald* (Valparaíso, Chile: Ediciones Universitarias de Valparaíso, 1971).

10. Atwood and McAnany, *op. cit.*

social scientists, and their work could easily be grouped under the "critical" rubric, as could that of several empirical behavioral scientists. Such are the difficulties of classification systems.

Admitting these and other imperfections of our coding, we can nevertheless make appropriate use of these categories if we apply them consistently in comparisons among the several bodies of data in this study. Whatever biases might exist are the same in each citation analysis and each coding of survey responses. To some extent too, errors of categorical definition tend to cancel one another out. We are not trying here to determine precisely how to characterize the intellectual contributions of any one author, but rather to get a rounded picture of Latin American communication research as seen by its practitioners, by North American scholars, and through journal citations.

Results

Looking first at the leading authors according to each data source, Table 1 lists each individual who ranked in the top ten of at least one of the five lists. These authors are grouped by the six intellectual schools, which provides a guide to the nature of the larger categories. The dominance of Mattelart is obvious in this table. Other names that rank high on several kinds of lists include Marx, Veron, Daniel Lerner, Luis Ramiro Beltran, Wilbur Schramm, Antonio Gramsci, Herbert Schiller, Paolo Freire, Everett Rogers, and Umberto Eco. These, we can conclude, have been leading individual influences on Latin American communication research. The only other characteristic linking them seems to be their diversity. Rogers's statement that both empirical and critical influences are important in Latin America seems clearly born out by the appearance of advocates of the modernization approach (Lerner, Schramm) alongside Marx and kindred theoreticians here.

One more general fact that stands out vividly in Table 1 is that none of the empirical U.S. scholars, and none of the European critical scholars, ranks among the top ten influences in the region according to the survey of Latin American scholars. This intellectual exclusivity of the region occurs despite the fact that the European critical theorists were often cited, especially in the earlier period (1960-76), and several of them ranked high in terms of influence on the Latin American respondents' own work.

It is instead the Latin American critical scholars who are seen in the region as influential on one another — although few of them were often cited in the journals, or ranked high as influences on the respondents' own work. The only Latin American scholars ranked highly by the U.S. scholars are Beltran and Juan Diaz Bordenave — both educated in the U.S. and published in U.S. journals — and Freire, whose work is widely available in English.

Empirical scholars tend to be mentioned more often by the U.S. respondents, and several of them are cited frequently in Latin American journals. The only empirical scholar who was ranked as a major influence by the Latin American survey respondents, however, was Rogers, and this result may have been colored somewhat by the fact that Rogers was himself identified as associated with that phase of the present study, so that Latin Americans more influenced by his work would also have been more likely to participate in the survey.

TABLE 1
Rankings of Most-cited Authors, by Data Source

	Source of Data				
	Latin Am. Survey		Journal citations		
	Region	Self	1960-76	1977-84	U.S. survey
Latin Am. Critical					
L. Beltran	3	-	-	9t	1
P. Freire	8	7t	-	-	2
G. Pasquali	2	-	-	-	-
M. de Melo	4	-	-	-	-
J. Eistenou	6t	-	-	-	-
F. Reyes-Matta	6t	-	-	-	-
J. Martin-Barbero	9	2t	-	-	-
F. Fern. Christlieb	10	-	-	-	-
Mattelart et al.					
A. Mattelart	1	1	1	1	7t
Empirical					
W. Schramm	-	-	-	3	3
E. Rogers	-	4t	-	8	4t
J. McNelly	-	-	4	-	-
J. Diaz Bordenave	-	-	-	-	4t
D. Lerner	-	-	10t	-	9
J. Cortina	-	7t	-	-	-
H. Lasswell	-	-	-	-	10
J. McLeod	-	-	10t	-	-
European Critical					
K. Marx	-	2t	2	4	7t
A. Gramsci	-	4t	-	2	-
V. Lenin	-	-	8t	-	-
T. Adorno	-	-	10t	-	-
Semiotic/Linguistic					
E. Veron	5	4t	5t	9t	-
U. Eco	-	7t	5	5	-
R. Barthes	-	-	3	7	-
O. Masotta	-	-	7	-	-
C. Levi-Strauss	-	-	8t	-	-
Media Imperialism					
H. Schiller	-	-	-	6	6
E. McAnany	-	7t	-	-	-

Only authors who ranked in the top ten in at least one of the five data sources are included in this table. The subscript "t" indicates tied rankings.

