

THE INTERNATIONAL HISTORY OF COMMUNICATION STUDY

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LATIN AMERICA

The history of communication study in Latin America has been constituted through deeply transnational lines of intellectual exchange, institutional initiatives, and geopolitics. They cut across a massive and internally varied region that extends from Mexico and the Caribbean to Brazil, Argentina, and Chile. Beyond that, strong lines of influence and interchange extend to the global north, particularly Western Europe and, in a more politically freighted way, the U.S. Though much of the best work on the rich and complex history of the field there has been published in Spanish and Portuguese, there are a few good overviews in English (see Islas and Arribas, 2010; Martín Barbero, 2014; Marques de Melo, 1988; Chaffee, Gómez-Palacio, & Rogers 1990; Beltrán, 1975). The two superb chapters in this section are doubly valuable given the paucity of work in English. Situating the national cases of Mexico and Brazil within the broader contexts of Latin America, Fuentes Navarro and Vassallo de Lopes and Romancini draw upon the sociology of knowledge to provide illuminating frameworks for understanding the institutional development of the communication field in the region.

As the chapters show, communication study in Latin America grew out of a tradition of journalism education that dates back to the early 20th century and the institutionalization of communication and information sciences that began in the late 1950s. Across the century, Latin American intellectuals and educators were variously influenced by U.S., French, Spanish, German, and Italian thought while also developing distinctly Latin American paradigms and models of education—the latter influenced by Catholic and public universities and left-leaning professors within these nations. U.S. functionalism and the diffusion of innovations paradigms were influential from the late 1950s on, tied up with development communication initiatives that came in from the north. Along with

other transnational institutions, UNESCO played an important role in the region, beginning with its 1959 founding of a regionally based research and teaching institute in Ecuador, CIESPAL (the International Center for the Study of the Press for Latin America). Since the late 1960s, the political Left has exerted a major influence on Latin American communication study, both intellectually and in the institutionalization of the field that has occurred since the 1970s, aided by transnational professional associations, journals, and networks of scholars across the region and beyond it.

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INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE FIELD OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES IN MEXICO AND LATIN AMERICA

Raúl Fuentes-Navarro

Overdependence on American and European concepts and practices and the need to develop locally based, culturally relevant knowledge of communication are common themes in other regions. As the field has spread globally, its assimilation to different academic systems and national cultures has created distinct local characteristics.

(Craig 2008a, 678)

The aim of this chapter is to contribute to the ongoing international search for “a rigorous, contextualist treatment with an altogether different story to tell” about the history of Communication Studies, which could be considered “new” (Pooley 2008, 43), and to put forward the peculiarities and common traits that have arisen in Mexico and Latin America¹ as scientific research practices and graduate and undergraduate programs have emerged and developed over the last five decades, constituting what is conceptually known, following Bourdieu (1975, 1988), as an *academic field*.² In other words, this reconstruction and analysis of the field in Mexico has considered communication teaching and research as social practices whose specificity can only be explained by taking into account both historical trends and its current cultural, economic and political conditions, as will be argued below.

Mexico was one of the first Latin American countries to open Journalism Schools in its universities (1951), and was the very first to have a “Communication Sciences School” (1960) at the *Iberoamericana University* in Mexico City. Nowadays, Mexican universities offer at least 550 undergraduate programs in Communication, attended by more than 70 thousand students, a figure equivalent to approximately 3 percent of the total population of undergraduate students in the country. However, there are fewer than 2 thousand graduate students, in 18 programs that are officially accredited³ to grant master’s degrees in communication, plus

12 Doctoral programs devoted to the Social Sciences or other broad approaches in which Communication studies are explicitly included. All of these 30 graduate programs are located at 13 public and 3 private institutions, oriented toward “internationalization” as part of the accreditation framework. There are some 50 additional graduate programs (mostly private low-quality master’s degrees), not officially accredited, operating all over the country.⁴

On the individual level of official evaluation and accreditation, there are about two hundred members of the National System of Researchers (*Sistema Nacional de Investigadores, SNI*), whose main scientific production can be recognized as “communication studies,” increasingly defined as such in the blurred intersecting zones of the social sciences and humanities. This number has been steadily increasing over time, and is roughly equivalent to 1 percent of the total membership of the System.

For the last three or four decades, communication processes, systems and contexts have been systematically studied at several Mexican universities, and some other institutions have recently been joining them, supporting new research and graduate programs. Gradually overcoming the relative scarcity of resources and recognition granted to Communication research and researchers in Mexico, there has been undeniable progress, and some academic quality has been attained, not exclusively but mainly at six universities, namely: the National Autonomous University, *Autónoma Metropolitana* and *Iberoamericana* universities in Mexico City; University of Guadalajara and *ITESO* in Guadalajara; and *Tecnológico de Monterrey* system, in Monterrey and some other cities. Two out of every three published products of Mexican Communication Research, for the last 10 to 20 years, have been signed by authors acting as faculty members or graduate students at one of these six universities (Fuentes-Navarro 2011b, 35). Nonetheless, the number of consolidated academic journals serving the field⁵ is lower than might be desired.

