

10 The Early Days of Survey Research in Latin America

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THE FIRST SURVEYS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE “OFFICE OF INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS”

Systematic empirical survey research emerged in Latin America as a result of the objectives of the “Office of Inter-American Affairs” (OIAA), an agency created in August 1940 by the U.S. government and chaired by Nelson A. Rockefeller. Aimed at increasing and strengthening hemispheric solidarity and combatting Axis propaganda, the Coordinator realized that his program required an in-depth knowledge of the field conditions in Latin America as well as reliable research methodologies (Rowland, 1947: 1–7).

Even compared to the activities undertaken by the Committee on Public Information from April 1917 to the end of World War I (Creel, 1972), the OIAA was the most ambitious project ever attempted in the western hemisphere in the fields of international and intercultural communication, propaganda, cultural diplomacy, public relations and mass communication research (Rowland, 1947; Aikman, 1942: 551–553).

DEBATES WITHIN THE U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT

Polling was viewed by Rockefeller’s office as an appropriate tool for gauging the feelings and opinions of the populations in the republics south of the Rio Grande. It was, however, a hazardous activity in terms of diplomatic traditions and procedures.

This explains the reluctance of Larry Duggan, Assistant Secretary for Latin America at the State Department, to collect political information abroad without the consent of local governments.

Covert or indirect interviews were deemed an option, albeit not as reliable as Gallup’s methodology. This predicament marked the genesis and demise of the initial opinion surveys carried out in Latin America during World War II.

HADLEY CANTRIL: THE FOUNDER OF COMMUNICATION RESEARCH IN LATIN AMERICA

Almost immediately after his appointment, Rockefeller consulted polling guru George Gallup, who consented to act as advisor for some of the OIAA's projects (Cantril/Jan 28, 1941/NACP/229/1/138/15).⁶⁷ Gallup, who asked the Coordinator not to publicize his involvement, recommended Dr. Hadley Cantril of Princeton University to lead the project. Gallup and Cantril had become close friends when the latter was starting the Office of Public Opinion Research at Princeton. Subsequently, they co-chaired the Radio Research Project. The Rockefeller Foundation funded both projects (Rogers, 1994; 268–269).

Considered one of the key figures in modern social communications studies, Cantril can rightly be called the forerunner of scientific communication research in Latin America. After graduating in 1928 from Dartmouth College and receiving a Ph.D. from Harvard in 1931, Cantril taught briefly at both universities and at Columbia in New York. He moved to Princeton University in 1936 to start a prolific twenty-year career, serving as chairman of the Department of Psychology, head of the university's Radio Project, founder of its Listening Center, and director the Office of Public Opinion and Research. Cantril's work at Princeton is recognized as "the first time that academic social science took survey research seriously, and it was the first attempt to collect and collate systematically survey findings" (Simpson, 1994, 80–81, Barnouw et al., 1989, 233).

Cantril's work came to the attention of the Roosevelt administration after he successfully predicted voting behavior in gubernatorial and other elections using small samples. He also experimented with surreptitious interviewing techniques. "The interviewers had to memorize the questions, ask them in casual conversations, make no written notes during the interview, but record the answers as soon as possible after they had left the respondent" (Glander, 2000: 88). These covert and informal techniques were later employed in some Latin American countries, especially Mexico, during World War II.

67 The bulk of letters, reports and memoranda cited in this chapter are housed at the National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland, U.S.A. [NACP]. Unless otherwise noted, all documents from this source are cited as follows: Author/Date/NACP/Record Group/Entry/Box/Folder.

On October 14, 1940, Rockefeller established “American Social Surveys Inc.” (ASS), a private, nonprofit corporation with Gallup as the nominal president, Cantril as vice president and executive officer, and two chief aides: Dr. Leonard Doob and Lloyd A. Free. Shortly thereafter, ASS signed an agreement (“NDCar 1”) to deliver some scientific reports to OIAA about the basic attitudes of people in Latin America and to conduct some opinion polls in the United States to test citizens’ attitudes towards the other American republics (Gallup/Sep 25, 1940/NACP/229/1/138/14; Gallup/November 8, 1940/NACP/229/1/137/8).

