

Theoretical Frames and Institutional Constraints: A Synopsis about Chilean Communication Research in the 21st Century

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Using official data from the Chilean system of science and leading local journals, this article provides a historical overview of the main contemporary trends in Chilean communication research since the 2000s. The field in Chile seems to be expanding, with stable funding, stronger institutionalization, and an increase in better trained researchers. However, this development shows many paradoxes: Despite the valuable insights recent studies in communication have provided to better understand the Chilean communication landscape, they are, rather, applied research, testing global or international theoretical frames to local problems in communication. I argue that the institutional, political, and economic constraints have strongly shaped the possibilities of expanding contemporary communication research in Chile, particularly regarding its theoretical contributions. Therefore, current Chilean communication research seems a work-in-progress project, far from its substantial contributions to the international field in the 1960s and 1970s.

Keywords: communication research, Chile, history of communication, institutionalization

The literature on the history of the field of communication research in Chile is scarce. Nevertheless, previous scholars agree on identifying three main historical periods for the field, shaped by the civic-military dictatorship (1973–1990)—that is, before, during, and after the authoritarian regime. This article focuses on the latter period, which includes the end of Pinochet’s government, the return to a formal democracy, an economic expansion under a neoliberal frame, the privatization of higher education, the explosion of new schools of journalism, and scholarly production under the pressure of productivity’s metrics. This examination enlarges previous works that have addressed specific topics and narrow periods or provided partial accounts.

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For instance, Davies (1999) analyzed mass communication research in Chile between the 1950s and the 1970s and was particularly interested in the roles that communication and culture played in maintaining hegemony and the strategies developed locally to dispute metropolitan powers in peripheral countries. Whereas Davies's work constitutes an outsider's perspective, Munizaga and Rivera (1983) examined the field between 1930 and 1973 as insiders. By reviewing more than 100 studies published during that period, they highlighted the sociopolitical and historical contexts under which communication research was developed, the main problems it addressed, the institutional capacities deployed to support scholarship, and the key contributions to a field relatively novel by then (Munizaga & Rivera, 1983). Despite the value of their work and the extent to which it is cited, Munizaga and Rivera did not explain how and why they focused on this corpus or how they defined it.

Since Munizaga and Rivera's overview, there has been no comprehensive or updated examination of the field. Few contemporary accounts have been published afterward (Avendaño, 1999; Lazcano, 2007; Lazcano-Peña & Perry, 2016). Thus, most of them described general trends or focused on a specific area, such as semiotics (del Villar, 1996; A. Gallardo & Sánchez, 1986) or surveys (Chaparro, 2003; Cordero, 2009; Poveda & Sánchez, 2013). Antezana (2011) explored the constraints that Chilean women face in the field, and Santa Cruz (1997) examined features of the Chilean case as a part of larger Latin American trends.

Carlos del Valle (2004a) and Rubén Dittus (2008) carried out two of the most ambitious reviews of Chilean communication research in recent years. The former analyzed the evolution of the field between 1970 and 2003 under the political economy of communication's umbrella. The author identified four main topics organizing the research of this area: the political economic structures of information and communication, the role of the state, public policies on communication, and the way in which knowledge production is shaped by research agendas. On the other hand, Dittus focused on media studies, privileging a semiotic perspective and arguing that communication research in Chile carries four key shortcomings: a relatively weak epistemological tradition, pragmatism as the hegemonic perspective, a scholarly production geographically centralized, and scarce academic productivity.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that a certain formalization of communication research in Chile has started within schools of journalism created at the end of the 1950s and early 1960s (Munizaga & Rivera, 1983). Therefore, the examination of professional training in journalism is also relevant, although it is scarce and anecdotal (Castellón, 2006; del Valle, 2001; González, 2001). Indeed, some of the classic studies in the field are historical accounts of Chilean journalism (Arias Escobedo, 1970; Menanteau-Horta, 1967; Silva Castro, 1958; Silva Vildósola, 1938) and critical analyses of the role journalism plays in enhancing capitalism (Santa Cruz, 1988; Taufic, 1973). Finally, overviews about global trends oriented to local audiences are also part of this body of knowledge (Otero Bello, 1997).

While these studies are imperative in understanding the history of communication research in Chile, I map a provisory, updated cartography of the field, understanding mapping as an intuitive experience rather than an objective practice (Martín-Barbero, 2002) and recognizing a field as a theoretical construct in attempting to understand cultural production as a relational mode of thought (Bourdieu, 1993, 2005). So, I highlight some players, the struggles, the boundaries, and the principal frameworks shaping communication studies in Chile.

The article is organized in four sections: a historical overview of communication research in Chile; a description of the main institutional features of the field, highlighting graduate programs, academic journals, and the organizational networks that define the standards, provide funding, and bureaucratically organize the field; a discussion of the main trends in communication research in Chile since 2005, including reliance on grants, domestic journals, and graduate training; and some limitations of this account and suggestions for further research.