Acting as constructive inter-institutional academic instances, there are two national associations, with different and complementary roles played for more than three decades, one strengthening ties among institutions and the other among researchers. Both have been very important for articulating Mexican efforts in the Latin American sphere, and through it, in the international field of communication. One is the National Council for Teaching and Research in Communication Sciences (*Consejo Nacional para la Enseñanza y la Investigación de las Ciencias de la Comunicación, CONEICC*), constituted in 1976; and the other is the Mexican Association of Communication Researchers (*Asociación Mexicana de Investigadores de la Comunicación, AMIC*), created in 1979. The former is the Mexican founding member (1981) of the Latin American Federation of Social Communication Schools (*Federación Latinoamericana de Facultades de Comunicación Social, FELAFACS*) and the latter, the national correspondent of the Latin American Association of Communication Researchers (*Asociación Latinoamericana de Investigadores de la Comunicación, ALAIC*), founded in 1977.⁶

Mexican (and also Latin American) academic communication research, an institutional derivation of professional schools, was influenced from its beginnings by Anglo-American methods, trends and models (Beltrán Salmón 1975, 1976), as almost all others in the world have been, but this influence has been frequently confronted or combined over the last decades with other intellectual influences, specifically those originating in France and other European countries, as well as the so-called “Latin American Critical Thought” (Marques de Melo 1988, 1993; Chaffee, Gómez-Palacio and Rogers 1990; Fuentes-Navarro 1992b; Orozco 1997; León-Duarte 2007; Martín-Barbero 2008; Cañizalez 2011; ALAIC 2013), conformed and strengthened in the seventies and eighties, but still seen as a priority for the immediate future:

The identity and potential of Latin American communication thought draw powerfully upon the role that it has played in the history of a region characterized by emancipatory ideals. Latin American communication thought stands today as a real alternative to traditional ways of supposedly universal knowledge consecrated by the dominant project of colonial modernity.

(ALAIC 2013, 11)

In sum, within this context, like any other national manifestation of this emerging scientific specialty, Mexican Communication Research is rapidly growing in size and scope, although not consolidating its development at the same pace, and faces the same problems, shortcomings and challenges that this specialty confronts in any other country around the world (Anderson 1996; Craig 1999; Peters 1999).

A Theoretical Framework and a Heuristic Approach to “the Field”

The French historian Fernand Braudel famously wrote that “sociology and history made up one single intellectual adventure, not two different sides of the same cloth but the very stuff of that cloth itself, the entire substance of its yarn” (Braudel 1980, 69). He considered history a *true* science, a complex one, for there are many “professions” in history, and—“in order to be understood by the sociologist”—he argued that history deals with the past in many different ways, “and that history can even be considered as in some sense a study of the present” (Braudel 1980, 64).

One of Braudel’s most distinguished followers, the sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein, made the call in the nineties for a deep and global movement to “unthink” (more than “rethink”) some basic sociological premises (Wallerstein 1991), especially the disciplinary structure inherited from the nineteenth century (Wallerstein 1996). For him, as a result of changes both in the world-system and in the world of knowledge, “the intellectual questions that we pose ourselves will be quite different in the twenty-first century than those posed for the last 150 years at least” (Wallerstein 2000, 26). One of the challenges to face is organizational, and

Another forerunner, maybe even more interesting because it involved media research, is the “lost” or forgotten decade (1941–1952) of public opinion surveys in Mexico conducted by Hungarian professor László Radványi, who founded a *Scientific Institute of Mexican Public Opinion* and whose “sample surveys raised important methodological issues and recorded opinion results that reflect the vibrant times of war and policy-making in a modernizing country” (Moreno and Sánchez-Castro 2009, 3). José Luis Ortiz-Garza (1989; 2007), who has done well-documented research on the history of Mexico’s international politics in the forties, argues “that it was Harald J. Corson, an American trained by Hadley Cantril, who first conducted a scientific poll in the country, a few months before Radványi’s arrival” in 1941 (Moreno and Sánchez-Castro 2009, 20), thus increasing the need for more inquiry and debate on the World War II period in Mexico.

Finally, an academic article published in 1956, when the field of communication in Mexico was still far from being recognizable, can also be mentioned as an antecedent. It is an essay written by Oscar Uribe Villegas and included in the Mexican Journal of Sociology edited by the Institute for Social Research (*Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales*) at UNAM, positing the relevance of a study “that addresses, beyond the restricted field that corresponds to language,” the “wider horizon which frames the study of the problem of communication” (Uribe Villegas 1956, 566). Nonetheless, this project led to the construction of a tradition of sociolinguistic research at the Institute, not communication.

