

José Luis Piñuel-Raigada

Teaching and Research on Communication as an object of study in European and Latin-American universities

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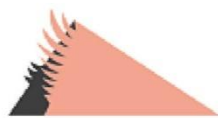
**Teaching and Research on Communication as an
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MDCS Group (Mediation Dialectics of Social Communication) of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, was proposed 5 years ago a research program Epistemology of Communication, whose two main research lines have been, on the one hand, the study on hegemonic discourses in the media and, secondly, the study of teaching and research in communication / information at the universities of Europe and Latin America.

Following the first line of research should highlight project ID+i (ref. SEJ2007-62202SOC1) on the truth in reference to self in Media Communication, completed in 2010 (with several publications) and the project also ID+i (ref. CSO2010-16936) on the hegemonic discourse on the subject of Climate Change concluded in 2013.

Following the second line, completed in 2009 a survey in six languages (English, Spanish, French, German, Portuguese and Italian) on the profile of the teaching of Communication Theory / Theory of Information in the European and Latin American universities that offer degrees linked to the world of social communication. And in 2011 the survey of the same scope, with the aim of studying the conditions and developments relevant basic and applied research in the last five years on Communication / Information at European and Latin American universities, and to evaluate the correspondence between research and teaching, so the core of the work presented here, is the interpretation of the data from these two surveys. So, without the work of this extraordinary MDCS team whose direction honor me, would not have been possible so far. Forthem, given my appreciation. And especially my thanks go to Juan Antonio Gaitan Moya, Juan Carlos Águila Coghlan, María Dolores Cáceres Zapatero, María Luisa Sánchez Calero (all from the UCM), Carlos Lozano Ascencio (URJC), Alejandro Barranquero (Universidad Carlos III de Madrid) and Miguel Vicente Mariño and José I. García-Lomas (Valladolid University).

Teaching and Research on Communication as an object of study in European and Latin-American universities

Abstract: Communication theories and research on communication as an object of study are the basic pillars that during the past two decades have become institutionalized as a disciplinary field in universities around the world. However, this process has not been accompanied by an objective analysis of the ontological and epistemological perspectives used by professors when teaching courses on communication theories and of the techniques of data production and registration in order to build a research methodology that is consistent with the theories. This notebook presents the results of two international electronic surveys applied to European and Latin American universities, one on the teaching of communication theories, and the other on the resources, routines and epistemological approaches to communication research. Based on these surveys, this article recapitulates valuable information about university teaching and research on communication as an object of study, which contributes to the organization of a field of knowledge that still requires a greater understanding to reach consensual positions that allow speaking of a true common higher education area. The results indicate that mass communication is a dominant object of study in an environment, defined by a high scientific interdisciplinarity but also by a weak interdisciplinary development in research methods

Keywords: Teaching, research, communication, universities

Introduction

The institutionalization of the scientific discourses on social communication at universities can be developed within the academic field of a diversity of disciplines from social and human sciences, or can be developed as an independent and autonomous disciplinary field, which puts into practice academic rituals whose

reproduction serves to socially legitimize those representations where the scientific research results are presented (as it happens in congresses and symposia), or where the recognition of scientific competencies of professors and researchers is proclaimed (as it happens in other academic rituals such as defenses of PhD theses, or competitive examinations for public services, etc.).

These forms of institutionalization that aim to create an independent and autonomous disciplinary field have progressed in the European and Latin American world with the creation and reproduction of university centers and/or schools for the study of Communication/Information Sciences, which naturally had to co-opt their academic staff through such evaluative rituals. In order to establish the main features of the teaching of communication/information theory, and the resources, routines and approaches used in the research on communication as an object of study in the European and Latin American universities, the Complutense Universidad of Madrid, through the MDCS research group, which I have the honor to direct and which is sponsored by the AE-IC (Spanish Association of Communication Researchers), thematic section of Communication Theory and Research Methodology, the FELAFACS (Latin American Federation of Schools of Social Communication) and the ECREA (European Communication Research and Education Association), designed and conducted two surveys, in English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish languages, on teaching and research on communication as an object of study. The first of these surveys was answered by 237 members of universities from Europe and Latin America and had the participation of 363 professors from more than 40 countries. The second survey was answered by 360 members of universities from both continents and had the participation of 506 professors from more than 60 countries.

The survey on teaching of communication theories focused on investigating the following aspects:

- *General information.* In addition to collecting basic data about the participating professor and his or her University, the survey investigated the name of the communication-related course subject, the compulsory or optional nature of the subject; the number of professors; the dominant education of professors; the location of the subject within the academic course; the number of teaching hours, etc.
- *Requirements, competencies, objectives and contents.* This set of questions investigated the previous skills required from students and the competencies that students were expected to acquire by the end of the course; the thematic interests, i.e., if whether the course expected students to dominate the study of paradigms and theoretical models, systems, processes and products, or the epistemological critique.
- *Objects of study, disciplinary field and theoretical paradigms.* In this block are asked, firstly if in the course dominate as objects of study, Mass Communication, Group Communication, Interpersonal Communication, Organizational Communication, or other social practices of Communication; secondly, whether the dominant perspective in the disciplinary field of reference was is historical, sociological, anthropological, philosophical, linguistic and semiotic, psychological, interdisciplinary, or none dominate in particular; finally, professors were asked on the attention given , in their teaching programs, to theoretical models and paradigms such as Behaviorism, Functionalism, Structuralism, Phenomenology, Systems Theory, Critical Models, Informationalism, Constructivism or if instead, to none of those in particular.
- *Evaluation criteria.* This part was focused in asking professors' criteria for measuring the obtained results for class attendance and participation, for individual work, and/or for oral and written test.