Historical Notes on Chilean Communication Research

Any historical account of a specific domain of knowledge is incomplete. This synopsis does not escape this fact because of the irregular cycles that communication research in Chile presents (del Valle, 2004b). Thus, I provide a chronological overview of the inception and development of the formal study of the field.

Indeed, systematic research in communication began in Chile at the end of the 1950s.² The director of the Institute of Sociology of the University of Chile, Eduardo Hamuy, is recognized as the founder of communication as a field of study (Castellón, 2006; Davies, 1999; Munizaga & Rivera, 1983), especially regarding the design, development, and application of the early public opinion surveys (Poveda & Sánchez, 2013). Functionalism and mass communication research shaped these early attempts to professionalize communication inquiry. However, by the 1960s, critical theory's influence, inspired by the Marxist tradition, the dependency theory, and Paulo Freire's theology of liberation, reached legitimacy and grew regarding institutionalization, production, and impact, both domestically and abroad.

This trend occurred alongside seismic changes that Chile was undergoing by then. In fact, between 1964 and 1970, the democratic Christian government of Eduardo Frei Montalva promoted a progressive agenda. The larger influence of revolutionary movements, such as that in Cuba, also swayed Chilean society. In 1970, a socialist administration was democratically elected for the first time in global history.

A critical school of communication developed alongside the university reform that revolutionized Chilean higher education (Munizaga & Rivera, 1983). The main representative of this scholarly trend is Armand Mattelart, a Belgium scholar holding a PhD in law and a specialization in demography. Mattelart arrived in Santiago de Chile in 1962 as a visiting scholar sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation.³ Working at the interdisciplinary Current Affairs Center (*Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Nacional*, CEREN) at the Catholic University of Chile, Mattelart and his team dismissed administrative frames. Based on a strong empirical work, they promoted critical perspectives, such as structuralism and political economy (Burton & Franco, 1978; Davies, 1999).

Although Mattelart's research has been relatively ignored since the 1990s (Estoniu, 2001), his contributions are inescapable (Brennan & Skinner, 1990; Burton & Franco, 1978; Martín-Barbero &

² Nevertheless, a sporadic interest in communication research emerged in the 1930s, alongside the increasing industrialization, urbanization, and consolidation of mass media (Munizaga & Rivera, 1983).

³ Grant documentation received by email from the Rockefeller Archive Center, August 4, 2017.

Herlinghaus, 2000; A. Mattelart & Siegelaub, 1979; Russi, 2010). Indeed, he embodied the intellectual and activist work developed by the CEREN.⁴ Armand and Michelle Mattelart are often cited as a fruitful intellectual partnership (A. Mattelart & Mattelart, 1970, 1997; A. Mattelart, Mattelart, & Delcout, 1984; A. Mattelart, Piccini, & Mattelart, 1970; M. Mattelart & Mattelart, 1990). Nonetheless, Michelle Mattelart's individual work has also contributed to enhancing critical theories of media. Her research about women's representations in media and cultural production was pioneering. Indeed, some of her research was actually conducted and published in Chile (A. Mattelart & Mattelart, 1968; M. Mattelart, 1971, 1976) before other efforts produced by, for instance, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham (Brunsdon & Morley, 1978; Winship, 1980, 1981).

Alongside other contemporary Latin American thinkers, Armand Mattelart unveiled the key role that ideology played in communication and cultural production, and the extent to which ideology and communication are at the core of capitalism. Among his fundamental early works are *How to Read Donald Duck (Para leer al Pato Donald)*, which unmasked the ideological operations in Disney's cultural products and was reedited and translated dozens of times after its first edition in the 1970s (Dorfman & Mattelart, 2005), and *The Ideology of the Free Press in Chile (La ideología de la prensa liberal en Chile)*, which revealed the hegemonic operations, the influence of foreign commercial interests, and class struggles within the Chilean liberal press (A. Mattelart et al., 1970). His oeuvre is monumental and still globally relevant in the field (Hay, Harsin, & Cohen, 2013; A. Mattelart, 2010). The political and economic conditions and the unequal production, circulation, and reception of communication flows continue to challenge the field as much as they did during the 1960s. He argued that these questions "had turned more complex" in geo-cultural and geo-informational global spaces, in which communication, information, and culture "have turned into structural factors" and are not only symptoms of political and economic trends (Mattelart in Bolaño, Mastrini, & Sierra, 2012, p. xi).

However, the development of the social sciences and the humanities in Chile was seriously hindered by the authoritarian regime (1973–1990). New authorities appointed by the dictatorship controlled the universities and fired faculty, students, and staff members, many of whom went into exile. They also cut budgets and closed programs and research centers, such as the CEREN, resulting in the destruction of critical research in the field.