In more general terms, we learned long ago (Sánchez and Fuentes-Navarro 1990, 71) that “modern thinking about society began in Latin America and Mexico between the last decades of the 19th century and the beginnings of the 20th century, in the form of ‘erudite studies,’ most of them philosophically, historically, or legally oriented” (Boils and Murga 1979). The first Communication studies, especially on the press (Ruiz-Castañeda 1958; 1959), evolved from this general model, closer to some humanities traditions than to the social sciences, which according to José Luis Reyna also “developed out of history and anthropology,” with a special trait since the end of the twenties: “The development and the institutionalization of the social sciences in Mexico are strongly linked to political power. The social sciences were born because the state supported them. Many disagreements arose between the two, but the link was never broken” (Reyna 2005, 414).

The comparative study of the institutionalization, internationalization and professionalization of the social sciences in Latin America (comprising Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay and Mexico), of which Reyna’s work was a part (Trinidad 2007), shed light on the differences and also the articulations among these processes across the five countries, especially those “links” between state support and scientific institutionalization, because of the continuities in Mexico and the violent ruptures in the other countries, origins of the “Mexican” exile that many South American scholars and political activists suffered in the seventies:

It should be noted how important for the social sciences in Mexico was the massive immigration of skilled social scientists who were fleeing from dictatorships in the Southern Cone. It was certainly an unexpected positive impact of political interference in the region. In some ways, the phenomenon repeated what had happened in the late thirties, when many intellectuals of *franquista* Spain came as refugees to Mexico.

(De Sierra et al. 2007, 20)

With a function similar to that of the *New School of Social Research* in the USA (where European intellectual refugees fleeing from fascism found a “temporary home”), *La Casa de España*, and its successor from 1940 on, *El Colegio de México*, were established by the Mexican government as a shelter for persecuted Spanish academics (among them the philosopher José Gaos and the sociologist José Medina Echavarría), thanks to the initiative of Mexican intellectuals Alfonso Reyes and Daniel Cosío Villegas (Reyna 2005, 433). This institution very soon became a center of excellence for the development of the social sciences—not including communication studies, however—in Mexico and Latin America, along with the *Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia* (INAH) and the *Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales* of the National University (IIS-UNAM), and the *Escuela Nacional (later, Facultad) de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales* of the same UNAM, where the first university program in Journalism was established in 1951.¹⁰

Three long-lasting and influential external developments that have proven to be important for the contextualization of the academic field of communication in Latin America (including Mexico) occurred over different dimensions of its international surroundings in 1959. The most important of them, for sure, was the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, planned and prepared some years before in Mexico by Fidel Castro. This was “a key event for fostering critical thought because it showed that there was a nearby option of socialist development in sight (seen very optimistically in the beginning) in the face of the many injustices, inequalities, and contradictions that were observable” in all Latin American countries (Sánchez and Fuentes-Navarro 1990, 72).

Established that same year in Ecuador, the International Center of Higher Studies in Journalism for Latin America (*Centro Internacional de Estudios Superiores de Periodismo para América Latina, CIESPAL*) “grew up in the Latin American context as a UNESCO initiative for creating training centres capable of preparing mass media professionals for the new socio-cultural needs.” In addition to pursuing its initial goal of “the remodeling of university communication teaching by proposing a model structure and suggesting suitable content,” CIESPAL exerted a strong academic influence through the dissemination of two widespread models of media research: “studies of the structure and content of the press (following the methodological orientation of the French researcher Jacques Kayser) and studies of the public behavior of mass media consumers (methodologically

inspired by the North American techniques of audience analysis)" (Marques de Melo 1988, 407).

Finally, in that same year of 1959 the debate over "The Present State of Communication Research" (in the USA), started by Bernard Berelson (1958), was followed and "commented on" by Wilbur Schramm, David Riesman and Raymond A. Bauer in the *Public Opinion Quarterly* (Berelson 1959), preceded by this editorial note: "Without waiting to publish a special issue, it presents in the following article and discussion a review of communication research which is of modest dimensions but unusual significance." As a matter of fact, more than five decades later, that discussion is still alive, even if very few Latin Americans have followed it.

A Brief Diachronic Reconstruction of the Institutionalization Processes

Among the heuristic tools (Fuentes-Navarro 1992a) designed to recognize the different *academic projects* that have guided the institutionalization of communication studies in the form of university training programs in Mexico and Latin America, the three *foundational models* (See figure 15.2) have been very useful as a set of Weberian "ideal types" to identify the factors that have configured, in different ways, the functioning core of Communication as an alleged academic discipline. Various components of these "foundational models" can be identified both simultaneously and successively in the mixed variants that nowadays constitute practically every undergraduate communication curriculum in Mexico.