From early February to July 1941, Harvard’s Professor Clarence Henry Haring visited all the South American republics (except Bolivia and Paraguay), in order to compile a “Summary of Opinion in Latin America” to be submitted to American Social Surveys. This document was most likely connected to the NDCar 1 contract signed with the OIAA. For the final report, Haring added the experiences obtained from six earlier journeys to all the republics, including Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean. A synopsis of the document was structured around key themes: German influence, Nazi methods of penetration, democracy and inter-American solidarity, and President Roosevelt (“Summary of Opinion in Latin America”/N.D./NACP/229/1/139/Manila envelope).

Late in October 1940, Laurence Duggan and James Young, chief of the OIAA’s Communication Division, approved the agenda for researching communications in the months to come. They decided to send Lloyd A. Free to Brazil to conduct a pilot opinion survey, along with posting field agents in the main capitals of the other American republics (Young/Oct 28, 1940/NACP/229/1/138/14).

Meanwhile, the ASS set up its offices in Princeton in a place that was separate from the university facilities and Gallup’s office. In early December 1940, Cantril reported that things were progressing well enough: “I think that in another eight months we shall know more about opinion, tastes, habits, and propaganda going to South America than Mr. Goebbels himself” (Cantril/Dec 5, 1940/NACP/229/1/138/14).

“THE EXPORT INFORMATION BUREAU” AND ITS MASS MEDIA RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

In response to the State Department’s qualms about conducting opinion polls in Latin America, the OIAA created “The Export Informa-

tion Bureau, Inc.” (EIB), a bogus branch of the American Association of Advertising Agencies (usually called AAAA or the “4 A’s”). After the EIB was created, the contract with ASS was changed so that it would work only in the U.S. until December 31, 1941.

Managed by Hadley Cantril, the EIB was formed as a different corporation, with a new staff separate from that of the 4A’s, and with the exclusive purpose of serving the Coordinator under two contracts: “NDCar 11” (also called “Advertising contract”) and “NDCar 35.” The latter (referred to as the “Surveys contract” or “Cantril’s contract”) covered the work of several observers in Latin America, all recruited by Hadley Cantril and trained by him and Leonard Doob (Turnbull/Dec 24, 1941/NACP/229/1/139/Manila envelope). Specifically, the observers were: George Landes (Argentina and Paraguay), Harald Corson (Mexico), Jack Fahy (Colombia and Central America), Charles Todd Lee (Peru and Bolivia), Eugene Warner (Chile), Roy Nash (Brazil) and George Massey (Cuba, later replaced by John Corbin). (“Names and addresses of observers”/N.D./NACP/229/1/137/19).

By the spring of 1941, these agents had settled in their offices and communications surveys were launched almost simultaneously in the different Latin American republics. All observers worked for U.S. governmental offices, were trained as a group by recognized scholars, founded and directed fully staffed bureaus in foreign countries, received similar tasks to be solved within specific deadlines, shared problems and solutions, and followed common techniques and methodologies.

Unlike the few important pioneers like Laszlo Radvanyi, who started his work on public opinion in Mexico in 1942 – and who have been studied mostly from a biographical perspective (Moreno and Manuel Sanchez-Castro, 2009) – OIAA’s contributions to the history of mass communication research are more of an institutional nature, closely related to “psychological warfare,” as described by Christopher Simpson (Simpson, 1996: 3–9).

THE FIRST SCIENTIFIC SURVEYS IN BRAZIL AND ARGENTINA

The contract that gave birth to the EIB on February 1, 1941 served as a cover for Brazil’s first survey on communications. Sticking to the plan devised in October 1940 by Duggan and Young, Lloyd A. Free carried out the research with a cross-national representative sample of 2,342 people. Working from February to May 1941, Free hired, trained,

transported and supervised a crew of twenty interviewers (Converse 1987,153). On May 29, 1941, Hadley Cantril claimed that it was “the first survey of its kind ever done in a Latin American country,” and that it was “worth more than any number of impressions sent on by observers, no matter how competent they may be” (Cantril/May, 29, 1941/NACP/229/1/138/18).