Therefore, communication research during the 1980s was displaced from the universities to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) devoted to inquiring about—but not limited to—culture and communication, such as the Latin American Institute of Transnational Studies (*Instituto Latinoamericano de Estudios Transnacionales*, ILET) and the Center of Cultural Studies and Arts (*Centro de Estudios Culturales y de la Expresión Artística*, CENECA). By 1985, 35 of these centers were employing 300 full-time

⁴ Between September 1969 and July 1973, the CEREN published 17 issues of the *Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional* before the Center was closed by the university authorities appointed by the dictatorship. The material illustrates the intellectual projects of many scholars that became crucial to social sciences in Latin America, such as the Mattelarts, Manuel Antonio Garretón, Norbert Lechner, Jacques Chonchol, and Tomás Moulián, among others.

researchers. This type of NGO was prolific: They published almost 100 books and more than 300 working papers between 1984 and 1985 (Brunner & Barrios, 1988, cited by Dittus, 2008, p. 193).

The main theoretical contributions of these NGOs are based on some unexplored problems in communication at the time, such as the interplay between communication and education, with a special emphasis on grassroots communication (*comunicación popular*) and alternative strategies of communication (Fuenzalida, 1991). There was also a commitment to documenting the status of culture, communication, and politics under authoritarian conditions (Munizaga, 1981; Portales & Sunkel, 1989; Torres, 1986). A sense of urgency to critically address the radical shifts in Chilean cultural industries undertaken by the dictatorship was at the core of this inquiry (Lasagni, Edwards, & Bonnefoy, 1985; Munizaga, 1984; Navarro, 1985; Portales, 1981; Reyes Matta & Richards, 1986; Sunkel, 1985). This body of work enhanced not only the Chilean field of communication research, but the Latin American one too (García-Canclini, 1994).

After the dictatorship, the communication field began to expand, relatively, by the early 1990s: The opening of new schools of journalism in the 1980s and the strengthening of traditional ones, as well as the training of a younger generation of scholars both in Chile and abroad, contributed to this growth. However, the field lost some of its key researchers—including Brunner, Catalán, and Portales, to mention a few—because they were appointed as officials under the democratic government in the early 1990s, and the NGOs that had been crucial were closed because of a lack of funding and the restructuring of the field.

At the same time, broader transformations were taking place at the beginning of the 1990s in Chilean society. In fact, a democratic government supported by a wide range of political forces replaced the dictatorship that ruled for 17 years, economic growth expanded foreign investment and domestic consumption, and a larger middle class emerged with new tastes and aspirations, fueled by a flourishing advertising industry (Moulián, 1997). The territorial expansion of broadcasting across the country, the first private broadcasters in national history, foreign investment in Chilean television companies, and the improvement and spread of telecommunications were also part of this epochal shift that contributed to broadening Chilean communication research. The liberalization of higher education since the 1980s increased explosively the number of programs in journalism during the 1990s, and consequently, more formally trained communication practitioners became available. All these large societal processes opened up a commercially based market for communication studies and consulting firms.

Material and technological advancement carried its own contribution to applied research in the field. For instance, audimeters (or people meters) were implemented as methodological tools to measure television audiences in Chile in 1992, more than 20 years after Europe began to use them and much later than Brazil, for instance. A partnership between television and advertising industries hired Time Ibope, a Chilean company subsidiary of IBOPE⁵ Media Brazil, to apply a real-time technique instead of using consumer diaries, which had been used to measure television audiences in Chile since 1986 (Buzeta & Moyano, 2013). The new people meter technology dramatically changed the production and programming of television, as well as advertising and audiences' practices, and it opened up a commercial circuit of study and researchers rather disconnected from university networks (Fuenzalida, 2006). The television companies found their own

⁵ IBOPE, Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística.

research departments as part of this trend, conducting qualitative (i.e., focus groups) and quantitative (i.e., surveys) studies to develop their products.

Within this environment, advertising companies, media agencies, public relations companies, and strategic consulting firms mushroomed. Although the Chilean advertising industry has been relatively formalized since the 1960s, it was during the 1980s and, particularly, the 1990s when advertising became a more professionalized, institutionalized, and strengthened sector.

Public relations firms and small and mid-size communication consulting companies also flourished (Herrera, 2008). Indeed, some of them had expanded their operations to other Latin American countries. All the players within this ecology provide several services, including applied research in communication, qualitative and quantitative studies of audiences, and media consumption inquiry, for instance. Although some trade journals and specific studies are publicly accessible, most of the research done for commercial purposes is confidential.

Meanwhile, the public polls that already existed by the early 1990s gained relevance in political and media agendas. Together with the first centers that were conducting public opinion surveys since the mid-1980s, such as *Diagnos* (later, *Demoscópica*), the *Centro de Estudios Públicos* (CEP), Adimark, and the *Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Contemporánea* (CERC), a few others sprouted up during the 1990s. Therefore, these centers gained an uneven public relevance because of their partnership with media outlets and international companies (i.e., MORI and GFK), which had broken into the domestic market by that time. As a symptom of the expansion of the polls market, public opinion surveys published between 1999 and 2006 represent more than half of all the polls conducted since 1957 (Cordero, 2009).