The oldest of these *models*, centered on the "professionalization of journalism" and journalists, typical of the "functionalist" epistemology and mediated from the

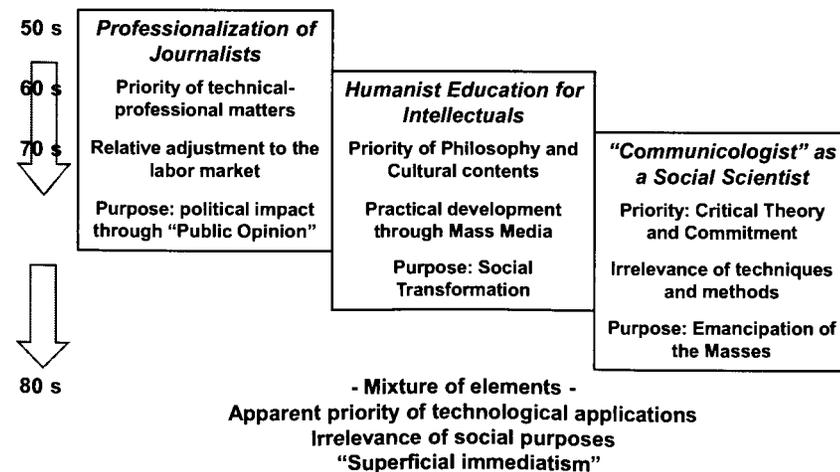


FIGURE 15.2 Foundational Models for Communication Studies (Fuentes, 1992a).

beginning by the U.S. traditions and continental influences of CIESPAL, is even now the most deeply rooted in Mexican and Latin American schools, embodying a "diffusion" or "transmission" model of communication (Carey 1992), which is easily identified with business and politics, and traditionally associated with "The Press" (in capitals). Although it pays little attention to scientific research, it was very important in the fifties (and still is) for the multi-sectorial social definition—never consolidated—of an imaginary "jurisdiction" to be defended in professional terms (Abbott 1988; Schudson 2008), as if journalism were a "true" profession, and as if its concept could be extended to "social communication."¹¹ The never-solved problem of the social recognition of the identity of the "field," and its confused struggle and mix-up with the technological determination of "Media" (Nerone 2006), are perhaps the strongest explanations for the incoherence and "multiple disarticulation" of the field, whose origin is professional and not scientific (Eadie 2011). Fortunately, well-qualified attention is still being focused on this questionable professionalization (Waisbord 2013).

The first university courses on Journalism in Latin America began in 1935 in La Plata (Argentina), following Joseph Pulitzer's prospect to prepare "professional, principled, competent and highly educated journalists." The same year, a *professorship*—not a school—in Journalism was founded in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), "oriented to study journalism as a social and literary phenomenon, inspired by European traditions" (Nixon 1971, 198–199; see Vassallo de Lopes and Romancini, this volume). Undoubtedly, the professionalizing version prevailed over the intellectual one, and by 1950 there were already 12 Journalism Schools operating in eight Latin American countries. A decade later, when CIESPAL was established, the number of schools had risen to 44, in 14 countries, according to the Minnesota Journalism Center (Nixon 1981).

The number of schools in Latin America kept on doubling every ten years: there were 88 in 1970 and 163 in 1980, still according to Nixon (1981). This growth was accompanied by the change from "Journalism" to "Communication" induced by CIESPAL from 1963 on, and both growth and change were critically assessed by Marco Ordóñez, general director of CIESPAL, in 1979: "Very few universities have clearly defined the type of professional they seek to prepare. Unfortunately, most of them waver between the determination of a scientific profession and the mere exercise of a literary genre." Having diagnosed the various dimensions of the professional training at 67 Latin American universities, CIESPAL concluded, "It is necessary, therefore, to amend the formation of communication professionals, arm them with an instrumental doctrine, skills and techniques, and thus make them capable of introducing the new communication systems required by each society" (Ordóñez 1979, 51). From a very different point of view and commitment with the subject, Nixon concluded two years after Ordóñez that "each of the studies on journalism education in Latin America, since my report of 1962 to date, has shown that the main fault of most schools of journalism and communication is the qualification of their teaching teams" (Nixon 1981, 55).

The second *foundational model*—built under the name “Communication Sciences”—originally associated a new concept of undergraduate education in the Humanities (Philosophy) combined with professional training for Media managing and content design. It was sketched out by the Jesuit philosopher José Sánchez Villaseñor and launched at the *Iberoamericana* University (Mexico City) in 1960. One year later, the founder died and his project was subjected to many changes, beginning with its name, because the federal education authorities refused to recognize under the term “communication” a program unrelated to roads and transportation. The new name, “Sciences and Techniques of Information,” however, did not deter the institution from seeking to form “intellectuals,” autonomous thinkers and skilled “communicators,” oriented by “the highest values of human community,” as opposed to a “ritual” concept of communication, to use Carey’s (1992) term. The main purpose was obviously not to be functional for the status quo, but to be committed to profound social change. At the same time, as Islas and Arribas (2010, 6) cite, it was a multipurpose model “because it intended to transcend the relative autonomy of independent professions associated with the ‘Science of Communication’, such as advertising, public relations, journalism, photography, etc., subordinating them.”