Almost simultaneously, between March and April 1941, the J. Walter Thompson Company (JWT) in Buenos Aires carried out a survey about short wave listening in Argentina. The manager of the agency took care of the fieldwork, preliminary tabulations and supervision, while Lloyd A. Free chose the sample of 1,977 persons and Hadley Cantril completed the final analysis and survey report (Cantril: “A study of Communications in Argentina”/N.D./NACP/229/1/137/5).

FRICTIONS BETWEEN THE STATE DEPARTMENT AND THE OIAA

In April 1941, the observers were asked to place full-page advertisements by a mock American travel company in the main newspapers of every Latin American republic, especially in those with unfriendly attitudes toward the United States. Authorized by both Nelson Rockefeller and Adolf Berle, Assistant Secretary of State, the plan’s true objective was to make doubtful papers dependent on U.S. advertisement money and thus bring them to heel over time (Rowland, 1947: 245–248). Many embassies expressed their discontent at not having been informed or consulted. Sumner Welles was furious. As Under Secretary of State in charge of Latin American relations since 1934, he opposed Rockefeller’s intrusions into his turf and convinced President Roosevelt to put all OIAA activities under the authority of the State Department (Erb, 1982: 96–97).

The Coordinator ordered the 4A’s to discontinue the advertising program as of May 18, 1941, but instructed it to prepare materials for new campaigns. The State Department, however, halted any further plans because it considered the whole idea unfortunate (Rowland [Manuscript]: 175–176).

Although the controversial advertising campaign launched in spring 1941 was not directly related the OIAA’s system of observers, the embassies in some countries objected to the activities of the 4A’s and EIB. In response, Cantril sent a letter on May 29 to Shelley Tracy, Assistant Director of the Communications Division, to clarify his position:

The main purpose of the Research Department when it was originally established was to conduct systematic surveys in Latin American countries to study the opinions, tastes and habits of the people. The State Department authorized a trial survey in Brazil (Cantril/May 29, 1941/NACP/229/1/138/18).

By then, Cantril's initial enthusiasm had been badly dented. On June 19, 1941, he pleaded with John McClintock, Chief Executive Officer of the OIAA, "the absolute necessity of having cleared up as soon as possible the relationship between our men and the embassies". He also requested permission to continue with opinion surveys and systematic studies of communication habits, since that was the type of work he was supposed to do at the OIAA. He considered the surveys completed in Brazil and Argentina to be "far and away the most valuable and unique types of information we have gathered". Cantril stated that he was "more than eager to pursue this kind of work in other countries," but needed to get an answer about its feasibility (Cantril/June 19, 1941/NACP/229/1/138/19).

Rockefeller responded by convening a special meeting of the staffs of the OIAA and EIB. At Cantril's request to be relieved of activities not directly related to opinion polls, the Export Information Bureau was restructured into three sections: General Information, Propaganda Analysis, and Public Opinion, which were managed by Robert Miller, Leonard Doob and Hadley Cantril, respectively.

With regard to the Reports Sections, the observers provided data on all communication facilities and sources of information from the mass media. Descriptive surveys, such as habits and tastes on viewing, reading and listening to media products were the most frequently used. Under Leonard Doob's direction, the Propaganda Analysis Section provided the OIAA with a detailed account of Nazi propaganda strategies and techniques. The reports comprised transcripts of Axis short-wave programs broadcast to Latin America and news and commentary dispatches from German information sources, special reports on enemy propaganda gathered and submitted by the observers.