Since the beginning of the 1990s, communication research within the public sector had relied mainly on two governmental organisms: the National Council on Television (*Consejo Nacional de Televisión*, CNTV) and the Office of Communication and Culture (*Secretaría de Comunicación y Cultura*, SECOM). The first has the constitutional duty of supervising how broadcasting works and whether it is adhering to legal requirements. The latter is an office under the Ministry General Secretariat of Government's supervision (*Ministerio Secretaría General de Gobierno*, SEGEGOB). The research conducted by these offices is mainly oriented to serve their missions as public services.

Institutionalization

Mapping the field of communication research regarding its institutionalization implies examining the graduate programs available, the journals published domestically, the fellowships in communication, and the public funding and its bureaucracy. Those are some of the features that trace the configuration of the field and shape what has been done.

Graduate studies in social sciences in Chile have been traditionally available in public and Catholic universities, institutions that dominated the higher education landscape until 1981. In fact, regulation was very strict regarding the operations' requirements: The few universities operating were public and state owned; private and nonprofit owned by the Chilean catholic church; and institutions

sponsored by nonprofit private foundations. However, the dictatorship radically rearranged Chilean higher education, allowing and expanding the operation of private enterprises. Within a broader trend of liberalization and privatization of tertiary education, the private supply of graduate programs in communication has exploded since the 1990s. Indeed, at the beginning of the decade, there were only two master's programs in communication and no doctoral programs. Therefore, the scholars who were teaching and researching by then either had been trained in a different discipline or came from a professional background rather than via a scholarly path.

Nevertheless, by the end of the 2000s, more than 30 master's programs in communication were available, but only three were certified.⁶ Although master's programs are still popping up, there are currently only three PhD programs in communication. The first was created in 2012 by the Catholic University of Chile;⁷ a second, at the University of Los Andes,⁸ accepted its first cohort in 2017; and in 2018, a third doctorate program was launched by the University of La Frontera (UFRO) and Austral University. It is difficult to assess the theoretical contributions of the operating doctoral programs because there are not yet graduates from the University of Los Andes and just a few from the Catholic University of Chile.

Another outcome regarding the relative development of a field is the potential to organize and sustain academic publishing forums. Indeed, journals nourish a public sphere that fuels the scholarly debates within a specific area of knowledge. Journals might mobilize epistemological struggles, expand interdisciplinary perspectives, and set the standards for the field. This article describes the two longest established Chilean journals focused on communication: *Comunicación y Medios* and *Cuadernos.info*.

Broader institutional and political contexts have shaped the sustainability of, the scope of, and the practices carried out by both journals since their inception.⁹ *Comunicación y Medios* has been edited by the *Instituto de la Comunicación e Imagen* (Institute of Communication and Image, ICEI) at the University of Chile since 1981. *Cuadernos de la Información*, renamed *Cuadernos.info* in 2009, was launched in 1984 by the College of Communication at the Catholic University of Chile. During the 1980s and 1990s, professional journalists were their main audiences, as their topics suggest: new technologies,

⁶ Data System of Higher Education, Ministry of Education (*Servicio de Información de Educación Superior*, Mineduc). Available at

<http://www.mifuturo.cl/index.php/academicos-e-investigadores>. In a highly privatized higher education landscape, master's programs are often considered an efficient self-funding strategy rather than an exclusive scholarly project. Today, there are only six M.S. in communication programs certified by the National Commission for Assurance (*Comisión Nacional de Acreditación*, CNA).

⁷ The development of this PhD program was funded by a public grant provided by the Improvement of Quality and Equity in Higher Education (*Mejoramiento de la calidad y la equidad en la educación superior*, MECESUP).

⁸ The University of Los Andes is a private institution supported by the Opus Dei, a conservative Roman Catholic congregation.

⁹ *Comunicación y Medios* did not publish issues in 1986 and 1987, 1990 and 1992, and between 1994 and 1999. *Cuadernos.info* did not publish issues in 1987, 1989, 1992, 1998, 2000, and 2003.

editorial changes in local media, ethical debates, legal and regulatory challenges of free speech, and historical accounts of specific outlets or journalists (Bofill, 1993; Cea Egaña, 1984; Contardo Egaña, 1985; M. Gallardo, 1990; Muñoz Chaut, 1991; Wolf Cubillos, 1981). However, most of these works were essays or short comments to traditional theoretical frames (such as rhetoric on Aristotle, what science in communication means, or self-regulation in media systems with references to the United States and the United Kingdom, for instance), with scarce or older references and apparently oriented toward being used as teaching material more so than enhancing theoretical frames or providing new insights into communication.