With regard to communication research, it can be described as suffering from inconsistency, in addition to its aforementioned “triple marginality,” since it has developed by mixing up traditional (philosophical, “authoritarian,” political) traits with modern (empirical, imported, “efficient”) features. In the fifties and sixties, under the sign of dependency but already enclosing critical reactions against it, Mexican communication research actually began, following three paths: historical and descriptive studies of the Press; diffusion of innovation projects for rural development; and critical explorations of the social, political and educational functions of television and radio.

In 1970, the beginning of an agitated period of Mexican history, “developmentism” began to break down, the urban population became larger than the rural population, and mass media, particularly television, came on the scene as an important political agent. During the seventies, in a rapidly changing context, communication research established its basis and began to appear as a specific field of study. Several universities (especially the National University, *Autónoma Metropolitana*, *Iberoamericana* and *Anáhuac* universities in Mexico City), along with some governmental agencies, institutionally undertook communication research as a task that demanded attention, and some early research trends emerged with thematic and theoretically or methodologically innovative approaches, which were to be confronted over the next decade within the incipient community of researchers, in Mexico as well as in Latin America. Against Everett Rogers’s hopes, the “empirical and critical” schools did not merge into a Latin American “hybrid,” “in which Latin American communication scholars draw upon the elements from both schools that are most appropriate for the contemporary communication problems of Latin American societies” (Rogers 1982, 135).

It also may be emphasized that, beyond the “exponential growth” in the number of Communication Schools and students that began to occur in the seventies all over Latin America, and the “conversion” to this model of almost every pre-existing Journalism program, it was within the representatives of the “Humanistic” model that the need for a national (and soon, for a Latin American) institutional association emerged. In 1976, 14 out of the 24 universities with communication programs in Mexico constituted the National Council for Education and Research in Communication Sciences (*Consejo Nacional para la Enseñanza y la Investigación de las Ciencias de la Comunicación*, CONEICC). Only five years later, in 1981, CONEICC itself was one of the founding members of the Latin American Federation of Social Communication Schools (*Federación Latinoamericana de Facultades de Comunicación Social*, FELAFACS).¹²

By the early eighties, the third *foundational model* (“communication as a social science”) had been fully established in Mexico, and its representatives, mainly public universities, joined the associations and promoted debates and concerns crucial to the strengthening of the “field” and to the attention due to research, albeit sometimes in dogmatic and Manichean terms. This last model adopted a “critical-social-scientific” framework (with Marxist theorizing, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist “positionings” as common premises), and set aside almost all forms of technical or professional training, except for some propaganda or “denunciation” of Media manipulation and alienation. One of the consequences associated with the adoption of this model for undergraduate education was, paradoxically, the disconnection between university practices and the “reproduction” of the incipient research community. But at the same time, it was taken as the referential platform from which to organize research activities and the first master’s degree programs in a few Mexican universities. The pioneer graduate programs in Communication were instituted at *Iberoamericana* University in 1976 and at the National University (UNAM) in 1979. Both of them had from the beginning a mixed profile, oriented toward academic research and advanced professional (Media) training.¹³

By the end of the seventies, the search for identity and pertinence led Mexican communication researchers to establish themselves as a scientific community compelled to play the role of a pressure group and to confront Mexican government and media owners, from a wider than national (Latin American or even Third World) perspective. The long-lasting public debate on Right to Information legislation (1976–1981), Media democratization and national policies on communication and culture were privileged points of attention for the groups behind the constitution of the Latin American (in 1977) and the corresponding Mexican (in 1979) Associations of Communication Researchers (*Asociación Latinoamericana*, ALAIC, y *Mexicana de Investigadores de la Comunicación*, AMIC), fostered by “critical” researchers, many of them acting within the government, non-governmental or international organizations, and not affiliated with universities or academic institutions,¹⁴ as was the case with 13 of the 54 (24%) individual

founders of AMIC. This political orientation undoubtedly affected academic and scientific advancement in the field and was the cause of conflict among researchers, but at the same time it was an important and enriching experience from which many lessons have been extracted.