The Public Opinion Surveys Section intended to gauge attitudes on issues related to the United States in foreign countries, such as the political, economic and social climate, reactions to specific events, opinion trends and comparisons made via longitudinal polling, etc. As head of this section, Cantril explained very clearly that there was still a huge amount of work to be done:

The Coordinator's Office hoped that it would soon be possible to complete public opinion surveys in the more important Latin Ameri-

can countries. This work would be carried out under the direction of Dr. Cantril, who would send technical representatives to Latin America to determine the proper sample populations, train interviewers, and so forth. The questions to be asked in these surveys would be solicited from the various heads in the Coordinator's Office, from the heads of the U.S. Missions in Latin America, and from other government agencies in the country that were interested in this service (Cantril/Aug, 8, 1941/NACP/229/1/139/21).

The EIB was also reorganized to serve as an "Intelligence Division," along the lines of similar governmental offices. This decision proved crucial for OIAA's field detectives from media organizations and from practitioners in the region. After compiling detailed information, they indicated unfriendly persons and firms that were to be included on the "black lists", a punitive action by the U.S. government aimed at those who supported the Axis powers' subversive and propaganda activities in Latin America. The methods used to determine the enemies included content analysis, covert observations and personal interviews.

In mid August, John McClintock asked Larry Duggan the questions posed by Dr. Cantril. Duggan admitted that he and others at the State Department were still very doubtful about conducting opinion surveys in Latin America, partly because they had not received sufficient information from the field, and partly because "there was a division of opinion in the State Department on the subject." Duggan thus suggested postponing the decision until the Coordination Committees had been set up. McClintock agreed, since he was convinced that "the matter of making opinion surveys would be turned down if we pressed for decision at the present time" (McClintock/Aug, 16, 1941/NACP/229/1/139/21).

Harassed by angry or suspicious American ambassadors in several countries, many of the observers faced difficulties in carrying out their information-gathering activities, especially those related to interviewing people. In Cuba and Chile, frictions between the embassies and the EIB became so harsh that the observers were expelled from each country (Robbins/Sept, 11, 1941 [Cuba] and McClintock/Nov 27/1941[Chile]/NACP/229/1/139/Manila folder).

Nevertheless, in some places the observers were able to work on favorable terms with their embassies and without problems with local governments. This was the case in Colombia, Argentina and Mexico, where the field men engaged in public polling either under the sponsorship of the EIB or American advertising companies. In Cali, Jack Bradley Fahy conducted an opinion survey in November 1941 about people's

tastes and preferences when it came to the press, radio and motion pictures. He sampled the population according to upper, middle and lower income groups, and focused especially on radio. His findings covered preferences toward popular and classical music, programs featuring news, educational and political affairs, the percentage of people who listened to foreign radio stations, etc. ("Press-Radio-Motion Picture Survey of Cali, Colombia"/N.D./NACP/229/1/137/6). In Buenos Aires, President Roosevelt's broadcast on January 7, 1942 was picked up by the "El Mundo," "Belgrano," and "Splendid" radio stations. Over the course of four days, J. Walter Thomson's pollsters interviewed 621 persons to determine the share that had listened to the address (Granger/Jan 4, 1942/NACP/229/1/307/"Reaction").

In Mexico, communication research in general and public opinion surveys in particular thrived like in no other country in Latin America. Harald Corson, the EIB observer, was so skillful and talented that at some point Cantril and Rockefeller considered sending him out to the other Latin American countries to share his knowledge with his fellow observers (Cantril/Nov. 24, 1941/NACP/229/1/139/Manila envelope). By November 1941, using the casual interviewing method invented by Cantril, Corson had completed 27 public opinion surveys among highly strategic sectors, such as the military, bureaucrats, labor unions and university students (Ortiz Garza, 2007: 115–142). With samples of around 280 people of both sexes selected according to their socioeconomic level, Corson obtained such valuable information that even the State Department praised his work (Drier/Dec 15, 1941/NACP/229/1/139/Manila envelope). He conducted the first longitudinal poll in Mexico about attitudes toward the United States, and trained a crew of pollsters for whom he wrote a "Manual for Surveyors" ("Principal Activities of the AAAA Export Information Bureau at Mexico City"/February 9, 1942/NACP/229/1/105/13).