Since the late 2000s, both journals have developed several changes regarding an open access publishing system, expanded their editorial boards, and broadened their scopes (Stange, 2008; Valenzuela, 2013). Part of their goal was to reach an international community of researchers in communication. For instance, as part of its renewal in 2013, *Cuadernos.info* began to publish articles in English. In the same vein, both journals have allocated institutional and economic resources to be included in international indexes, such as Scopus and Scielo.

To examine the publishing trends in *Comunicación y Medios* and *Cuadernos.info* since 2000, I adapted the bibliometric criteria used by Ossandón, Salinas, and Stange (2014) in their analysis of Latin American journals of communication,¹⁰ identifying the main author, institutional affiliation, topics published, and the genre in which the work fits (i.e., an essay or a research paper). At the beginning of the 2000s, both journals were self-referring; that is, most of the authors were faculty members of the institutions editing both journals. Additionally, the articles mostly discussed journalistic practices and objects, and they predominantly adopted the form of an essay. Nonetheless, both journals have started to include more authors affiliated to institutions based not only in Chile, but also in Argentina, Spain, and Brazil. This expansion started as a smooth transition in the late 2000s, and it became a strong trend by the 2010s.

Analyzing the main themes that both journals had encouraged presents some limitations because of their editorial policies emphasizing special issues. However, a descriptive glance indicates that this material addresses audiences and reception phenomena; media coverage, especially on television and in the press; and representations and discourses in the media. This corpus deploys qualitative methods, such as interviews and archival works, and quantitative tools, such as surveys. The enterprise has been remarkable: Although it is difficult to identify substantive theories reshaping communication in Chile, the craft of research in the 2000s and onward has contributed to reconstituting what has been going on in the field, highlighting in particular local phenomena framed by the redemocratization and neoliberalization of the country and boosting a relatively novel community of scholars in institutions devoted to reinvigorating a field that once was very influential not only in Latin America, but also globally.

¹⁰ I am thankful to Drs. Carlos Ossandón, Claudio Salinas, and Hans Stange for sharing the form they used to collect and classify the articles published by six Latin American communication journals.

Funding: Grants and Scholarships in Communication

The National Commission for Scientific and Technological Research (*Comisión Nacional de Investigación Científica y Tecnológica*, Conicyt) is the public office supporting scientific and technological development in Chile. The main tools to accomplish such goals are the scholarship programs for graduate students in domestic and international universities and the national program of grants for developing research in all areas of knowledge (the National Fund for Scientific and Technological Development, *Fondo Nacional de Desarrollo Científico y Tecnológico*, Fondecyt).¹¹

Fondecyt has two main funding programs: *Fondecyt Regular*, oriented toward senior researchers, and *Fondecyt de Iniciación*, focused on junior scholars. The former was created in the early 1980s and the latter in 2006. Additionally, since 2009, Conicyt also has provided a grant funding studies about media pluralism in Chile. These resources are competitive and support short-term (a year) and medium-term (two to four years) studies rather than long research agendas. The scholarship program for graduate students is the second main mechanism for strengthening Chilean research.

This section examines the research projects in communication funded by Fondecyt (in its versions for senior and junior scholars) and provides a synopsis of graduate students in communication. By doing so, this article complements and expands previous works regarding the span of time previously considered and the funding tools analyzed. For instance, Lazcano-Peña and Perry (2016) described communication research funded by the Fondecyt's regular program between 1982 and 2014, whereas Del Valle's inquiry considers information up until 2003 (del Valle, 2004a). By that time, research on social sciences represented less than a quarter of the Fondecyt's budget (Dittus, 2008). Within this portion, communication research in Chile received *less than 1%* of the funding (del Valle, 2004b, emphasis added). Despite its relatively marginal presence in the whole system of science, research in communication seemed to slightly stabilize from 2005 onward.

Grants

Conicyt has been the core institution in developing science and supporting research in Chile, especially through Fondecyt. Between 2005 and 2016,¹² Fondecyt has funded 300 research projects in sociology¹³ for junior and senior scholars. However, only 58 of them correspond to studies conducted in the subfield of sciences of communication and information. Additionally, between 2009 and 2016, the national system of science has supported 24 short-term projects on media pluralism. Therefore, only 19% of the

¹¹ Besides Fondecyt and the fellowship program, Conicyt has 11 more programs funding science development in Chile, including grants for acquiring or renewing technology, promoting international networks, and spreading research into elementary and high schools, among others.

¹² Conicyt's official response to a requirement submitted under the Freedom of Information Act (*Ley de Acceso a la Información Pública*, #20,285), received electronically February 10, 2017.