The National/International Articulation of the Field

Since the mid-seventies, critical studies of transnational information flows and the resulting documentation and denunciation of global imbalances and the dependency of Latin American countries have constituted important issues associated with the proposed “National Communication Policies” and with a “New World Information and Communication Order” (NWICO) advocated by UNESCO (see Wagman, this volume). Two Latin American research centers were especially noteworthy: the Institute of Communications Research (*Instituto de Investigaciones de la Comunicación, ININCO*) founded in 1974 at the Central University of Venezuela (by Antonio Pasquali, who years later occupied high positions at UNESCO and is considered one of the “founding fathers” of Latin American thought on Communication), and the Latin American Institute for Transnational Studies (*Instituto Latinoamericano de Estudios Transnacionales, ILET*) established in Mexico City in 1976. In Venezuela the long-term political and academic traditions of professional journalism bodies contributed to the formulation of a number of problems related to international information (in the sense of news), which would be extensively investigated in the following decade. The main objective of ILET, meanwhile, was defined as the development of “pragmatic studies and research” on transnational phenomena, in particular the transnational structure of power acting within most “Third World countries” (Fuentes-Navarro 2011a).

The role of ILET was extremely important for the emergence and international recognition of the presumptive “Latin American critical thought,”¹⁵ although its projects were only loosely related to academic concerns. Its executive director, the Chilean economist Juan Somavía (along with the future Colombian Nobel Prize winner Gabriel García Márquez), was a member of the *International Commission for the Study of the Problems of Communication* established in 1976 by UNESCO, chaired by Seán MacBride (MacBride 1980). Armand Mattelart, the Belgian-born and French-resident scholar who was part of the research personnel associated with the Socialist Allende’s administration in Chile (violently deposed in 1973) and perhaps the most influential author for the Latin American critical researchers (Chaffee, Gómez-Palacio, and Rogers 1990), summarizes from a contemporary perspective: ILET “became a source of ideas and proposals partially adopted by the MacBride Commission,” developing the “embryos” of a political economy of communication “in action,” because “the time had come to accompany the processes of social change, rather than worrying about the institutionalization of a field of study!” (Mattelart 2012, viii). It has to be stated that,

especially through AMIC and CONEICC, a whole new generation of Mexican academic researchers¹⁶ deeply committed to the articulation of “social change” and “scientific rigor” in the field of communication continued and extended this critical “source of ideas and proposals” left in Mexico by that other generation of exiles, which included Mattelart himself, who helped to configure the founding communication curriculum at *Metropolitana* Autonomous University at Xochimilco and co-directed, with Héctor Schmucler, the epochal journal *Comunicación y Cultura*.

Despite this ferment, the institutionalization of new, innovative, “utopic” (Wallerstein 1997) *foundational models* for Communication undergraduate programs ceased in Mexico by the mid-eighties. Since the programs continued to grow, curricula and professional education came to embrace a broader and broader hodgepodge of disparate elements, with apparent priority granted only to superficial technological applications and the satisfaction of growing, commercially-induced demand for “light education.”

A Final Synchronic “Snapshot” of the Academic Field and Its Future

The assessment of Mexican academic production in the field, through independent or official meta-research projects, has become easier than ever before thanks to documentation resources such as the Open-Access web repository *ccdoc* (<http://ccdoc.iteso.mx>), launched in October 2003 and ranked 11th among Mexican academic repositories.¹⁷ There is systematized evidence there to assert that, under many different conceptual frameworks and application purposes, Mexican Communication research has been gaining consistency in a plural and expanding manner since the eighties (although not as fast as one might wish and at the growing risk of fragmentation), and that the constitution of a Latin American digital network of academic documentation is a feasible project to be undertaken in the near future.

In order to further design the “contents” of such a Latin American “scientific capital,” the development and strengthening of multi-lateral and respectfully self-interested collaboration, not with an eye to unifying anything but to sharing the relative advantages of diversity, seems to be a clue supported by history. In Jesús Martín-Barbero’s words,

From the beginning, the field of communication studies in Latin America has faced two issues: the *technological one, characterized by the modernizing and developmental argument of ‘the technological fact,’ and the socio-cultural one, which relates to cultural memory and identity in a struggle for both social survival and cultural reconstitution based on movements of resistance and re-appropriation.*

(Martín-Barbero 2008, 614)

Just as “development” first, and later “dependency,” were key concepts for communication research done in Mexico and Latin America from the fifties until the seventies, “democracy” became axial in the mid-eighties, as well as the “recovery of the subject” principle in theory and practice, especially through the “shift” taken “from Media to Mediations” and the “strategic” subordination of “communication” to “culture” and both of them to “politics” (Martín-Barbero 1987). But even if the so-called “Latin American Cultural Studies” have sometimes been considered the main and almost ultimate contribution of this continent to the field (O’Connor 1991), it is unacceptable to reduce Mexican—and even more, Latin American—Communication Research to the persistence of a mythical and uniform “critical thought” or the conquest of some “hegemony” (León Duarte 2007; Gobbi 2008), nor is it justifiable to claim that “the information and communication sciences, institutionalized in several places under this name, underwent a decline in their critical commitment, and the issues investigated lost their political sense” (Mattelart 2012, viii). The challenge to develop a “New History” of the field could be an imperative and stimulating task for everyone interested in the practical discovery of democratic communication in Latin America.