The survey on communication as an object of study, focused on investigating the following aspects:

1. *General information.* In addition to collecting basic information about the researcher and his or her university and country, this section asked about the institutional nature of the research activity (specifically, whether this activity was a personal or team initiative, or of a consolidated group, whether it is part of specific projects or directed by specialized centers or institutes, etc.).
2. *Research frameworks:* This section asked whether the research activity was framed within long-term research programs, whether following the term or the deadlines established by specific projects; whether its character was basic or applied and with what type of funding (public, private or mixed); whether it was undertaken with the participation of national or international university departments or schools; the number, demographic features, qualifications, dedication and competencies of the researchers that integrate the research teams.
3. *Subjects and General Contents of the Research.* This block first asked for the key objectives of investigation (whether *Descriptive* –e.g. selection of dimensions for an object of study–, if *Explanatory* –e.g. to relate the features of an object to propose models–, if *Evaluative* –e.g. to validate research models and objects of study–, if *of Intervention* –e.g. to use models to change behavior or social processes–); to what thematic profiles ascribe the research activity, according to the areas established by the thematic sections of the major national and supranational associations (ICA, IAMCR, ALAIC, ECREA); and what appreciation about the pertinence of the corresponding lists of the thematic sections established by the associations.
4. *Research Methodology* with questions about the most frequent methodological Field –particularly, whether natural field research (e.g. the study of social practices) or experimental (e.g. pilot test for advertising spots) or

documentary (e.g. discourse analysis)—; or finally whether the most frequently-used research techniques for the production and registration of data (e.g. observation, conversation with individuals or groups, survey, experimental, documentary and/or discourse analysis); the most-used techniques for data analysis (e.g. quantitative, qualitative, or mixed techniques); or finally whether Research/Action on a field; on the most recurrent situations for the preparation and recording of research data: specifically whether by Observation techniques, or by Conversation techniques with groups or individuals, or by Survey techniques, or by experimentation techniques or, finally, by documentary techniques and/or discourse analysis; about the most used techniques for data processing, specifically if by the use of quantitative, qualitative or mixed techniques of data processing; and finally, with what software and adjusting to what guarantees and controls (theoretical or empirical) to Falsation of Theories, the Method Validity or the Reliability of Techniques

5. *Dominant objects of study and paradigms.* Specifically if dominate as an object, the Interpersonal Communication, Group Communication, Organizational Communication, Educational Communication, Mass Communication, or others; and if when citing the paradigms of reference used in the research, dominate the Psychological perspective, or Sociological, or Linguistic and Semiotics, or Anthropological and Ethnographic, or Philosophical, Educational, Historical, or an interdisciplinary vision; without depending of paradigms; or instead, a communicational vision over the rest of paradigms. At last, teachers were asked on the given attention, in their epistemological frames, to models and theoretical paradigms used in the research like Behaviorism, Functionalism, Structuralism, Phenomenology, Systems Theory, Critical Models, Informationalism, Constructivism, or instead, none of those in particular.

6. *Dissemination of results and knowledge transfer.* The final questions of this questionnaire were referred to the most used procedures for the dissemination and use of results of their current research and their level of satisfaction. In particular, pointing the number of articles in scientific journals, books and monographs, congresses and conferences, patents and royalties, PhD theses and teaching manuals.

The following section presents the most relevant results associated to the third section of the first survey on teaching, *Objects of study, disciplinary field and theoretical paradigms*, and the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th sections of the second survey on research.

State of the art review

Before launching the surveys, the research group wanted to know what is happening with Communication Theory in the field of scientific epistemology. Today we already know that in all historical periods –and even in those we call "prehistoric"– social groups have developed routines, standards and skills to create and reproduce the cognitive capital which, supported by communicative practices and transmitted from generation to generation, guarantees the confidence or the certainty on the actions that society establishes to carry out its reproduction, up to the point that the biological reproduction of our species ended up being conditioned to the social reproduction of human groups, without which it is rendered impractical. By the sciences or nature we have come to understand, precisely, how communication allows the living beings to configure their own domain of existence, to which the skills of the species and the opportunities offered by the environment are incorporated reciprocally and dialectically (see, for instance, Maturana and Varela, 1973, 1996). ; and by the human sciences that have helped us to understand how communication becomes a specific behavior that is crucial in the evolution of individuals (in their personal and social maturation –see, for instance, Vygotsky, L.S. 1988–, but also in

the construction of identities, habits, scenarios and social imaginary without which the shared knowledge and the human relations in society can be reproduced (see, for instance, Luhman, N. 1991). Thirdly, we have also come to understand how communication is the universe that gives life and relevance to the rules of language and the expressive discourses, but also that, reciprocally, the rules, standards and discourses contribute to the enrichment and reproduction of the communication universe (see, for instance, Deacon, T.W, 1997). Also, by the Archaeology and Ethnography we have come to understand, in fourth place, how writing and its cultural evolution show the dialectic connection between communication and language, which promotes the reproduction of the socially-validity knowledge from generation to generation (see, for instance, Garfinkel, H. 1967): how, in fifth place, with the experience of writing comes the hesitation about the suitability between expressions and representations, and that these doubts emerge when considering both the development of the individual and the evolution of cultures, and are at the root of the discourses that are socially imposed to ensure accurate knowledge (with its mythical and scientific criteria of “truth” –see, for instance, Lledó, E. [1961] or Piñuel, J. L. and Lozano, C. [2006] chapter 6)–; how, in sixth place, these criteria of truth are historically changing when applied to the “historic discourse”, which provides the keys to locate in time and space the vicissitudes of our own community and the community of others (see, for instance, Ranke, L.V. 1954; Bachelard, G. 1973); and, finally, in seventh place, how the scientific examination of communication as an object of study has led us to reconsider the natural order and the social orders from the social practice of communication (see, for instance, Leydesdorff, L. [2003], or Piñuel J. L. & Lozano, 2006, op. cit. chapter 8).

Moreover, it is a fact that, so far, all the great thinkers have shared very rich insights about the communicative activity, and that many very diverse sciences have produced very important knowledge about the communicative activity. Also, until very recently, the knowledge provided by thinkers and scientists and the cognitive capital accumulated on communication, through the various sciences, has been manifested sometimes incomplete,

sometimes too divided and often poorly organized due to the disparity of theoretical and epistemological criteria. Indeed, there is an epistemological challenge facing, first, to a certain excessive accumulation of knowledge about communication as an object of study; and obviously this challenge has possibly forced communication professors to review the knowledge that biology, psychology, linguistics, philosophy, history and sociology contribute to the study of animal, human and social communication. This challenge sometimes also includes considering and completing such contributions in order to establish a field of study: communication. However, this endeavor would also include establishing whether there is a disciplinary paradigm capable of providing a new approach that is capable of integrating and reorganizing all the knowledge about communication. Has this be enough to lay the foundations of a new scientific “discipline”? And how should it be called, *Communication Theory*?