¹³ Group study: sociology; it includes information and communication sciences, social change and development, methodologies, sociology of organizations, urban and rural sociology, and social and cultural theory, among others.

projects funded by Fondecyt in sociology correspond to communication studies, and they make up a third if we include investigations about media pluralism.¹⁴

The institution with the strongest presence conducting research under this frame is the Catholic University of Chile. Between 2005 and 2016, the university obtained 18 grants in communication, with most of the research conducted by faculty members affiliated with the College of Communication and one faculty member affiliated with the Institute of Aesthetics. This number increases to 21 if we add funding granted by an R+D program (*Fondo al Desarrollo Científico y Tecnológico*, FONDEF) also provided by Conicyt: From around 500 research projects conceded, the only three in communication were conducted by scholars from the Catholic University. Also, scholars from Austral University and the University of Chile conducted eight projects each during the same period. Until 2013, principal researchers who received the regular funding were overwhelmingly faculty members working at consolidated universities. For the first time, in 2014, a scholar of a relatively new private school—Diego Portales University—obtained a Fondecyt grant. *Fondecyt de Iniciación*, the grant oriented toward scholars early in their career, shows a similar path.

But funding focused on media pluralism's studies shows a different pattern. Although it is newer and its budget is smaller, it is an attractive platform for faculty members in private and relatively new schools. Since 2009, the funding for media pluralism has supported 24 short-term projects, nine of which were carried out by scholars affiliated with institutions created under the liberalization of higher education in the 1980s. However, historical institutions are still relevant. In fact, five research projects granted by the media pluralism fund have been conducted at the University of Chile.¹⁵

Some of the relevant topics in Chilean communication research between 2005 and 2015 came from the fruitful intersections between media literacy, audiences and media uses, and education and communication. This trend continues and expands a rich tradition of studying these issues, at the root of communication research in Chile (Dittus, 2008; Fuenzalida, 2006). Regarding methodological frames, this body of research relies on discourse and content analyses, interviews, and archival work. The body of research funded by Fondecyt between 2005 and 2015, then, addresses similar topics that Del Valle found in previous years. In fact, between 1982 and 2004, television, new technologies, and media consumption and uses were key in communication research (del Valle, 2004b).

Regarding diffusion and circulating strategies, the projects reviewed for this article and their outcomes show that research in communication still follows traditional forms, such as final reports, books, and articles, preferably in indexed journals. Recently, some of them have adopted digital formats, such as e-books, and privileged open-source platforms. This trend slightly differs from the production that characterized communication research in the 1980s, which was heavily based on working papers. It is also remarkable that multimedia forms exploiting Internet potential—such as visualization, podcasts, and video—are largely absent from the field. Final reports, particularly papers, provide the top scores in evaluation

¹⁴ The funding oriented toward media pluralism studies operates slightly differently than Fondecyt Regular and Fondecyt de Iniciación.

¹⁵ The author of this article has been the principal researcher and coresearcher in two research projects granted by the pluralism fund.

processes for new grants, transforming publishing strategies in a vicious circle that discourages diverse genres, platforms, and mediums, as well as languages, in publishing.

Indeed, the formal criteria regarding what is considered worthy in relation to academic productivity have been narrowed since 2008¹⁶: Top-tier journals have additional appeal and impact factor matters. Indeed, today, at least regarding what the written requirement indicates, the only criterion to evaluate a scholar's trajectory competing for a research grant is his or her publishing record.¹⁷ Although projects are evaluated by peer reviewers, the actual process of human deliberation that could eventually introduce some nuances in the evaluation is beyond the scope of this article and should be addressed by further research.

Therefore, institutional pressures to publish in journals indexed preferably in SSCI are shaping the type of research projects, theoretical frames, and methodological strategies deployed by Chilean scholars. It is important to note that there are no communication journals in Chile in the SSCI index, and only a few are published in Spanish. The latter has many consequences: Editing new journals domestically is an unappealing endeavor. It is time consuming, and it does not provide an accepted platform within the structure of academic recognition because any indexing process takes time. Thus, a new journal is not attractive enough to reach scholars under heavy pressure to publish in indexed publications.

Most journals in communication recognized by the national system of science as valuable are published in foreign languages, heavily in English, which also results in translation and editing costs. Although several institutions provide funding for this service through competitive internal grants,¹⁸ in a highly privatized scholarly system, that cost comes out of scholars' pockets more often than is desirable. As a result, many researchers are excluded from this circuit of knowledge because of a lack of funding. Finally, pushing scholars to compete for research grants to demonstrate productivity in certain journals risks scholars losing connection with the local intellectual debate.

¹⁶ The public criteria that Fondecyt has considered for allocating research grants in its yearly competitive application process has changed slightly since 2008. See *Pauta de Evaluación Curricular, Concurso Fondecyt Regular 2008, Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades*, available at <http://www.conicyt.cl/fondecyt/grupos-de-estudios/sociologia-y-ciencias-de-la-informacion/criterios-de-evaluacion-curricular-concurso-regular-2008> and *Criterios de Evaluación Curricular Concurso Regular 2012, Sociología y Ciencias de la Información*, available at <http://www.conicyt.cl/fondecyt/grupos-de-estudios/sociologia-y-ciencias-de-la-informacion/criterios-de-evaluacion-curricular-concurso-regular-2012-sociologia-y-ciencias-de-la-informacion>.