It is possible, of course, that the phrasing of the question about leading influences in the Latin American survey implied that the respondent should name primarily Latin American authors. This possible response slant would create discrepancies with the U.S. scholars survey, where one question included a list of Latin American names, and then a second question was accompanied by a list of European and North American authors.

Table 2 breaks down the total data from each survey (not just the top ten names) by the six scholarly categories. When aggregated in this way, the results are somewhat different. Mattelart and associates, for

example, rise to the top of the U.S. survey, but are outnumbered in the Latin American survey by the aggregation of other Latin American critical scholars.

TABLE 2
Ranking of Scholarly Groups, by Data Source

	Latin Am. Survey		Journal Citations		U.S. survey
	Region	Self	1960-76	1977-84	
Latin Am. Critical	1st	1st	5th	1st	6th
Mattelart et al.	2nd	5th	4th	4th	1st
Empirical	3rd	2nd	3rd	5th	3rd
European Critical	4th	3rd	1st	2nd	4th
Semiotic/Linguistic	5th	6th	2nd	3rd	5th
Media Imperialism	6th	4th	6th	6th	2nd

The citation analysis nicely supports this last finding. Comparing the earlier and more recent periods, European critical scholars have become somewhat overshadowed in citations by Latin American writers of similar persuasion. Empirical scholars have also moved down in relative citation prominence. The U.S. scholars, then, seem to be responding more to Latin American scholarship as it was in the 1960-76 period than to what it has become more recently.

This conclusion is supported more clearly in Table 3, which shows two kinds of summary correlations among the five data sets we have been comparing. Below the diagonal in Table 3 are rankorder correlations based on the category rankings in Table 2. The U.S. survey rankings of the six categories are negatively related to all four of the other sets of rankings — but most negatively with the recent (1977-84) journal citations. Those recent citations, on the other hand, are positively correlated with the rankings by the Latin American scholars — most notably their rankings of influence in the region.

Table 3
Correlations Among the Five Data Sources

	Latin Am. Survey		Journal Citations		U.S.
	Region	Self	1960-76	1977-84	
Latin Am.: Region	—	+.07	-.46	-.09	-.09
Latin Am.: Self	+.54	—	-.04	+.38	+.07
Citations: 1960-76	-.09	-.20	—	+.11	-.19
Citations: 1977-84	+.54	+.31	+.37	—	+.38
U.S. Survey	-.20	-.37	-.26	-.77	—

Cell entries above the diagonal are fourfold point (ϕ) coefficients based on the data shown in Table 1, for co-occurrence of names in the top ten on each of the two paired lists ($N=28$). Cell entries below the diagonal are rank-order coefficients (ρ) based on the data shown in Table 2, for differences in ranking of the six categories of scholarship.

Thus, although the Latin American survey was conducted more than a year before the U.S. survey, it appears to be much more up-to-date in terms of relative influence of different types of scholarship. This conclusion is evidence of a time lag in the diffusion of knowledge from the Latin American scholarly community to North America. Most generally, the U.S. respondents seem as yet unaware that Latin American critical scholars have come to influence one another strongly through their

own journals, rather than continue their earlier reliance on European and North American sources.

This conclusion needs to be modified somewhat, though, in light of the data above the diagonal in Table 3, which consists of fourfold point (ϕ) coefficients based on whether a given author was in the top ten on the two lists in any of ten pairings of data sources. Here, the only correlation that is clearly consistent with the findings below the diagonal is the positive association between influences on a Latin American respondent personally, and the frequency of citation in the later (1977-84) period. So it is clear that the Latin American respondents feel they are influenced by the authors who are most often being cited in their journals, which is to say by one another rather than by Europeans or North Americans.