THE CANCELLATION OF THE CONTRACTS WITH 4 A'S

On August 19, 1941, Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Coordinator Rockefeller formally established a new field organization composed of prominent United States nationals in Latin America serving in "Coordination Committees." By early December 1942, twenty committees were established and functioning (Rowland, 1947: 245–248). The contracts with the ASS [NdCar 1], AAAA [NdCar 11], and EIB [NdCar 35] were cancelled when they expired on December 31, 1941, June 30, 1942, and

March 3, 1942 respectively (Levy/Dec 4, 1941/NACP/229/1/139/manila envelope).

Thereafter, the observers became either employees or executive secretaries of the Coordination Committees in Mexico, Colombia, Peru and Chile (Memorandum/March 9, 1942/NACP/229/1/139/Manila envelope). The State Department, however, limited their activities to “a newspaper clipping service, and any other function which may be agreed upon by the Missions and the Coordination Committees” (Duggan/March 23, 1942/ NACP/229/1/139/Manila envelope).

THE COORDINATION COMMITTEES AND RESEARCH ON THE MASS MEDIA IN LATIN AMERICA

Financed partly by the OIAA and partly by voluntary contributions, the Coordination Committees usually comprised leading American representatives of U.S. corporations, chambers of commerce, advertising agencies, motion picture distributors, journalists, and others. Many had developed considerable local expertise and good connections with prominent leaders in different fields (Rowland, 1947: 253).

In April 1942, the State Department sent a circular to American embassies in Latin America to remind them that it was more appropriate for information-related activities to be pursued by the coordinating committees and not by the diplomatic representatives. Regarding politics, however, the Department emphasized that it would not be appropriate for the coordination committees to carry out any independent reporting or investigations of political subjects, although it was expected that the missions' chiefs would call on them if it were considered advisable (Rowland, 1947: 254)

This clause did not prevent Rockefeller from trying to resume public opinion surveys in Latin America, an activity that was considered essential to OIAA's objectives. To discuss the issue, Rockefeller summoned George Gallup, Hadley Cantril, Leonard Doob, Robert Miller, John H. Withney, and John C. McClintock to a meeting on May 23, 1942. The communication experts agreed on the urgent need to resume monitoring the sentiments of Latin Americans. In the event that a conference could be held with Under Secretary Sumner Wells, it was agreed that Rockefeller should try to convince him that systematic opinion surveys were “essential in order to execute effectively the plans and projects of this Office”. He was also to emphasize that the experience gained in

securing the systematic reports on public sentiments in Latin America would be useful not only for their present work, but would also serve as a guide to obtaining similar reports inside of enemy countries between the period of the Armistice and the peace conference (Doob/May 23, 1942/ NACP/229/1/214/“Reaction to films”).

If Wells consented to the plan, Wallace K. Harrison, head of the OIAA’s Information Division, would try to persuade every coordinating committee and ambassador that the service could be “of infinite service to the entire mission.” Thereafter, technicians trained in Washington or Princeton would be sent to each country to work with people acquainted with local conditions. Both pollsters had to design population samples and interviewing techniques. The samples would be relatively small yet extremely carefully selected. The interviewers had to be nationals, not aware that they were working for the Coordination Committee or the embassy, and at all times appear to be conducting a market survey. All interviews had to be informal, with no notes being taken in the presence of the interviewees, but they also were to be as long as necessary to secure more in-depth information. The data obtained in the interview would be subjected to both statistical and qualitative analysis. Most importantly, the issues to be investigated via the interviews were to be determined in Washington (Ibid).

Rockefeller’s public opinion project did not work out as planned. He succeeded, however, in expanding the Coordination Committees through the creation of Information Centers charged with handling the dissemination of information and measuring its effectiveness. Ten such centers were established in mid July 1942 in the main cities of Latin America. Their main functions included surveys related to mass media contexts, uses, processes, preferences and reactions to propaganda messages. The OIAA’s Press, Radio and Motion Pictures Divisions compiled many reports of this kind. Staff working for existing local advertising agencies completed the interviews, either personally, by mail or by telephone.

