
Reviewed by: Akira Ichikawa, Department of Political Science, University of Lethbridge.

While the ambitious title of this collection may be understandable, it is also unfortunate and, finally, misleading. It is unfortunate because a general criticism arising from the title could detract from several quality entries that comprise the set. It is misleading because eleven of the fourteen chapters focus specifically on or refer in their headings exclusively to Central American or Caribbean countries. Even the common thread, i.e., media, which presumably connects the pieces together is snipped figuratively by arguably the book's best chapter and one that makes no mention of media: Maurice Water's legal attack of the U.S. justification for invading Grenada in 1983.

These reservations must sound like a broken record when this or any other conference requires the imposition of an organizing framework, usually at an inclusive level of generality, on diverse submissions. It remains inexcusable, however, that a title purporting to look at Latin America should have so little or nothing to say about the media systems of dominant nations like Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, or Mexico.

On the other hand, one could argue with some force that the media travails associated with Grenada, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Cuba are typical of the entire hemispheric region, and the close examination of these countries because of the ready-availability of data (The Light Is Better Here Argument) could generate findings applicable throughout Latin America. Something of this sort informs the first three chapters that address the global issue of the New World (or International, depending on the writer) Information Order (NWIO).

Aggey Brown, director of the Caribbean Institute of Mass Communication at the University of the West Indies, sees the antidote to North-South communication differences in the control of communication technology, and not the New World Information Order articles of faith built on the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's dictates to change the 'minds of men' in the industrial and dominant North to affect their reportage of the developing South.
Brown chooses Grenada to illustrate this shift in control, but his intent is much more catholic and instructive for Latin America and the South (The Third World).

Although different in scope, Thelma McCormick's assessment of the (Sean) MacBride Report (Many Voices, One World, 1990) is similar in intent. As an alternative to, but at the same time incorporating the best of, liberal and Marxist models, the Report presents in McCormick's estimation a promising research agenda for media study in the Third World. Her concerns and the Report itself, however, get a tepid reception from Suithichai Yoon, a Thai editor and publisher, whose inclusion here is somewhat of a mystery but whose Third World response is right on target: both, to Yoon, are academic exercises which do not speak to the realities of running a press in the face of government censorship and restrictions. The unstated contrast between the Canadian academic and the two practitioners needs no exegesis; it speaks volumes about taking care of media business in Latin America and the Third World better than any other section of the book.

The other three portions of the collection are built around media performance, Canadian and American coverage, and the Grenadian invasion. At the risk of belaboring the earlier point, nine of these eleven chapters accentuate the Central American-Caribbean tilt. At the same time Water's critique of the United States assault on Grenada is among them as well as several others that make contributions to the understanding of communication and media in the area.

Unfortunately, Howard H. Frederick's chapter misses being one of those. His piece starts off well enough with an analysis of radio broadcasts of the Voice of America and Radio Havana Cuba to establish the meaning of key concepts contextually and comparatively, but suffers from a lack of direction and organization thereafter and appears to fade away rather than end crisply.

Bonnie J. Brownlee's interest has more to do with communication research than media in a traditional society, although access to and trust in media are affected when, as in this case, communication patterns among Nicaraguan Indians based on kinship ties break down. In what appears to be the only attempt to examine all of Latin America, Mary Gardner examines the colegacion, an institution little known to North Americans and whose double-edged nature seems to have taken a turn in favor of government control. The practice of colegacion is ubiquitous in its varying national incarnations and designed to 'professionalize' journalism, but Gardner believes the practice has been turned around by governments for licensing purposes. A laudable intent appears to have been co-opted by governments and perverted in the process.

Christine Ogan and Ramona Rush conclude the section on media performance with their investigation of two news agencies ostensibly established to augment the quality and quantity about Third World news.
covered by the Big Four (AP, UPI, AFP, Reuters). The co-authors dis-
covered the pool of 'development news' did not increase appreciably
with the addition of the two agencies, leading them to hypothesize the
existence of universal news values "either inherent to man or imposed
upon him by the Western media."

The articles by Walter Soderlund, one of the two co-editors of
this collection, and by Marlene Cuthbert and Stuart Surlin, the latter
the other co-editor, are straight-forward flow-of-information studies
examining selected newspapers to establish volume of news about Central
America and the Caribbean reaching publication. Both are comparative:
the findings are not unexpected, with geographical proximity of dailies
to an event, i.e., Grenada, correlating with volume of news about the
event; and U.S. papers printing more about El Salvador and Nicaragua
than their Canadian counterparts. The studies have the merit of provi-
ding hard evidence in place of 'armchair musings' about such truisms.

Graeme Mount's study also touches on foreign news impact on a
domestic population, but to characterize his highly-readable history of
the Spanish-language press in New Mexico as a flow-of-information study
would be to miss his fundamental point. Mount tries to show how the
Spanish-language press stemmed the tide of Mexican nationalism among
the largely American population of Hispanic ancestry through measured
editorial positions against Pancho Villa. Mount's chapter appears
misplaced historically and geographically in this collection, but it is
a well-crafted entry.

The remaining chapters include one with sage advice to prospective
reporters from a veteran Latin American news hand, John Harbron of the
Thomas Newspaper chain, and a couple more items on Grenada. Among the
latter, Robert Hoogendorn says Canadian media generally adopted the
ideological outlook of the U.S. administration, including the Cuban
connection, which resulted in visceral newscopy. The other, by Peter
Haberman, attempts to impose a theoretical overview on the Grenadian
events to grasp the "interdependence of public opinion formation and
political decisions as they relate to the role and function of mass
media in developing societies," in this case, Jamaica.

In summary, with due reservations stated, it appears worthwhile to
have a record of the conference proceedings. At the same time, the one
further step of transforming the proceedings into bookform could have
used great blue penciling and editorial bullying. Additional invited
chapters, again about Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, or Venezuela, would
have provided the title; Latin America, after all, covers eight mil-
lion square miles and includes more than thirty countries accounting
for 260 million persons.