Unfinished Review of Venezuelan Academic Output in Communication, Media, and Politics

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Abstract: This text analyzes two main trends in political communication. First, and as theoretical foundation, we review what is commonly referred to as media- or communication centrality in politics from the findings of mostly Latin-American authors about the complex relationship between the media and politics, considering the prevailing role played by the mass media in Latin America and Venezuela. A second part of this paper, focused in the production of academic knowledge in Venezuela, reviews books and articles on the phenomenon of political communication within a period established as a time-based frame (2000-2012). This period overlaps the "Bolivarian Revolution" model, or the "process" as it was frequently referred to in its early years, which significantly influenced the Venezuelan academic output in the field of political communication. In these years, Venezuelan publications like considerations, essays, or investigation results in political communication have been aimed at describing the political process that was causing deep transformations in institutions and in political culture per se. This should not be surprising, since "the process" had a clear political practice of highlighting communications in this period.

Key words: Political communication; Venezuela; Bolivarian Revolution

Introduction

The book written by Alejandro Botía, "*Auge y crisis del cuarto poder: La prensa en democracia*" (Rise and Crisis of the Fourth Power. The Media in Democracy - 2007) is worth mentioning in this introductory part. This is a necessary story to understand how media and political power were related for decades in Venezuela. This necessary story narrated by Botía starts in 1958 with the arrival of democracy after the fall of Dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez and ends with the media paroxysm experienced during the general

strike of December 2002 and January 2003. This text connects political history to journalism history, and so the names of high-profiled media personalities in print media for 45 years appear together, mixed or separately. It sounds easy, but the reconstruction reflected in the book is an important milestone, since it shows a break between the 1958-1998 period -which we now refer to as the IV Republic, thus evidencing the power of discourse- and the period that began with Hugo Chávez. A contribution from this book is the building of bridges, the construction of a narrative thread between what was presented as before and now. After all, this is a unique story although it includes different protagonists and diverse discourses.

While Botía's text helps to understand the rise and consolidation of the print media in Venezuela, it is not a book about the history of the print media in democracy per se. It outlines, links, and –particularly- rebuilds the political feature of Venezuelan media and vice versa. For this reason, this book is essential for analyzing the relationships within the political system, but not from an abstract point of view given the growing power assumed by the media in the particular development of political action. In this sense, we see how 1968 will be remembered as a milestone: an alliance between presidential candidate Rafael Caldera and the Capriles chain would result in one of the most serious distortions from those years: six positions of parliament and one of the senate were exchanged for editorial support to the campaign (p. 63). This arranged marriage between editor Miguel Ángel Capriles and Caldera would dissolve before the end of the first Caldera administration. However, this damaging practice would repeat itself during the 70's and at least until the first half of the 80's, and involve almost all the significant print media in the country. Thus, the conspiracy between media and political power has history and references in Venezuela, even though the second part of this chapter is focused on the XXI century.

1 About the New Town Square

1.1   Political agenda, media agenda

Although we do not share the apocalyptic view on the media's political role, we must not disregard the main role played by the media in contemporary societies, particularly Latin-American, as Ángel Álvarez affirmed in the end of the last century:

> The media is not the only agent of political socialization, but it is the most efficient and quick way to bring political information to the homes. What and how the media broadcasts influences the public's beliefs on what politics is and what it should be. (Álvarez, 1995: 86).

Predominance of the "stage" over the "town square" as a place to build politics is the first way to notice how politics are mediated, which refers to the centrality acquired by the media to legitimate topics and actors, as expressed by Agrivalca Canelón in 1996. This trend has led to the construction of many contemporary political strategies from communications, thus making communications a central dimension rather than a complementary aspect. Therefore, we notice how elements that did not have the slightest significance for public figures in the past are nowadays a central part of their campaigns. An example thereof is image consultancy, which has become a common practice for those who want to offer security and credibility to possible voters through mass media. This dimension thus transcends from a mere resource to the proper space where political action is completed, where the actor participates in the public sphere. Therefore, "the dialog between individuals and society, society and politicians, politicians and the government is made predominantly through the media". (Osorio Meléndez, 2002: 23).