Notes

- 1 “The term ‘Latin America’ was probably invented by the French, in their attempts in the nineteenth century to colonize the Americas to the south of the Rio Grande” (Salzano and Bortolini 2002, 328). It has been occasionally employed as a kind of counterpart to the term “manifest destiny,” coined by U.S. journalists and politicians to justify as “God’s will” the annexation of territories and the military interventions abroad, and as a marker of identity for the more than 580 million inhabitants of 20 modern countries on the American continent.
- 2 According to the broadest categories designed by Pooley to classify the documented contributions to the field’s history (<http://historyofcommunicationresearch.org/>), this chapter takes its place within the least common of his four main historiographical approaches, for it seeks to develop a “contextual, institutional history” (Pooley and Park 2013, 78), without ignoring pertinent issues from both “field-centric” and “intellectual” perspectives, following the conceptualization of the “academic field” as a heuristic model from a socio-cultural perspective, an approach partly derived from the “historical-structural” methodology (Sánchez Ruiz 1992) of the Latin American Dependency Theory and other critical traditions (Sánchez and Fuentes-Navarro 1990; Fuentes-Navarro 1992a, 17).
- 3 The official evaluation and accreditation of graduate programs in Mexico is a responsibility of the National Program of Quality Graduate Programs (*Programa Nacional de Posgrado de Calidad, PNPC*), a dependency of the National Council for Science and Technology (*Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, CONACYT*) and the federal Public Education Secretariat (*Secretaría de Educación Pública, SEP*). A detailed up-to-date description of this institutional sector of the academic field is displayed in Fuentes-Navarro (2014).
- 4 A recent recount and analysis for Latin America (Lopes 2012) listed 287 graduate programs in 19 countries (the exception being Nicaragua): 249 at the master’s level and 38 Doctorates in Communication.
- 5 Among them, *Comunicación y Sociedad*, edited by the University of Guadalajara since 1987 (<http://www.comunicacionysociedad.cucsh.udg.mx>), *Estudios sobre las Culturas Contemporáneas*, edited since 1986 by the University of Colima (<http://www.culturascorcontemporaneas.com/acerca.php>) and *Razón y Palabra*, “the first digital Ibero-American journal on communication,” published since 1996, by a group of scholars formerly associated with the *Tecnológico de Monterrey* system.
- 6 Every one of these four associations are also important academic research publishers, AMIC and CONEICC in the form of refereed yearbooks, FELAFACS through *Diálogos de la Comunicación*, at present an open-access web journal (<http://dialogosfelafacs.net/>), and ALAIC with its two journals, one printed and digital, edited in Spanish and Portuguese, *Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias de la Comunicación* (<http://www.alaic.net/revistaalaic/index.php/alaic>), and the other, digital only and edited in English, *Journal of Latin American Communication Research* (<http://alaic.net/journal/>).
- 7 It seems worth mentioning here that in the territory now occupied by “Mexico” in the southern extreme of North America, history spans about 30 centuries. Hundreds of nations, descendants of Asian immigrants, gradually left nomadism behind and built civilizations, some of them powerful empires, like the Maya or the Azteca (and the Inca in South America). Over hundreds of years, many different cultures developed from tribe to nation independently of outside influences, until the sixteenth century, when the extensive immigration of predominantly Europeans and Africans started to bring “Discovery” and “Conquest” to the American continent, as the eminent Brazilian geneticist Francisco M. Salzano has studied, from an integrated and multidisciplinary approach, and synthesized in a fascinating book (Salzano and Bortolini 2002, 328). Communication before Columbus, by the way, is an almost empty category in the bibliography of Communication History, with some outstanding exceptions (Beltrán Salmón et al. 2008); this scarcity of studies is also the case for the three centuries of Spanish colonial domination of America.
- 8 “The triple marginality . . . means that communication research is marginal within the social sciences, which we contend are marginal within the general area of scientific research and, in its turn, the latter is marginal within the development priorities in Mexico as a result of the development model adopted in the 1950s (which showed signs of exhaustion by the late 1960s and entered into undeniable crisis by the late 1970s, a condition that has lasted until the present day)” (Sánchez and Fuentes-Navarro 1990, 68).
- 9 A state-of-the art review article (Fuentes-Navarro 2005a) and two edited books (Fuentes-Navarro 2004; 2006), as well as some comparative analyses of institutionalization processes of Communication studies in Mexico and Brazil (Fuentes-Navarro 1994; 2006; 2007) are among the main products of these projects. There are some other Mexican books on “the field” edited by Galindo and Luna (1995), Lozano (2005), Chávez and Karam (2008), Méndez and Vizcarra (2009), or Vega (2009). Unfortunately, none of these texts are available in English.
- 10 However, the first higher education institution in Mexico devoted to Journalism education (it is still operating) is the one named “Carlos Septién García” in honor of its second director. It was founded in 1949, sponsored by the Mexican Catholic Action organization, from which it became independent in 1966 (<http://septien.mx/acerca-de-la-escuela/presentacion/>, retrieved 04/22/14).
- 11 A philological perspective of research would help to clarify why, until the late sixties or early seventies, influential institutions such as CIESPAL and UNAM avoided the literal translation into Spanish of the denomination “Mass Communication” (*Comunicación*