RESEARCH CONDUCTED IN THE FIELD OF RADIO

Beginning in Brazil in February 1941 and in Argentina one month later, surveys on radio listening were conducted in almost every important city of Latin America. The information gathered concerned both local and international short-wave stations. Local reports dealt with radio regulations such as policies and censorship, peak listening hours, the types of

programs preferred by audiences at specific times of the day; interest in radio and news broadcasts, top commentators and their degree of trustworthiness. Other aspects included information on every radio station: name and main focus – political, commercial cultural broadcasts, etc. – address, ownership, power, wavelength, coverage, advertising rates, type of audience, reception (clarity and volume), financial status, network tie-ups, rebroadcasts. With regard to short wave, the information to be gathered consisted of the number of stations, clarity and volume of reception, audience size and preferences for individual stations (Cantril/March, 19, 1941/NACP/229/1/137/Manila folder).

Thanks to the OIAA, the first national opinion surveys on the popularity of radio programs were completed in Latin America. Systematic reports of audiences' ratings and shares allowed the propagandists to take strategic decisions on the types of content to broadcast and the best hours for their different productions. In early March 1943, the Radio Division in Washington congratulated the Mexican Coordination Committee for its pioneering work in adapting the American methodologies to check up on broadcasting facilities and conduct surveys on listening habits. Since the results represented a "very valuable body of information", they encouraged the Committee to polish up their methodology so that other Latin American republics could also use it (Krause/March 8, 1943/NACP/229/1/344/Solicited Reaction). The Coordination Committee carried out a dozen audience surveys in the most important cities of Mexico, a watershed in the history of communication research in the country (Cerwin/July 1, 1943/NACP/229/1/347/Surveys-Emblems").

Although only households in the upper income brackets owned a telephone in Latin America in the early forties, telephone surveys were completed in the principal cities of the region in 1941 and part of 1942. In other cases, questionnaires were mailed with the monthly distribution of short wave schedules.

The information obtained via these surveys was insufficient, yet served to assess the listening audience and control the placement of programs by the hour and station. The Content Division of the OIAA carefully chose the ideas and attitudes to transmit and instill to audiences; many radio scriptwriters inserted them in their productions. Inspection reports and popularity surveys conducted by the "Reports and Operating Analysis Section" helped to fine-tune the contents and schedules of all types of radio programs (Pirsein, 1979: 34–39).

Reaction to propaganda was also measured according to the amount of fan mail received and the number of telephone calls to local radio sta-

tions. Requests for maps of war, radio schedule booklets, pamphlets, etc. were used to gauge the impact on the audiences in many countries.

RESEARCH CONDUCTED IN THE FIELD OF THE PRESS

From the mid thirties on, German companies were investing large sums in “subsides” and newspaper advertising to influence the media’s editorial stance toward the Third Reich. American officers and later the British and French reacted by keeping a close eye on the contents of the press in each Latin American country. Content analyses of periodicals became the most frequently employed method during World War II, although many personal interviews were also completed (Niblo, 2001: 359; Friedman, 2003: 92; Ortiz Garza, 1989: 47–57).

Descriptive surveys conducted for each newspaper and magazine encompassed a huge range of details, such as: name, address, and date of foundation; ownership, editorial aims and policies; social, political and business interests to its readers; attitudes expressed in editorials and the main headlines of each of the papers; the number and percentage breakdown of local and foreign news stories broken down according to the type of information provided (i. e. sports, politics, the economy, and so forth); sources of news and photographs: names and political orientation of journalists, columnists, cartoonists, photographers; American products advertised and percentage of space occupied in each medium; advertising rates and circulation, etc. (Cantril/March, 19, 1941/ NACP/229/1/137/Manila folder).

In early 1945, the OIAA measured the impact and preferences of subjects and specific articles of *En Guardia*, its monthly magazine that was distributed to about 500,000 subscribers in Latin America. A mail survey was sent to a sample of 10,000 subscribers (Bell/February, 22, 1945/ NACP/229/1/135/9). Likewise, *Reader’s Digest* conducted readership surveys concerning the editorial content of its Spanish edition (Belden, 1944, 105, footnote 2).