Authors studying Latin America, like Martín Barbero (2001), express that this dynamic is related to our countries' social experiences because traditional actors in our societies –like the State, church, and political parties- can no longer be their backbone and there is a mass presence of the mass media industry, thus making "the public scene increasingly more identified with what the media presents" (p. 75). The projection of events through the media creates the idea that in many cases everything ends with the limits of their display. For this reason, the rest of the world that continues to generate other kinds of communicational constructions is excluded and "communication" seems to be an exclusive issue of the media.

Marcelino Bisbal (2005) points out some characteristics of the new process, which shows not only a media reproduction of the traditional political game, but a reconsideration of it. The media builds/rebuilds the "political agenda", redefines the political work and ultimately becomes the new "town square", which in turn allows for the "creation and affirmation of phenomena known as show-business politics, political marketing, personalization of programs and electoral performances" (p. 48). New symbolism is being implemented in the present to consolidate the political image through the massive media.

In classic democracy, according to Bisbal (2005), political parties were the legitimate intermediaries between the State and the people. This intermediation occurs nowadays through a television screen. For this author, there is no dissolution of politics, like some apocalypse-enthusiasts affirm, but we are facing "a reshape of politics and, ultimately, of the public sphere" (p.50).

In the new interaction scene, politics are now built from the media: "the media appears as a privileged space for making contacts and finding support, replacing town squares and the smallest -but particular- spaces for debate and joint action" (Bisbal, 2005: 52). Naturally, the media is the instrument to re-politicize society in the present because it is precisely in the media where people maintain their link to the public sphere in a sort of media citizenship despite the limitations, distortions, or trivializations inherent to the structure and functioning of the media. (Corredor, 2005: 59)

1.2   The Media as a Political Actor

In this point it is convenient to review the concept of political communication, which role seems relevant to consolidate a system of social demands and institutional responses. Canelón (1996) affirms that political communication "is a multidirectional process of data exchange among different structural sectors and levels (primary-, intermediate-, and base political actors)" (p. 13). In an open and plural society "the mass media is a formal and institutional channel to access the system" (Canelón 1996: 14), it allows broadcasting public demands and is, at the same time, a channel to broadcast the implementation of political decisions.

The mass media is currently regarded as the place of encounter, recognition, and for the plural building of opinion:

> For some, the media is that place where the inclusive community denied by our countries is fulfilled; a place for this merely nominal or incomplete citizenship created by the profound financial and social inequalities we live in, which determines not only our citizen rights but prevents us from complying with the obligations inherent to such condition, and even the possibility to recognize and reclaim those rights as such. (Mata, 2002: 67).

Another aspect that strengthens the role of the media for the effects caused is that, due to the fascination and charm it triggers, the media automatically conditions the social, legal, ethical, and moral truths it presents, thus turning such truths into autonomous media truths. Social, ethical, and moral truths arise from rational judgment, or at least result from ethos inspired by the truth as such. Media truths, however, result from emotional criteria where they become valuable per se. (Osorio Meléndez, 2002: 24).

Critics have sustained that the media builds an idea of public opinion using surveys and polls "which have increasingly less citizen debate and criticism and more simulation" (Martín Barbero, 2002: 15). This dynamic broadcasts the results from these consults on a daily basis as a result of the legitimate and valid public opinion, while in this unceasing

bombardment of information and stand-taking "civil society loses its heterogeneity and controversial nature to be reduced to a statistic existence". (Martín Barbero, 2002: 15).

Even so, social dynamics make it seem illogical to conceive the media as Machiavellian laboratories for the elaboration of plans and actions aimed directly and particularly at influencing audiences. If broadcasting contents influence how the world is perceived, it is probably not the result of previously conceived campaigns designed with this purpose. A complete dimension is naturally established where the presented political and social realities are organized with a certain structure, which logically allows to identify with the message.

The media construction of politics in general is not particular to Venezuela, though. The trend shows this phenomenon occurring in different countries and areas: "politics is now a matter of mass media" (Bisbal, 2003: 125). Given the lack of representation in what is expected to be representative, it becomes easier to support the discourse of the model of communication hegemony for those who intervene or intend to intervene in the public sphere (Martín Barbero, 2002).

Rafael Roda (1993) argues that -after reviewing the trends in media studies in the last decades- the "agenda setting" function has been predominant over other secondary functions of the media. This has been defined as:

The ability to influence the level of importance of problems in public awareness, due to the particular attention given by the media to such problems in the process of reflecting on reality. The generic agenda setting function is divided into several operations, the most important of which consist in establishing what there is, what is important, what is incorrect. (Roda, 1993: 36).