Masiva) and preferred “Collective Communication” (*Comunicación Colectiva*) or some others, before adopting the Catholic Church concept: “Social Communication” (*Comunicación Social*). The Official Documents of the Ecumenical Council Vatican II (Abbott and Walter 1967) included a *Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication*, promulgated in 1963, known as “*Inter Mirifica*” for its first words in Latin, which “asserts, for the first time in a general document of the Church, the obligation and right of the Church to use the instruments of social communication” (Abbott and Walter 1967, 320). Note that the Church did not use the term “Media” either. Notwithstanding, in the Mexican case, given the legal and formal non-recognition of the Church by the secular and “Revolutionary” State before the nineties, the open participation of the Church in the Media was unthinkable, or at least unspeakable for decades. But while the owners and officials of Televisa and other Media conglomerates were comfortable talking about “Mass Communication” by the early seventies, Mexican Government officials from the Echeverría administration (1970–1976) paradoxically got rather used to referring to “Social Communication” activities and Offices. Extremely interesting documents were compiled in a “transcript” by The University of Texas at Austin (1971) of a *Symposium* celebrated there in April 1971, with high-level Mexican and U.S. officials, journalists and Media owners as panelists.

- 12 Representatives of 15 countries signed the Foundation Act of FELAFACS in Melgar, Colombia, on October 28, 1981: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.
- 13 Some years later, in the eighties, other universities created and consolidated their graduate programs, including Master’s degrees and some interdisciplinary areas in Doctoral programs, at the *Autónoma Metropolitana* University in Mexico City, ITESO and the University of Guadalajara in Guadalajara, and the *Tecnológico de Monterrey* in Monterrey.
- 14 In the context of the “Cold War,” various types of non-Latin American agencies (especially political and philanthropic, but religious and industrial foundations as well, from different “developed” or “developing” countries and regions) funded a multitude of social interventions and experiments of diverse character in Latin America, most of them “legal” and many of them associated with the use of media and communication resources and technologies. The history of the *diffusion of innovations* approach (Fuentes-Navarro 2005b) is a well-known example of these “Extensions for Progress.” Knowledge of the impacts of that multilateral and continued external intervention in the constitution of the “field” in Latin America is a major structural challenge for “New” History, and would have to be understood for the sake of a true “internationalization of democracy,” among other purposes. An extensive documentation of “Communication for Social Change” projects—not only in Latin America— can be found in Gumucio and Tufte’s monumental *Anthology* (2006).
- 15 Some of the most representative titles on communication matters produced by ILET in Mexico were signed by a multi-national array of researchers, including Bolivian Luis Ramiro Beltrán Salmón and U.S.-Colombian Elizabeth Fox; Chileans Fernando Reyes-Matta, Diego Portales Cifuentes, Adriana Santa Cruz and Viviana Eraso; Peruvians Rafael Roncagliolo and Alberto Ruiz Eldredge; Argentinians Gregorio Selser and Héctor Schmucler; the U.S.-born Noreene Janus; Belgian Armand Mattelart; and Dutch Cees Hamelink. Once many of the South American researchers who were exiled in Mexico had returned to their countries of origin, ILET edited other books in Peru, Argentina and Chile. In less than a decade ILET’s communication research shifted,

without losing its central axis (the *transnationalization* phenomena), from an almost exclusive preoccupation with the flows of information to more complex issues such as the so-called alternative media and new information and communication technologies in Latin America, bearing always in mind the study of power (Fuentes-Navarro 2011a), and thus advancing a critical perspective on “globalization” before the term was widespread.

- 16 Among them: Fátima Fernández-Christlieb, Javier Esteinou, Raúl Trejo-Delarbre, Florence Toussaint, Beatriz Solís, Alberto Montoya, María Antonieta Rebeil, Guillermo Orozco . . . all founders of AMIC (1979) and still today active leaders in the field.
- 17 <http://repositories.webometrics.info>, retrieved 03/03/2014. The database includes more than six thousand references to academic published products of communication research in or about Mexico, half of them accessible full-text.

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