These questions were addressed at the symposium held in Madrid in May 2009 to present the results of the first survey¹. Bernard Miège and Paolo Mancini were the most belligerents and opposed the desirability of considering the creation of a new scientific “Discipline”, and referring to *Communication Theory* as a didactic exercise aimed at the reflection on the experiences that the social practice of communication offer to the analysis of sociologists, political scientists, semiologists, etc. As it is widely accepted, a scientific theory, applied to a consistently defined and delimited object of study, acquires value if it can be tested theoretically and practically, but only to the extent that the “knowledge” that it provides is able to improve the “making” designed by its implementation and to the extent to what, as it facilitates the success of the “praxis”, it enriches and reviews the initially formulated knowledge. That being said, the notions of “theory” and of “object of study”, “field of knowledge” and “practices that review the knowledge” are sometimes used with

¹ The full text of all papers was published by DIÁLOGOS magazine, of FELAFACS (Latin American Federation of Schools of Social Communication) N° 80, April 2010, ISSN: 1995-6630 (<http://www.dialogosfelafacs.net/revista/index.php?ed=80>)

different degrees of rigor. For this reason, in the practice of scientific research and in the discourse that later explains it and allows other scientists to reproduce it, the processes of work, which are never disorganized, can alternatively seek two different objectives: firstly, to collect data that confirm previously formulated knowledge, allow expanding the repertoire of details that describe an object of study, or can reduce the distance of observation; and secondly, to organize the data that is useful to describe and examine an object of study: either in its description, its relationship with other close objects of study, or in its epistemological consistency.

The knowledge accumulated on communication as an object of study in the cognitive capital provided by the sciences can be explained and addressed by reviewing their “drawers” of knowledge and searching for those chapters and sections related to the communicative activity of the living beings (Biology), of the “Homo Sapiens” (Anthropology), and to human behavior (Psychology), language and writing (Linguistics), and the cultural relics and the discourses used to explain the development of human history and thinking (History and Philosophy). We can also search for those chapters of modern epistemology that, based on knowledge about both nature and culture, have tried to review and reorganize the visions, until now partial, of the different sciences, and have tried to reunite them by using new formal paradigms, one of which has been the paradigm of communication. An “encyclopedia” (from the Greek ἐν, in, κύκλος, circle, and παιδεία, teaching) always provides concentric and orderly access to the knowledge of each science, based on their circular process. Sometimes, this access is provided alphabetically so that each alphabetical entry in the dictionary (described as “encyclopedic”) offers knowledge about each science. Some other times the access is offered thematically, in such a way that each thematic chapter corresponds to the corresponding knowledge of each science. An encyclopedia, therefore, does not organize knowledge from a unique perspective of knowledge, but from many perspectives, as many as the entries of a dictionary or as many subjects are proposed to organize the

(more or less specialized or general) fields of knowledge (e.g. authors, epochs, discoveries, techniques, or general classifications of all kinds)².

Table 1: Notion of theory and areas of knowledge for the discipline of “Communication theory”

Areas of knowledge			
	Some objects of study	Fields of knowledge	Some models that review knowledge
Communication Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signal Transmission • Expressive patterns • Group behavior • Social interaction • Language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physics • Ethology • Social psychology • Sociology • Semiology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information theory (Shannon) • Evolution theory (Darwin) • Double bind theory (Bateson) • Spiral of silence theory (N. Neumann) • Framing theory (Goffman, E., Lakoff G.)

Theorizing communication is therefore not about making an encyclopedia of communication. But question the proposed "theory (s) of communication," either. It may help however for the scientific community to achieve the time comes to propose a "theory of communication" that can acquire sufficient epistemological consistency if the object is well defined, what is meant by "communication", and from hence, propose an epistemological and methodological design able to formulate problems and ways to solve problems and therefore to better understand all aspects that are relevant to that object of study (considering their relationships: temporal, causal, etc.). as to better apply that knowledge to human practices in which

² There are no many dictionaries and thematic encyclopedias on communication. As author, I have a long experience in the biographical and bibliographical production of encyclopedias and dictionaries, including the *Diccionario Técnico de Comunicación* (Technical Dictionary of Communication), which is integrated in WESTFALEN, M. H. and PIÑUEL, J. L. (Eds.), *La Dirección de Comunicación* (The Directorate of Communication), published by Prado (Madrid) in 1993

communication is present, thereby facilitating that the understanding of communication as an object, the analysis of the areas where communication is present, and the practice of communication can be mutually enriching, progress and reproduce.

In this sense, it could raise in respect of the Communication, a table (see Table 1) that covers the areas of knowledge which would be characteristic of a discipline that was able to incorporate knowledge of communication as an object, the field analysis where communication is present, and theoretical review of the scientific models of knowledge about communication, so that they can enrich each other, progress and reproduce.

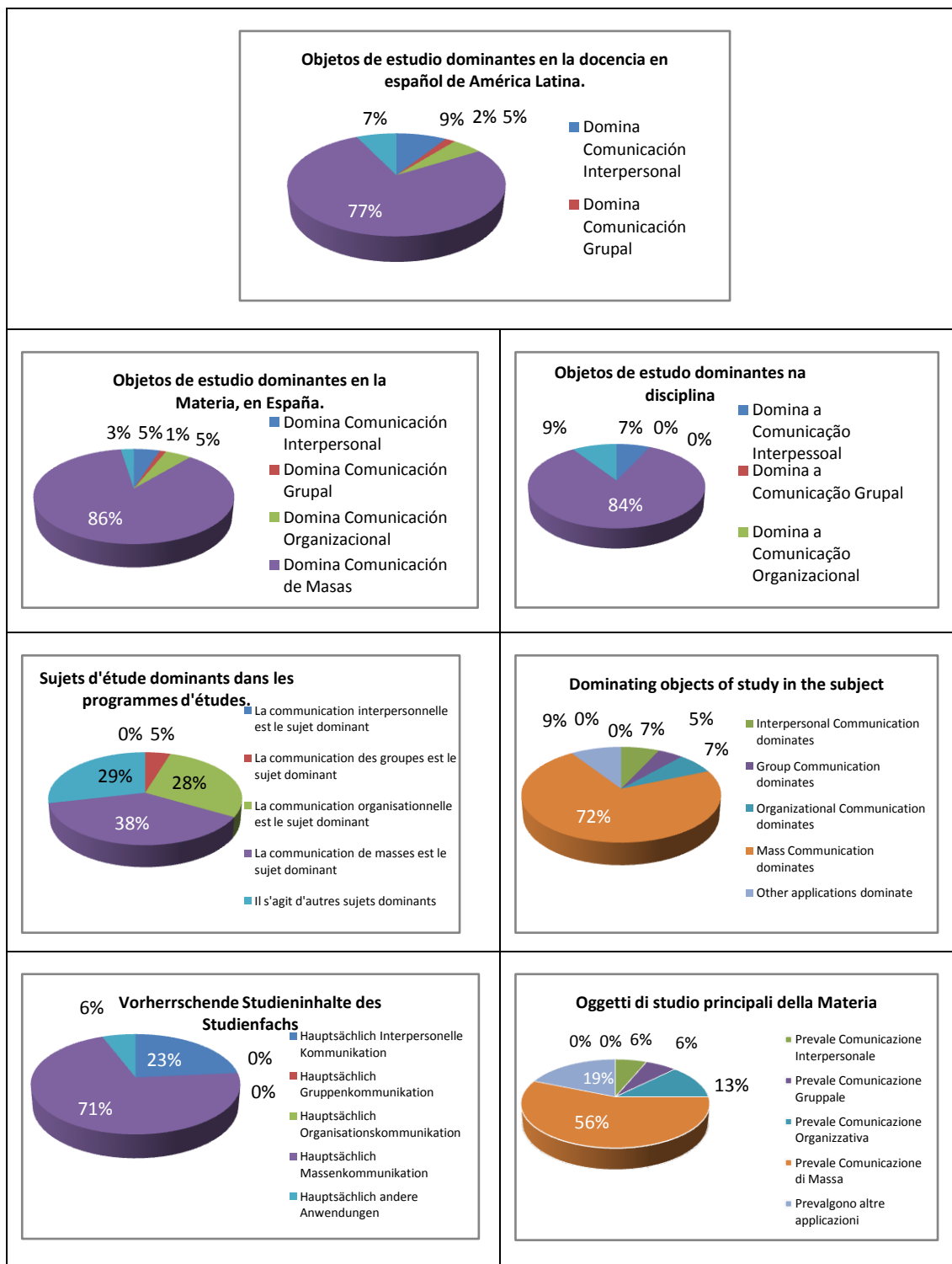
Objects of study, disciplinary fields and theoretical paradigms in the teaching of Communication Theory