¹⁷ See the public criteria that Fondecyt currently evaluates for allocating research grants at <http://www.conicyt.cl/fondecyt/grupos-de-estudios/sociologia-y-ciencias-de-la-informacion/criterios-de-evaluacion-curricular-concurso-regular-2017-sociologia-y-ciencias-de-la-informacion>.

¹⁸ Although there are no national consolidated data regarding the policies that institutions are fostering to support translation costs, by reviewing their official websites, we can mention that institutions such as University of Chile, Catholic University, University of La Frontera, University of Los Andes, and University Adolfo Ibáñez, among others, financially support articles' translations mainly through competitive grants that often cover partially the costs of the services. Other universities offer financial incentives to their scholars publishing in highly competitive journals. There are several institutional websites that do not provide any information about whether they financially support translation costs in non-Spanish publications.

Something similar occurs regarding who appears as a principal researcher conducting studies in communication based on public grants. Indeed, only six Chilean scholars¹⁹ have received grants from Fondecyt for senior researchers in three or more opportunities between 2005 and 2016. All are affiliated with traditional universities shown to be highly competitive in obtaining public funding through the national system of science, not only in communication, but also in all disciplines.

Despite the high value of this body of knowledge inquiring about the Chilean media system, the cultural narratives about powerless populations, the ongoing change in journalistic practices and frames, and the valuable new insights they have provided to better understand the Chilean communication landscape, these studies tend to be applied research that tests foreign theoretical frames on local problems in communication. Indeed, developing theory is a long-term process that requires not only talented scholars, but also strong institutions, long-term funding, and a community engaged in questioning and enhancing new frameworks, which is a work in progress in Chile. This is a consequence of the institutional frame that promotes competition instead of collaboration, short and mid-term projects, and a stagnant budget for an increasing community of certified scholars in the field.

Scholarships

Between 1988 and 2012, Conicyt supported scholarships for graduate students both domestically and abroad through its training program (Programa Formación de Capital Humano Avanzado),²⁰ whose main objective is to increase the community of researchers with a doctoral degree in all areas of knowledge in order to foster scientific and technological research in the country. Despite supporting master's students, Conicyt's goal is to enhance the number and the quality of PhDs in Chile (Conicyt, 2013). The official information is scarce, however.²¹

But the number of applicants for a scholarship to study communication abroad is marginal. Indeed, between 2011 and 2015, barely 2% of more than 17,000 applicants applied for a scholarship to pursue graduate studies in communication abroad. In that same period, the system received 4,537 applications to study a doctoral program in an international institution. However, only 1% of them corresponded to applicants seeking a PhD in communication in a foreign institution.

Between 2011 and 2015, 76 Chilean students were pursuing graduate studies in communication abroad thanks to a national scholarship. The majority were enrolled in a master's program, and only 19 were pursuing a PhD. British and American universities are the most preferred for master's students, but

¹⁹ Dr. Soledad Puente and Dr. Carlos del Valle received four grants each during the period analyzed in this work. Dr. Claudia Mellado, Dr. Bernardo Amigo, Dr. Rodrigo Browne, and Dr. William Porath received three each.

²⁰ The concept of "human capital" in education is associated with narrow frames, tightly tied to the economic structure instead of a holistic approach to social development, under which individuals are considered a productive factor.

²¹ For example, the training program for Advanced Human Capital has only consolidated and made data available since 2010. Official response to a requirement submitted under the Freedom of Information Act (*Ley de Acceso a la Información Pública*, #20,285), received electronically March 7, 2017.

Spanish universities are still important for Chilean graduate students. Indeed, 8 of 19 doctoral students in communication between 2011 and 2015 were enrolled in a Spanish institution. Nonetheless, assessing the theoretical contributions of these recently trained doctoral students in foreign institutions is difficult because they constitute a small group (around 20), and not all of them have finished their thesis.

The data regarding students enrolled in graduate programs in Chile show some differences. For instance, there were no applicants for doctoral programs between 2011 and 2015. This might be explained by the absence of a PhD program in communication before 2012, scholarships that fall short of supporting full-time students, and the interdisciplinary training of scholars working in communication and their enrollment in domestic programs that better fit their research interests (such as literature, aesthetics, or political science, for instance); this topic is beyond the scope of this article.

Final Remarks: More Questions, Some Limitations, and Further Challenges

This account does not expect to be exhaustive or impartial. After all, what constitutes an outstanding theoretical contribution in the field of communication research in a local scholarly community could be debatable. But I argue that material, bureaucratic, and institutional conditions have radically reframed the conditions of possibility in the field of communication research in Chile. There are some research projects, journals, an increasing participation in global academic networks, and knowledge serving local problems. This is clearly an improvement and a sign of the increasing field's robustness. However, there is a rather scarce presence of original theoretical frames developed in Chile, unlikely was seen in the field during the 1960s and the 1970s. Consequently, communication research in Chile is fragmented not only because of the dictatorship's heavy shadow, but also overall because of the mode of production based on competitive projects and restriction to narrow problems that can be researched under short- or mid-term grants and that have specific outcomes (journal papers). Under this umbrella, Chilean communication research is a work in progress facing stimulating perspectives.