Not so clear in the upper-right portion of Table 3 is our interpretation of the U.S. survey. It corresponds most closely, at least in terms of the same names ranked in the top ten, to the more recent (1977-84) journal citations. Indeed, there is a sharp reversal in Table 3 from one correlational statistic to the other, of the citation period that the U.S. survey resembles. If these data are to be taken at face value, it is as if the U.S. respondents are aware of the names of a few prominent critical European and Latin American authors but not of the larger base of slightly less influential contributors of those schools. That inference is decidedly tentative, however, as we are comparing quite different levels of evidence with the two kinds of statistics presented in Table 3.

Summary

There has been a shift in the character of communication research in Latin America in the past decade or so, toward intellectual self-sufficiency built around an emerging school of Latin American critical scholars, journals, and institutions. This trend has been stimulated by the New World Information Order debate and by the seminal analyses of Armand Mattelart, and marks a departure from earlier dependence upon American and European influences. Although Latin American scholars do not yet cite one another frequently, they consider themselves highly influenced by other current scholars in their region.¹¹

North American scholars who have done research in Latin America do not appear to be fully aware of this shift. Although they recognize prominent authors such as Mattelart, they tend to see empirical scholars as more important than they are, and to overlook the influence of semioticians and critical scholars, especially those in Latin America itself.

Why has communication research in Latin America taken such a different direction from its counterpart field in North America? The present analysis has focused on intellectual influences, notably those from European marxist scholars. But perhaps a more basic reason has been the markedly different nature of Latin American society. The Luso-Hispanic cultural heritage of Latin America is quite distinct from the northern European institutions that took root in North America. The broad concept of a "libertarian theory of the press", for example, is

11. This influence within the region was overwhelmingly seen as positive. Scholars mentioned by Latin American respondents in answer to the question about "negative influences" (see fn. 8), were mostly either North American or European writers, not fellow Latin Americans.

drawn from French and British intellectual and political traditions, and is not easily translated into a Spanish equivalent.¹² Theories of society that flow from a highly stratified socioeconomic order, such as the marxist viewpoints that have been flourishing in Latin America, are a much better fit to the realities of life in that region than in the more affluent U.S.

The voluminous literature in English dealing with libertarian and social responsibility themes and such central Anglo-American concerns as libel, ethics and press bias, is largely unavailable in Spanish. The concerns of professional journalism in Latin America are different, having more to do with ownership and class interests in a hierarchical society. Of the U.S. scholars whose names appear at the top of the lists in the present study (see Table 1), none is centrally identified with the professional practice of journalism, nor with cultural production in general. Instead, all are social scientists whose most-cited contributions concern the role of mass communication in national development. Cultural and normative discourse appears to be more strictly bounded by language than is social scientific analysis, so that the macroscopic issues driving Latin American scholars are not heavily influenced by parallel scholars writing in English. Social scientists, whose unit of analysis is typically the individual respondent in a large-sample survey, tend not to work with the structural-level concepts that commend themselves to the typical Latin American scholar.

Latin America's recent history of military dictatorships, foreign debt, rapid inflation, over-urbanization, and unemployment represents a very different context for mass communication and hence for communication scholarship. Critical approaches are particularly likely to flourish under such conditions, in contrast to the more industry-oriented and neutrally scientific approaches that have been established in the U.S. Our study indicates that Latin American scholars are responding to the demands of this context of underdevelopment with an evolving mode of research that is unique to the region. This distinct brand of communication scholarship differs in important ways from both the North American and the European roots from which it originally sprung.

12. See Steven Chaffee and Pedro Hernandez-Ramos, "Comunicación Política", chapter 11 of Carlos Fernandez Collado and Gordon L. Dahrke (eds.) *Comunicación Humana: Ciencia Social* (Mexico City: McGraw-Hill de Mexico, 1986), pp. 309-360. These authors use the term *pressa libre*, which is literally understood as "free press" is in the U.S., rather than the term "libertarian", in their exposition of the classic *Four Theories of the Press*, by Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1956).