A personal invitation to complete the survey questionnaire was sent (through e-mail, an electronic link and a password) to a list of about one thousand professors of communication theory, which was created based on various sources, such as universities' websites, the databases of scientific communication associations (like ECREA, FELAFACS, AE-IC, etc.).

Nevertheless, only one-third answered the survey and of those not everybody answered it fully. The statistical representativeness of the amount of answered questionnaires is not significant based on the universe which, on the other hand, is finite. Thus, the results of the survey (based on the opinions of a significant sample) can reveal certain trends about that universe, but nothing more.

Aside from that, the data that will be presented and examined will allow us to start a debate, but will not allow drawing a geographic map of the perceptions and mentalities about the objects of study, fields of knowledge and theoretical models that are involved in the teaching of communication theory in Europe and Latin America.

Table 2: Dominant objects of study in the teaching of communication theory



The results are presented in tables and are divided according to the language in which the subject of communication is taught: Firstly, teaching in Spanish, which is divided into Latin American

countries and Spain, then teaching in Portuguese (which includes the replies from Brazil), and later the data about communication teaching in French, English, German and Italian³.

Table 2 presents the similarities and differences regarding the preferred objects of study in the teaching of communication theory among Spanish-speaking (from Latin America and Spain), French-speaking, English-speaking, German-speaking and Italian-speaking professors. As it can be noticed, mass communication is in all cases the most-examined object of study, because in all cases almost eight of every ten professors admit having a privileged interest in it. Conversely, of the French-speaking professors only 38% admits having a preference for this object of study, while the other two-thirds stated they have a dominant interest in organizational communication, or other objects of study not included in the survey question. “Animal communication” (which was one of the possible answers) did not receive any attention in any case, and “Group communication” stands out for only receiving the attention of a tiny minority and being an object of study hardly considered in educational programs, as it is the case among Portuguese-speaking and German speaking professors.

The survey also asked respondents whether there was dominant disciplinary perspective (e.g. historical, interdisciplinary, sociological, anthropological, philosophical, of Linguistics and semiotics, or psychological) in the main fields of knowledge included in the education programs.

The results appear in table 3, in the following order: teaching of communication in Spanish-speaking Latin America universities, Spanish-speaking Spanish universities, French-speaking universities, English-speaking universities, German-speaking universities, and Italian-speaking universities. Spanish-speaking Latin American and Spanish group we can find other relevant profiles.

For example, while the interdisciplinary paradigm is dominant in the communication theory programs of more than

³ The results of this first survey, resulted in several publications, among which highlights that of Lozano A., C. & Vicente M., M. (2010) “Teaching Communication Theory at European and Latin American Universities”, at *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 65, pages 255 to 265.

Table 3: Dominant disciplinary perspectives in the teaching of communication theory

<p style="text-align: center;">Paradigmas disciplinarios dominantes</p> <p style="text-align: center;">9% 6% 5% 0%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">53% 11%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dominan Psicología y Psicología Social ■ Dominan Lingüística y Semiótica ■ Dominan Antropología y Filosofía ■ Domina la Sociología ■ Domina la perspectiva histórica ■ Domina la perspectiva interdisciplinar ■ No domina ninguna de las anteriores 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Paradigmas disciplinarios dominantes</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5% 0% 0% 9% 6% 1%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">53% 22% 4%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dominan Psicología y Psicología Social ■ Dominan Lingüística y Semiótica ■ Dominan Antropología y Filosofía ■ Domina la Sociología ■ Domina la perspectiva histórica ■ Domina la perspectiva interdisciplinar ■ No domina ninguna de las anteriores 	<p style="text-align: center;">Paradigmas disciplinares dominantes 14%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">0% 5% 11% 0% 4%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">66%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dominam Psicologia e Psicologia Social ■ Dominam Lingüística e Semiótica ■ Dominam Antropologia e Filosofia ■ Domina a Sociologia ■ Domina a perspectiva histórica ■ Domina a perspectiva interdisciplinar ■ Não domina nenhuma das anteriores
<p style="text-align: center;">Paradigmes disciplinaires dominants.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">0% 9% 18% 27% 28% 0%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">0%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Le paradigme de la Psychologie et la Psychologie Sociale ■ Le paradigme de la Linguistique et de la Sémiotique ■ Le paradigme de l'Anthropologie et de la Philosophie ■ Le paradigme de la Sociologie ■ Le paradigme de la vision historique 	<p style="text-align: center;">Dominating disciplinary paradigms.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">9% 7% 7% 7%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">42% 23% 5%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Psychology and Social Psychology dominate ■ Linguistics and Semiotics dominate ■ Anthropology and Philosophy dominate ■ Sociology dominates ■ Historical perspective dominates ■ Interdisciplinary perspective dominates ■ None of the above dominates
<p style="text-align: center;">Vorherrschende Paradigmen des Faches</p> <p style="text-align: center;">12% 0% 0%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">18% 17% 53%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hauptsächlich Psychologie und Sozialpsychologie ■ Hauptsächlich Linguistik und Semiotik ■ Hauptsächlich Anthropologie und Philosophie ■ Hauptsächlich Soziologie ■ Hauptsächlich die historische Perspektive ■ Hauptsächlich die interdisziplinäre Perspektive ■ Es herrscht keiner der erwähnten Ansätze vor 	<p style="text-align: center;">Paradigmi disciplinari dominanti</p> <p style="text-align: center;">0% 0% 12% 0%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">38% 19% 31%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Prevalgono Psicologia e Psicologia Sociale ■ Prevalgono Linguistica e Semiotica ■ Prevalgono Antropologia e Filosofia ■ Prevalgono la Sociologia ■ Prevalgono la prospettiva storica ■ Prevalgono la prospettiva interdisciplinare ■ Non prevale nessuna delle precedenti