RESEARCH IN THE FIELD OF MOTION PICTURES

The EIB observers and the Coordination Committees made a full inventory of the motion picture industry in every country. They compiled lists of all theaters, including the name, address, seating capacity, admission

fees, weekly attendance, rating of films shown, and types of exhibition circuits. Other items included censorship, sources and distribution of film supply, the popularity of various movie genres, forms of advertising, popularity of film stars, customs regulations, governmental control and censorship (Cantril/March, 19, 1941/NACP/229/1/137/Manila folder).

Direct observation of audience reactions to shorts and documentaries in movie theaters was the first and most frequent research method used by propagandists in Latin America. Reports from German, French, British and American embassies and legations included catcalls and clapping to scenes of battles, flags, presidents, prime ministers, airplanes, battleships, etc.

In mid 1943, Francis Alstock, Director of the Motion Picture Division (MPD) of the OIAA, asked all Coordination Committees to conduct surveys about U.S. feature films released in the first-run theaters of each of the Latin American republics. The objective was to find out if the films were creating a better understanding of the United States and if they reflected the country's war efforts (Alstock/July, 20, 1943/NACP/229/1/235). Crews of surveyors from the Coordination Committees disguised as advertisers interviewed people in the lobbies of the leading first-run theaters (Crump/Longan/September 14, 1943/NACP/229/1/235/Reaction).

The survey method used most widely and regularly by the OIAA's Motion Picture Division was the "exhibition report," a simple form submitted by the operator for each screening. It indicated the titles of the motion pictures shown, location, attendance, and a brief comment by the operator on the audience's reaction. Generally, this account indicated merely whether the audience "liked" or "disliked" the picture. Some countries also provided "spectator reports," filled out by the person in charge of the group for which the movie was shown, that contained open comments from the audiences (Bell/February, 22, 1945/NACP/229/1/135/9).

Non-commercial educational and documentary films were also used by the OIAA for the dissemination of propaganda. In addition to productions by Hollywood's main motion picture companies, other institutions like the Museum of Modern Art, the Department of Agriculture and the Office of War Information provided Rockefeller's office movies and shorts free of charge. These were usually shown in schools, military camps, town squares, union halls, etc. Mobile units using 16mm films also reached remote villages. By 1945, the OIAA estimated a monthly audience of five million people and a total of more than two hundred million (Erb, 1982: 118–121).

Thousands of “exhibition” and “spectator” questionnaires were filled in by all kinds of viewers attending non-theatrical exhibitions of OIAA’s educational and documentaries shorts. Most of these accounts were ordinarily quite brief and general, yet they served as a general guide to audience reactions.

EARLY SURVEY RESEARCH IN LATIN AMERICA – A BALANCE

The Export Information Bureau, and later the Coordination Committee in each Latin American country became the first professional bureau fully dedicated to applying and measuring persuasive communication processes, the diffusion of messages and measuring the effects thereof. International and intercultural communication became their core fields, deeply entwined with psychological warfare, public diplomacy, propaganda and public relations.

Further research on this subject is still needed in every country of Latin America. It seems clear, however, that the communication research projects carried out by the Office of Inter-American Affairs between 1940 and 1945 are of paramount importance when it comes to the history of social studies in Latin America.

Hadley Cantril’s contributions to establishing public opinion surveys and developing methodologies for studying mass communication in Latin America deserve due credit and more in-depth examination. As a forerunner of empirical public opinion research in the region, he left a substantial legacy in the training of personnel and in the adaptation of methods to entirely different field conditions. Although Cantril spawned a trailblazing school of social communication researchers in the region, no mention is made of this in the historiography of the field in Latin America. This chapter may serve as a small tribute to all of them.

The ultimate outcome of the colossal work undertaken by the OIAA and the State Department has still to be assessed. Thousands of reports compiled in Latin America about mass media facilities, communication habits, sizes and types of audiences, reactions to persuasive appeals, preferred radio programs or movie content, etc., seem to have been ignored by subsequent propaganda agencies such as the IIS and the USIA.

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