The role of communications is strictly linked to building agendas, particularly the aforementioned agenda setting in what is defined by Herbert Koeneke (1999) as the negotiation of the newsworthy: "the complementary yet ambiguous relationships between democratic government leaders and the media show a dynamic that has been characterized as the negotiation of the newsworthy in a recent investigation" (p. 23).

At least three agendas converge in this process: the public agenda –defined from citizen demands-, the strictly media agenda, and a third government agenda. This sets up a "triad of reciprocal influences among media, citizens, and government leaders, which is the basis for modern democracy" (Koeneke, 1999: 24). We agree with the opinion that the role of the media in the political context should be played down. The media is not almighty or foolproof, and according to the critical theory of communications, could influence the

citizens and the government. "They make up an institutional network in a democracy that contributes to shaping public opinion, which in turn influences a country's governability" (Koeneke, 1999: 24).

1.3 Communication Centrality of Politics

For renowned contemporary authors like Norberto Bobbio (1994), the promotion of new actors in the political scene is closely linked to the media and the shaping of public opinion. According to Bobbio "civil society also encompasses the phenomenon of public opinion, which is understood as the public expression of common agreement and disagreement regarding institutions, broadcasted through the press, radio, television, etc." (p.45). Moreover, public opinion and political action go together and are mutually conditioned. Without public opinion, or rather, "without channels to broadcast public opinion, which precisely becomes 'public' because it is broadcasted to the public, the sphere of civil society is destined to lose its function and, ultimately, to disappear" (Bobbio, 1994: 45).

With the above considerations, we can confirm that the relationship between Communication and Politics is being reconsidered not in accessory- or accidental terms in the context of contemporary societies. There is a substantial change, not only in its relationship to politics mediated by the screen, but in the way to socially coexist. There is an "interference" of the mass-media culture in politics and in different spheres of public and private life; according to some specialists:

It is not the dissolution of politics and democracy, or even life as considered back then; it is a reshape of politics and ultimately the public spheres. The media has currently become the public space privileged by the people, it is changing life as it is and even the forms acquired by sociality nowadays. (Bisbal, 2005: 50).

Although the relationship between media and political agenda is long-standing, a substantial change has been experienced in the last two decades, at least as we can confirm in Latin America. Authors have argued that "the Latin-American political paradigm was so powerful that it conditioned the media by imposing its rhythms and many of its game-rules, in a political centrality of communication" (Corredor, 2005: 59). However, at the end of the 1980's and during the 1990's, the relationship reversed and the media is now imposing the rhythms and game-rules to politics. This trend was consolidated at the

beginning of the XXI century. "The exponential growth of the power of the media in our countries has made the media paradigm the dominant paradigm. This is the current Latin America of communicational centrality of politics" (Corredor, 2005: 59).

1.4   The Role of the Critical Discourse Analysis

An increasingly important aspect in the field of political communication is the critical discourse analysis. This field of contemporary discourse studies gathers "the contributions of different disciplines like linguistics, anthropology, psychology, sociology, philosophy, communication sciences" (Iñiguez, 2003; Van Dijk, 2003 quoted by Stecher, 2010: 97). As stated by several authors, the complexity of relationships among power, communication, and society reaffirms the need for diverse and multidisciplinary research methods, creating a trend to link critical analysis to other approaches. From this perspective, discourse is understood as the complete process of social interaction, and the text is a part thereof (Fairclough, 1989 quoted by Pini, 2005).

Two texts written in Venezuela from a political-media perspective border the limits between content analysis and discourse analysis, and ultimately cross such limits freely. These articles were written by Maritza Montero: "*Análisis del Discurso de Irene Sáez: El Discurso Soy Yo*" (Irene Sáez's Discourse Analysis: I am the Discourse"), and Iria Puyosa: "*Análisis del Discurso Politico de Hugo Chávez: Gesta de un Mesías*" (Analysis of Hugo Chávez's Political Discourse: The Development of a Messiah"), both published by *Comunicación* magazine in 1998. In this subject, it is important to review the texts written by Friedrich Welsch (et al.) "*El mensaje oculto del debate*" (The Hidden Message of Debate), published in 1983, and Alfredo Ascanio's doctorate thesis "*Análisis de Contenido del Discurso Politico*" (Content Analysis of the Political Discourse), edited by Universidad Simón Bolívar (2001).