half of the Spanish-speaking (from Latin America and Spain), Portuguese-speaking and German-speaking professors, this paradigm is not so dominant among the French-speaking and English-speaking professors –although this perspective is dominant among a majority of them, the Sociological perspective is dominant among other significant shares (specifically among one of every four professors). Finally anthropology and philosophy were dominant disciplines only among very low numbers of professors, regardless of their language.

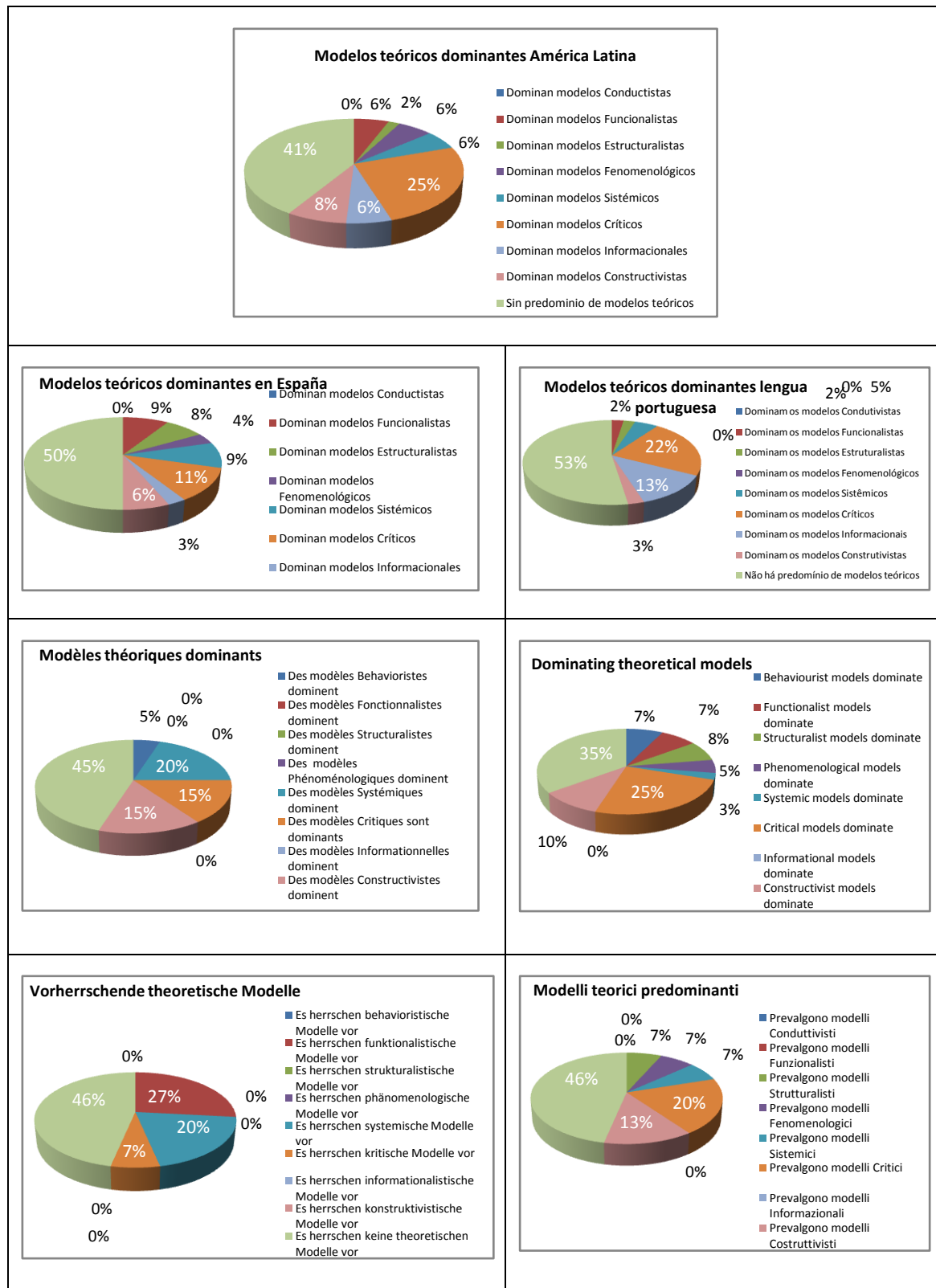
In this regard, the dominant disciplines in the European area are Anthropology, Linguistics and Semiotics, and Sociology (in this order), except in Spain, where Psychology is the dominant discipline. The historical and interdisciplinary perspectives are dominant in Latin America.

However, if we compare answers across the different language groups and separating the. The share of professors among which Linguistics or semiotics was the dominant disciplinary paradigm did not even reach two of every ten professors, regardless of their language.

Thus, in general terms the results indicate that in relation to the dominant disciplinary paradigm in the teaching of communication theory programs, there is a progressive tendency to abandon disciplinary homage's, especially to those disciplines with greater speculative weight, like anthropology, philosophy, linguistics and semiotics.