This article analyzes the main institutional boundaries, some specific players, and several features of the struggles regarding funding and productivity. In particular, this article highlights the process and mechanisms through which communication research has shown relative strength since 2005. By doing so, this article contributes to the expansion of previous research on the history of the field based on the period analyzed and the public policies oriented toward supporting communication research in Chile. However, there are some limitations that should spark further inquiries.

The scope of the article is communication research conducted under the umbrella of social sciences, specifically funded by three competitive grants: *Fondecyt Regular*, *Fondecyt de Iniciación*, and Pluralism grants. However, this analysis overlooked other funding sources, such as those that support R+D. Although only three projects in communication are funded by this grant,²² representing a very

²² All are conducted by faculty members of the Catholic University: *Sistema de integración informativa: Productos derivados* (Fondef D08I1082) and *Sistema de integración informativa* (Fondef DOI10364), both

small portion of all the R+D funding, it pictures a fruitful but underdeveloped area of communication research. As long as R+D funding requires partnerships with local industry, it could open up a challenging and yet unexplored terrain to enhance theoretical frameworks addressing domestic and original problems in communication. Global trends adopting very local flavors—for example, environmental conflicts and recurrent natural disasters, including earthquakes, tsunamis, or wildfires—represent an underexplored area of research in communication in Chile.

Also, because of the field's relatively recent development and its interdisciplinary character, researchers have been trained within different disciplines. In the same vein, some researchers have framed their projects under subdisciplines, such as history or aesthetics, for two main reasons. First, because of the interdisciplinary character of communication research, there are studies that fit under a larger umbrella of social sciences and humanities. Because I only looked at research projects in communication, those other studies fell out of this article's focus. The second reason that could explain framing research applications under disciplines other than communication is that it allows for the expansion of epistemological and methodological frames. The community of communication researchers has noted that the sociology of communication tends to shrink the type of research that can be conducted, framing it as media sociology. The same occurs with the fellowships that fund graduate studies: Students are pursuing master's or doctoral programs in Chile and abroad in disciplines other than communication, but they are addressing problems somehow intertwined with communication, such as political science or gender studies, for instance, which are beyond the scope of this article. Further research should expand on this.

There is a lack of consolidated data about research funding and scholarships during the period this article examines. Consequently, this impedes a better understanding of larger historical trends. Not only is this a problem for studying how research is financially supported and scholarships delivered, but it also raises difficulties regarding the design, implementation, and evaluation of public policies. It is key to point out that expanding theoretical frameworks is one of the purposes of the national system supporting science.

The increasing relevance of publishing in indexed journals and the pressure to accomplish some metrics as the goal instead of as a part of a process has several consequences. On the one hand, it positively stimulates the internationalization of researchers and their participation in broader networks of work, and it reaches broader audiences. But in opposition, it consecrates only some specific circuits of sharing and publishing and hampers the possibility to engage in new platforms of diffusion. The implications of this trend regarding colonial and decolonial processes of knowledge production are beyond the scope of this article, but it suggests a fruitful dimension for further work.

This article shows the relative increase in the number of students pursuing graduate studies abroad and domestically. This process has been accumulating a body of research that also deserves

led by Prof. Silvia Pellegrini, and *Diseño de Sistema de Comunicación de Salud para Adultos Mayores y sus Redes de Apoyo* (Fondef Ca13i10210), directed by Prof. Sergio Godoy.

further inquiry. The novelty of the data available does not yet constitute a fully developed body of work that allows any conclusion regarding its theoretical contribution.

The relative professionalization and internationalization of the journals in communication edited domestically is an ongoing process. However, this account falls short in at least two dimensions: Although it provides an overview of the two most substantial journals published locally in the field, other journals²³ have been publishing communication research in the country. Examining them, looking for trends and comparisons, is a challenge that further studies should undertake. Second, stronger development and an expansion of journals of this sort are necessary, both in Chile and in the Hispanic world. Because only a few Spanish-language journals are already indexed, a strategic goal of the field should address this lack of publishing alternatives, pushing for original platforms and strengthening those currently available.

Finally, there is little about what communication research looks like in areas outside academia in Chile. Some government offices, such as the National Council of Television and the Office of Communication and Culture, for instance, have built up a large body of studies that deserve a careful overview. The role of the state as a producer and as a contractor of applied research in communication and the public policies supporting science and technology and how they shape the field of communication require examination too. There is also a lack of public knowledge about what consulting firms, marketing companies, and public relations consultants are doing because of the confidential nature of their research. Therefore, it is difficult to build bridges between academia and the private sector, and it ultimately results in a highly fragmented field.

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²³ Such as *Perspectivas de la Comunicación* and *F@ro*, to mention some.

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