2 Unfinished description of a process

Hugo Chávez's arrival in power, which -as we will study- had a highlighted communication feature as part of his political strategy, was preceded by many analysis of his discourse. This is the case of the abovementioned text by Iria Puyosa (1998) within the context of his first election campaign. In the same year, *Comunicación* magazine (Centro Gumilla) issued a thematic edition called "*La Trama Política*" (The Political Plot). Philosopher David de los Reyes in his "*Comunicación y Política*" (Communication and Politics) essay (1998) harshly questioned the mass-mediatization in the exercise of politics

and advocated for a reconfiguration of public communication spaces. Quoting Agapito Maestre, De los Reyes suggested that one of the biggest challenges for democracy -as a system that should include the media- was to build agreements among those with radically different points of view (p. 60). Whereas said text highlighted some of the challenges for the Venezuelan political model in terms of communication, Emilia Bermúdez's study "*Las Identidades Políticas*" (The Political Identities) (1998) provided some clarifications about the process of political identities' erosion that surfaced in Venezuela with the modern democratic project since 1958.

Additionally and through his investigations on citizen perception of political leadership, Iván Abreu Sojo was already outlining some of the elements that would finally translate into the ballot boxes in 1998 with Chávez arrival to power. In those days, before the first electoral result that would later trigger the process of transformations, Abreu Sojo gathered expressions like: the leadership needed in the country should work for common wellbeing; be characterized by being committed to society; brave, democratic, and affectionate; a leadership that should make the best of the capitalist and socialist approaches.

2.1 A Broken Country

The events of April, 2012, were a turning point for the country and, obviously, for any analysis on political communication. From our experiences in that time, I quote some considerations from Tulio Hernández, which I believe clarify the double dimension of the media in our time:

> We must admit that the media is a political actor because it decisively and openly participates in societies' decision making process. However, the media has a very specific condition, because in addition to being a political actor, it is also a legitimate narrator of what the other political actors do or confront among themselves (2002: 56).

In the fulfillment of this mission, the media's credibility is at stake and -the author reminds us- such credibility is not merely a market factor, but a main function that supports democracy. In order to complete such task (i.e., narrate the contradictions among the other actors), it is necessary to comply with a minimum of quality, transparency, and respect for audiences' rights. In order to do so and preserve their independent nature, the media must separate its political agenda from the interests of political groups and the government. Such agenda must prioritize the defense of democracy and citizen rights principles.

A broken country was evidenced after 2002. Based on international reports and recommendations, which incidentally never considered Venezuela a conflict zone in the past, Jesús María Aguirre in his text "*Comunicaciones Sin Tregua*" (Non-stop Communications) (2002) reviews the role of the media in the context of polarization and confrontation, which became a relevant issue in the analysis of Venezuelan political communication as of that moment. Iván Abreu Sojo (2002) wrote an analysis of a popular communication phenomenon, the proliferation of graffitis with political messages in a period of clear turmoil (2001-2002). The results of the aforementioned text evidence a reinterpretation of this mechanism. In the Venezuelan context, graffitis are not only expressions against the establishment, but they are also tools for those who agree with the official position -a novelty highlighted by the author.

There are profuse analyses of informative agendas. I particularly recommend Carla Villamediana's analysis "*La Prensa y el Golpe: ¿Conspiración Militar o Mediática?*" (The Press and the Coup: Military or Media Conspiracy?) (2002), and Caroline de Oteyza's and Leopoldo Tablante's study "*La Línea Editorial de los Periódicos El Universal y El Nacional entre el 7 y 15 de Abril*" (The Editorial Line of El Universal and El Nacional Newspapers between April 7 and 15) (2002). Both articles are a sort of taxonomy to determine the political-editorial position assumed by the print media in a context where -as affirmed by Pablo Antillano (2002) - Venezuelan journalism was injured by politics because it succumbed to it. From the political communication point of view, these studies are important because they help to build an objective idea of the media as a political actor, and this issue precedes and transcends the "Bolivarian Revolution", as we should remember. Two decades ago, Eleazar Díaz Rangel (1994, reedit. 2005) gathered the contemporary history of our print media in a complete work verifying that the press had been placed in the middle of the public arena. Media owners interviewed by Rangel 20 years ago were already aware that their responsibilities were being pushed into other dimensions, particularly political. This was strengthened by the institutional weakening and citizens' discomfort with traditional parties which was already tangible with the 1989 riots in Caracas (*Caracazo*) and the two attempted coup-d'états of 1992.