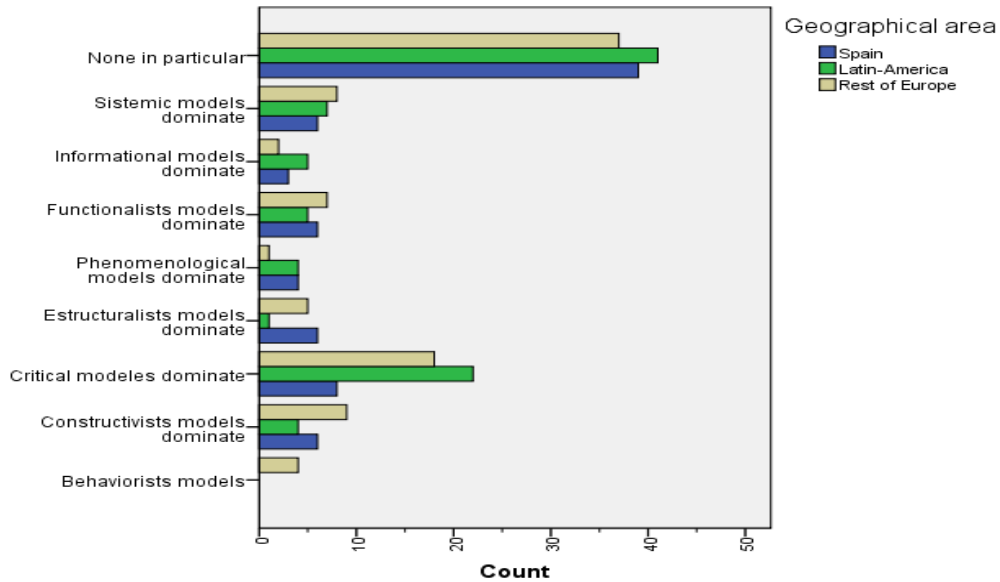
Finally, as we can see in table 4, which highlights the dominant epistemological models in the teaching of communication theory among the sample of professors, only the majority of Portuguese-speaking and Spain's Spanish-speaking professors (or at least 50%) stated they have no dominant theoretical models as epistemological reference in the teaching of communication theory. However, this option of not privileging any epistemological paradigms is also majoritarian in all the language groups. The most dominant epistemological model is the Critical Models (Frankfurt School), which is dominant among one of every four Latin American-Spanish-speaking, Portuguese-speaking and English-speaking professors, and among one in five Italian-speaking professors.

Table 4: Dominant epistemological theoretical models in the teaching of communication theory



The next most-relevant epistemological reference is Systemic models, which are the second most-dominant models among one of every five French-speaking and German-speaking professors.

Table 5. Dominant Theoretical Models in Teaching, by geographical areas



Now, if we examine the answers about the epistemologically dominant theoretical paradigms in the teaching programs across three geographical areas (Spain, Latin America, and Rest of Europe, which provided similar shares of participants), we can notice interesting profiles: the three geographical areas are similar in the sense that they do not have dominant theoretical models in the teaching of communication, but are very different in the treatment of the critical models, which receive greater attention in Latin America and the rest of Europe than in Spain. The “functionalist models” and “systemic models” receive more attention in the rest of Europe than in the other two areas. "Behaviorism" and "Constructivism" are the dominant models in the “Rest of Europe”. Meanwhile, in Latin America the dominant models are the “critical models” and “Informationalism”. Finally in Spain the dominant models are “Structuralism” and “Phenomenology” (See table 5).

In view of these results, it is natural to be a little concerned about the epistemological convenience of considering whether it is justified or not, to treat communication studies as a new discipline, or whether it is possible to formulate an

epistemological paradigm capable of integrating and structuring the *objects of study* of the universe of communication, the *disciplinary fields* where communication is present, and the *epistemological models* capable of explaining it, in a way that they can be reciprocally enriched, developed and reproduced as a science.

University frameworks in Communication Research

Just like it is not surprising to be a little concern about considering the epistemological convenience of considering whether is it justified, or not, to treat communication studies as a new discipline, the results of this survey on communication research as an object of study in European and Latin American universities, there are not too positive. Considering what university researchers say about research funding (see Table 6), it can be noticed that public funding is dominant in basic and applied research conducted by Spanish and Portuguese-speaking professors. Basic research predominates in Latin America and France, both publicly-funded and unfunded; while applied research with mixed funding and basic research with public funding predominate among English-speaking, German-speaking and Italian-speaking professors.

Graph 1: Research funding by geographical areas

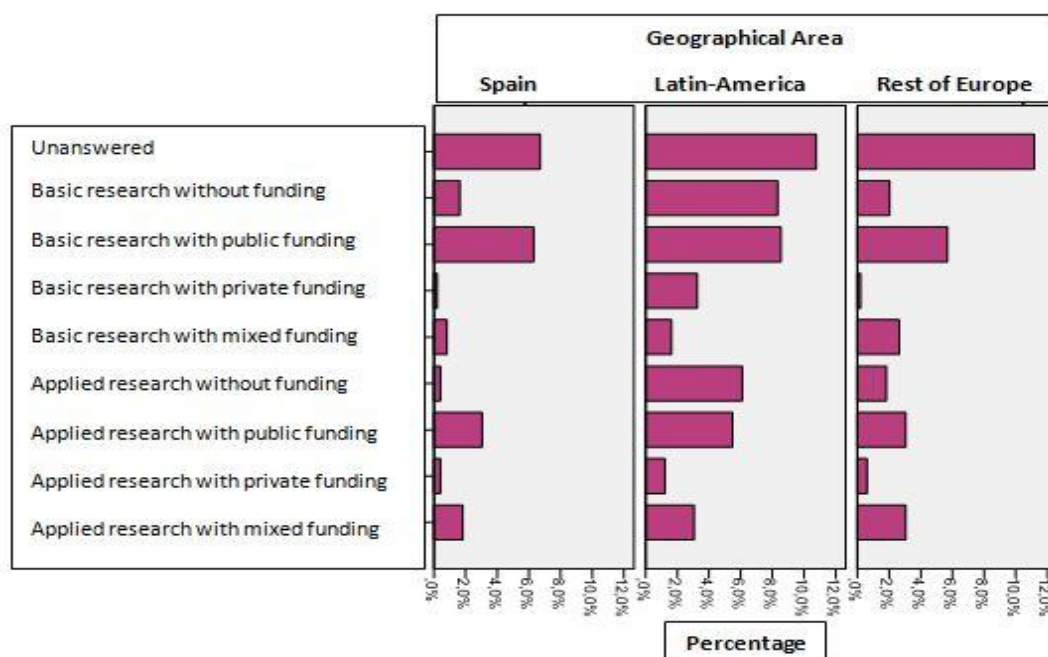
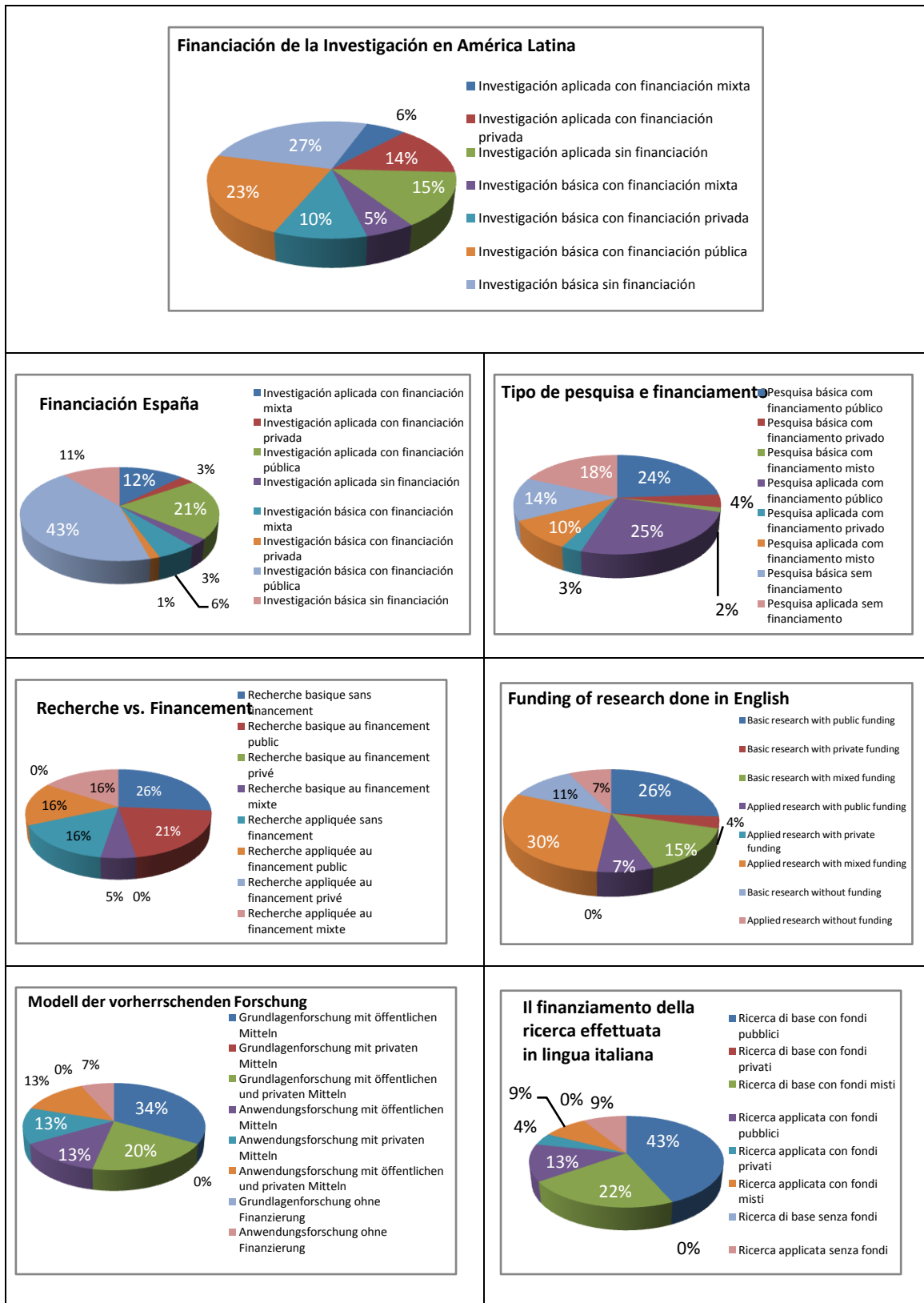
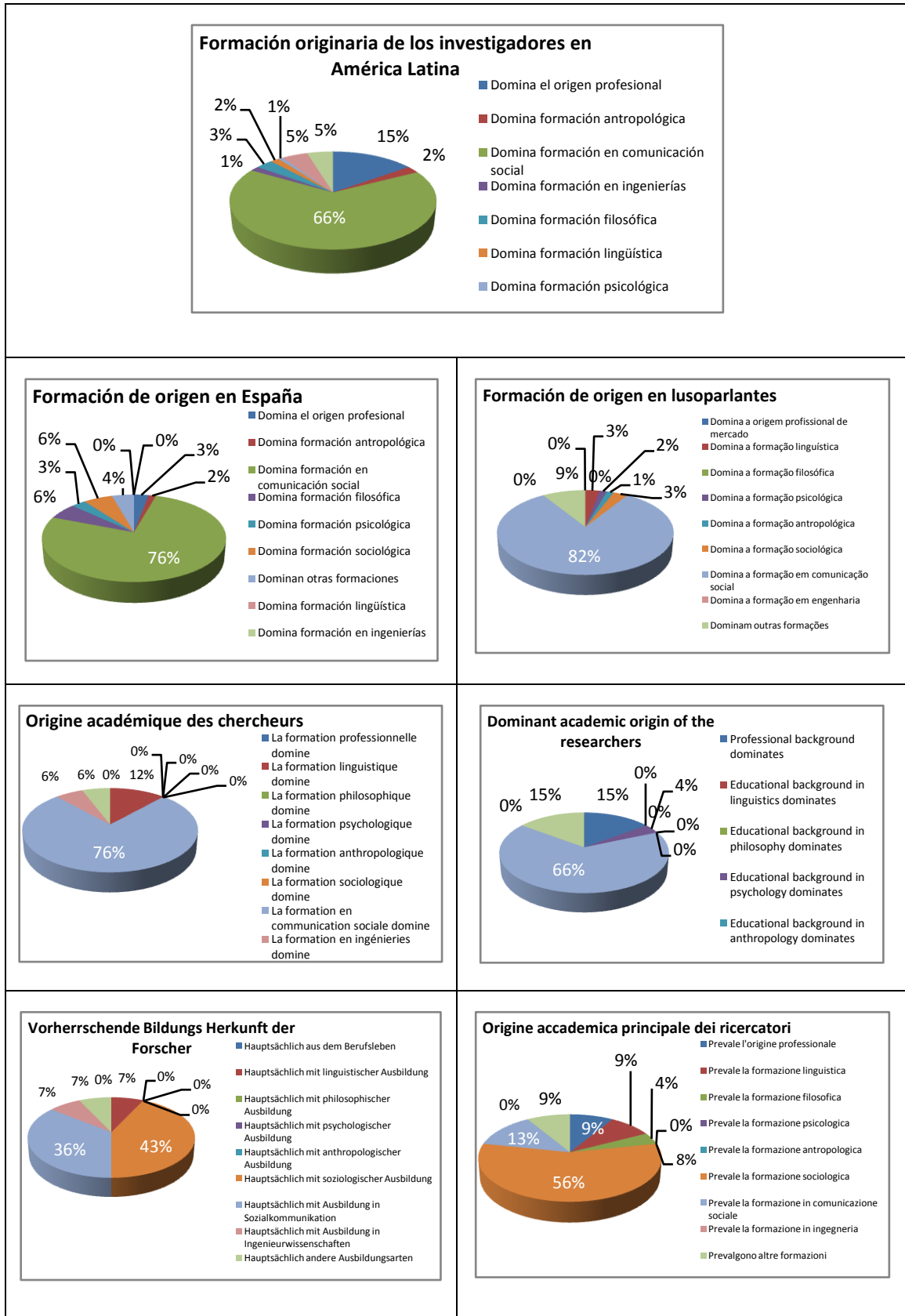