The book written by Luis Brito García called "*Venezuela: Investigación de unos Medios por Encima de toda Sospecha*" (Venezuela: An Investigation of the Media Above All Suspicions) (2003) is another critical work on the role of the private media in the coup d'état of April, 2002, with a less-than pleasant view on the political role played by the media and journalists in such context.

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One of the essays attempting to review the role of the media in national politics in full is called "*La Raya en la Retina*" (The Scratch on the Cornea) (2004). Author Nelson Rivera was able to dissect the metaphors included in the front pages of Venezuelan press from 1958 to 2003. Unity and optimism prevailed in the first two decades, while disillusionment, violence, and death were predominant as of the economic clash of 1984. For Rivera, the media is more than a mere narrator in the country, it builds social cohesion, it is another political actor, and -in his opinion- it is precisely in this role where its actions should be reviewed. Another text aimed at comprehension is Héctor Bujanda's essay: "*El Papel del Experto. Conflictividad y Liderazgo entre 1989 y 2004*" (The Role of the Expert. Controversy and Leadership between 1989 and 2004) published in 2005. Bujanda himself tackles the issue of political and communication transformations in Venezuela under the polarization scheme with another article published in 2006.

In 2005, Ysabel Briceño published an introspective look on the first pages of El Nacional newspaper between 1958 and 2000 analyzing the journalistic coverage of Venezuelan politics and the view of democracy arising from such pages. The challenge of shaping democracy from communications was an issue critically analyzed by professors Elda Morales and Ana Irene Méndez in their theory review "*Política, Poder y Comunicación. Una Vision desde América Latina*" (Politics, Power and Communication. A Vision from Latin America) (2005), where they considered that the foundations for new relationships between power, communications and politics were being laid in Venezuela, with new models of citizen participation and democratization of power.

In addition, Eleazar Díaz Rangel published his essay "*El poder de los Medios. Un Recorrido a Saltos por sus Relaciones con el Poder Político*" (The Power of the Media. A Swift Look on its Relations to Political Power) in 2004. In this essay, he rebuilt a century of journalistic and political history to reflect how the media influenced or how it did not influence a politician's decision in given moments of Venezuelan history. During this period where the media's political role was being reviewed in Venezuela, a critical discourse analysis of Universidad del Zulia was published on the strategies of journalistic style to reach ideological purposes in Venezuelan press. The authors were Sylvia Fernández and Lourdes Molero de Cabeza (2006).

Finally, two texts help understand -from the political culture approach- the Venezuelan social gap that began in 2002 and continues to this date as an inevitable topic addressed by communication, media and politics-related investigation studies. First, the well-versed text "*La Cultura Política del Venezolano*" (The Political Culture of

Venezuelans) (2005) by Carlos Guzmán; and the analytical reconstruction "*Venezuela 1989-2005: La Polarización Política Como Conflicto Cultural*" (Venezuela 1989-2005: Political Polarization as a Cultural Conflict) (2005) by Tulio Hernández. Both texts help understand the political culture 0keys that favored a political change characterized by authoritarianism along with a sort of inertia from the traditional political world, with the changes that resulted in the political and symbolic annihilation of the elite that had prevailed with the 1958 model.

2.2 Unfinished Description of a Model

The institutional political context of Venezuela since the recall referendum in 2004, along with the projection of the "Bolivarian Revolution" model as a long-term political-cultural project clearly conceived to establish a communication hegemony, had an important counterpart in academic output, particularly since 2006, when the elements of such communication model began to be described and structured. Issue 134 of **Comunicación** magazine, edited by Centro Gumilla and entitled "*Hegemonía y Control*" (Hegemony and Control), gathered a set of pieces that -in perspective- accurately outlined the upcoming trends in the field of political communication.

With his study "*El Estado-Comunicador y su Especificidad*" (The Communications State and its Specificity") (2006), Marcelino Bisbal lists -for the first time in the country- the trends, decisions, and actions implemented by Hugo Chávez's administration, in a sort of legal, financial, and administrative imposition, along with the strengthening of community media. Carlos Delgado-Flores with "*La Gestión Comunicacional de la Administración Chávez. De la Dominación Mediática al Control Estatal*" (2006) (Communication Management in Chávez's Administration. From Media Domination to Control of the State) discovered a clear official trend regarding the high turnover of public officers in the direction of communication policy. Every public officer lasted an average of 8 months as head of the incipient Ministry of Communication and Information (MINCI, for its Spanish abbreviation) back then. Another symptom the information control were obviously the radio and television blanket broadcasts, an issue pointed out by Carlos Correa (2006). This author mentioned the abuse implied in interrupting -without previous warning or planning- traditional radio and television broadcasts in Venezuela, on the one hand; and the high cost for advertisement hired for spaces that did not air in the end due to the president's whim, on the other. Moreover, Antonio Pasquali (2007) detailed the implications resulting from issuing critical messages, which was beginning to consolidate a new legal framework in Venezuela.

Relating Hugo Chávez's communication model to the regional context, by contrasting it to experiences and policies developed at the time in other Latin-American nations, was the main objective of Andrés Cañizález's book "*Tiempos de Cambio. Política y Comunicación en América Latina*" (Times of Change. Politics and Communications in Latin America. (2009).

By controlling the messages broadcasted in the private sector, a television mechanism with no precedent in Venezuela was consolidated in the 2004-2007 period. This topic was thoroughly analyzed and researched by Bernardino Herrera (2004), Gustavo Hernández Díaz (2007), and Marcelino Bisbal and Rafael Quiñones (2007). Such studies evidenced how the programming of the State media was not only far from fulfilling public functions, but were actually part of an enormous propaganda machine in favor of the government and carriers for the cult to President Chávez's persona.

The book "*De lo Estatal a lo Público. La Radio y Televisión Pública en la Venezuela de Hoy*" (From State to Public. Public Radio and Television in Today's Venezuela) (2010), coordinated by Andrés Cañizález, included essays from seven authors and attempted to build a different approach on the Venezuelan State's management of the media, which was not aimed at providing a public service in the field of open television. As set out by Pasquali (2005: 245), the purpose of the discussion in Venezuela and Latin-America's public media can be summarized in four words: "to democratize Latin-American television". In his work "Rediscover Public Services", included in the book "18 essays in communications", is a summary of Pasquali's thoughts on a topic he has extensively studied.

The new model was thoroughly analyzed in the book coordinated by Marcelino Bisbal "*Hegemonía y Control Comunicacional*" (Hegemony and Communication Control) (2009), which gathered texts by eight authors going through the main communication trends in the government model. Features like official propaganda, community media, radio and television blanket broadcasts, and the government communication model per se were analyzed in this book. Additionally, Andrés Cañizález (2012) also explores the characteristics of the communications model during Chávez's long-standing exercise of power, and particularly emphasizes the creation of public policies from the media scene as one of the distinctive features of this administration in his book "*Hugo Chávez: La Presidencia Mediática*" (Hugo Chávez: The media presence).

The extension of Chávez's government for over five years, which was the typical term during the 1958-1998 period, compelled authors to make balances, for example of a

decade, to explain or summarize the events occurred in that time. In this context, works like Mariana Bacalao's (2009) regarding the role of public opinion surveys in Chávez's first decade in office; Boris Muñoz's (2009) study called: "*Cesarismo Mediático*" (Media Caesarism) also analyzes the communication style of the late head-of-State, where "he" is the means and the message, this author concludes. Humberto Valdivieso (2009) also evaluates the first 10 years of Chávez's government analyzing his iconographic production; and Andrés Cañizález (2011) summarizes a series of setbacks on the subject of democratic governance and freedom of the press during the same period.

2.3   Election Communication

At the beginning of this chapter we stated that the "Bolivarian Revolution" or the "process" as it was originally called, finally filled the national discerning spaces in the subject of political communication, thus leaving little spaces for traditional topics in this area, such as election communications or even elections marketing. In the period under analysis, there were obviously expressions and practices in this dimension, but few academic contributions were gathered in academic publications.

An article by Ángel Álvarez (2000) analyzes the use of the media and the political communication strategies in the 1998 campaign, which launched Hugo Chávez to his first administration. At that time, the author stressed the importance of television within the framework of elections in Venezuela, because televised news was ultimately the main information media. Álvarez's considerations are related to the ideas expressed fifteen years before by a dozen authors, which were edited in a book by Alfredo Keller (1985). The use of television as a privileged means to lead political campaigns was precisely emphasized. Another remarkable fact of Keller's text is the title: "*Comunicación Política*" (Political Communication) because it was not common for Venezuelan academics in this area to use this term explicitly in the titles of their works or considerations.

Andrés Cañizález (2004) coordinated a volume that included articles issued by journalists and experts from six countries entitled "*Prensa y Elecciones. Experiencias de América Latina*" (Press and Elections: Experiences in Latin America) analyzing the role of the media in the context of electoral processes. Finally, in this particular field of elections communication, consultant Carmen Beatriz Fernández published her book: "*Ciberpolítica: ¿Cómo Usamos las Tecnologías Digitales en la Política Latinoamericana?*" (2008) (Cyber-politics: How We Use Digital Technologies in Latin-American politics), which studies the use of new technologies with political purposes.

The topics with low academic output in the field of political communication include the creation of public spaces in the media, the role of the political communicator and the relationship between communication and citizenship. Authors like Miguel Ángel Latouche (2008) with his considerations on the role of the media in the construction of a democracy of equals; Orlando Villalobos (2008) with his research on changes in the communication environment and citizen participation; and Luis Alejandro Ordoñez (2008) with his analysis on the implications of the communicator or political consultant role provide information on these topics and evidence the richness of approaches in this field of study.

Final Considerations

The academic output in the field of political communication in Venezuela has developed an unfinished analysis of the political process led by President Chávez (deceased in March, 2013) and his communication policy. Although this subject was essential in these years, others were disregarded, and there is still a lot to be analyzed, researched, and rigorously considered. Evidence of this is the book "*Saldo en Rojo. Comunicaciones y Cultura en la Era Bolivariana*" (Negative Balance. Communications and Culture in the Bolivarian Era) (2013), which gathers contributions from 20 authors coordinated by Marcelino Bisbal. In some political communication areas, this book will be used as a reference because it is a balance of the period.

In addition to a detailed analysis of a lengthy government that had a noticeable communicative feature, the academic field of political communication in Venezuela is also in debt with the theoretical production, which will help structure theories, trends, models, and authors. There were a small number of contributions within the framework of an intellectual production aimed at giving lectures and responses to the country's political dynamic. These exceptions include the digital book issued by Reinaldo Cortés, edited by Universidad de los Andes, entitled "*La Comunicación Política Como Forma Moderna de Dominación*" (2009) (Political Communication as a Form of Domination), and the book compiled by Adriana Bolívar on discourse analysis (2007), including contributions from 16 authors with a clear didactic function. As we expressed in the beginning of this chapter, the field of discourse analysis is mentioned because it has developed a close relationship with political communication.

It could be concluded after reading these pages that there has been little investigation in Venezuela in the last years about the complex relationship between communication and politics. It is convenient to make a final explanation, though. In reality, there have been some contributions and research, but few publications. Professor Mariela

Torrealba (2008) inspected the libraries and documentation centers in three universities in Caracas to determine the number of dissertations for bachelor degrees and post-grade studies dealing with political communication. According to this valuable investigation, there were over 200 extensive research papers between 1998 and 2007 in Universidad Central de Venezuela, Universidad Católica Andrés Bello and Universidad Simón Bolívar universities. However, the results of this great investigation effort remained unknown because they were not published. An additional documentary contribution that should not be disregarded was the inspection of articles published in the ***Comunicación*** magazine (Centro Gumilla) related to the Bolivarian political process. This text was issued by Jesús María Aguirre and Andrea Quiroz (2009).

Finally, a characteristic of the Venezuelan academic field in political communication is its active participation in the political life per se. In addition to describing the political process, many of the authors quoted in these pages went on to become consultants or public officers in tasks related to the creation of policies for sectors or the even for government management. A distinctive case is the book "*Coordenadas para un País. Política en Comunicación, Cultura, Telecomunicaciones y Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación*" (Coordinates for a Country. Politics in Communication, Culture, Telecommunication and Science, Technology and Innovation) coordinated by Marcelino Bisbal and Marino González (2012). This is a collection of different program contributions per area, like a concrete proposal for political change –in October 2012- for the sectors who opposed the reelection of President Hugo Chávez. After the electoral defeat, the document was turned into a book and evidences probably the most important value of political communication writers in Venezuela: they write from different ideological positions from defined and public political stances.

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