Table 6: Funding of research on communication as an object of study



If we examine the types of funding that basic and applied research receive across the three geographical areas, "Spain",

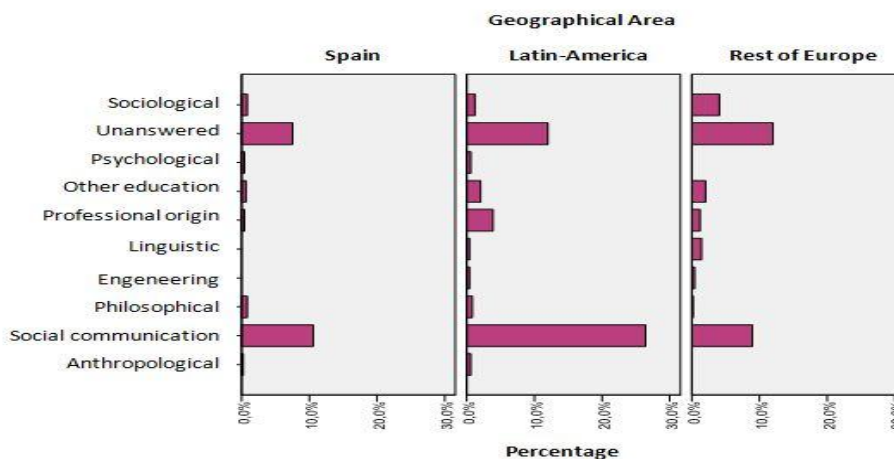
Table 7: Predominant education among respondents' research team's members



"Rest of Europe" and "Latin America", (which provided similar shares of participants), we obtain interesting results (see Graph 1): Considering the fact that the question of funding was mostly unanswered in the three geographical areas, the most significant finding is that basic research is mostly associated with public funding in the three geographical areas, and that in Latin-America there is a lack of funding for both basic and applied research

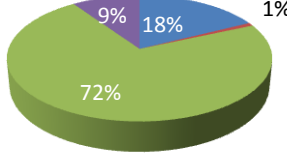
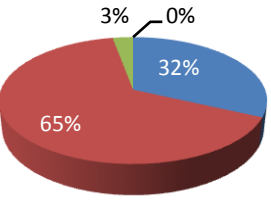
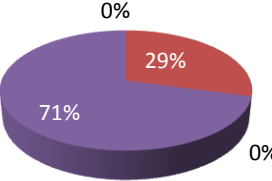
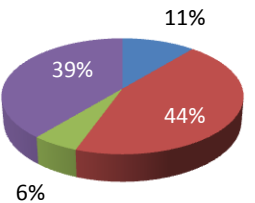
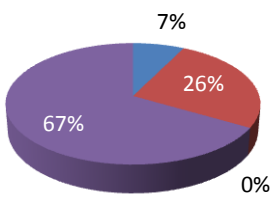
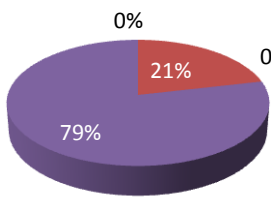
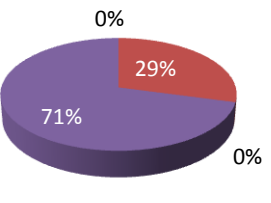
Another interesting aspect with regard to the infrastructure of the available capital is the dominant education where researchers come from. To obtain this information, respondents were asked to state the predominant education of the researchers in their research team. Table 7 presents these results across language groups (but differentiating Spanish-speaking researchers into Spaniards and Latin Americans).

Graph 2: Dominant education among researchers



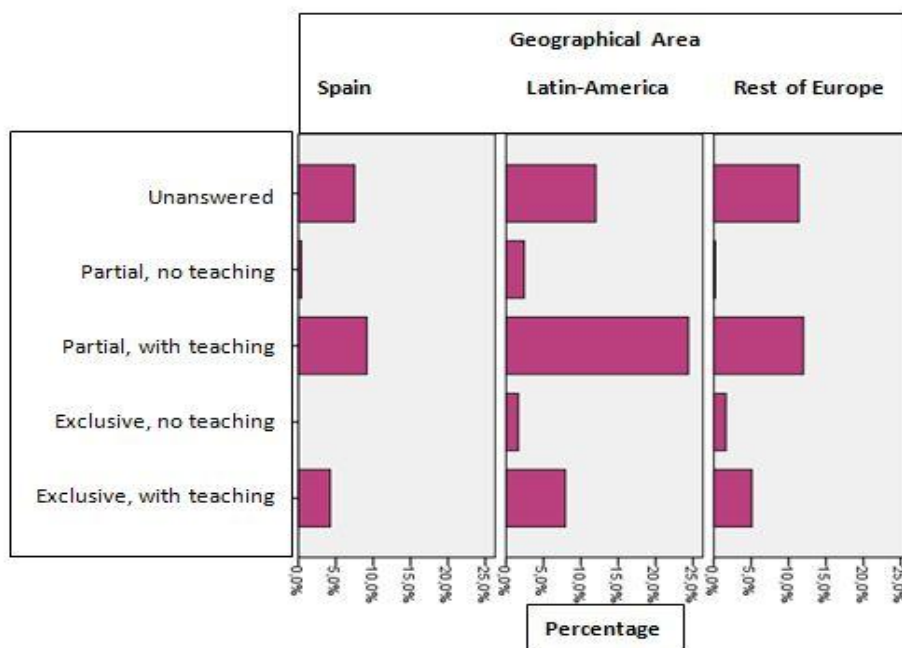
According to the survey, between six and eight of every ten researchers in Latin America, Spain, France and English-speaking and Portuguese-speaking countries claim that most members of their research teams have an education in Social Communication. Instead, almost half of the German-speaking and Italian-speaking researchers stated that the members of their research teams have education in sociology. The most significant finding is the tiny proportion of researchers with education in any other disciplinethat is not social communication and, of course, sociology.

Table 8: Types of dedication to communication research and teaching

<p>Dedicación a investigación en A. Latina</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dedicación exclusiva a la investigación, con docencia universitaria ■ Dedicación exclusiva a la investigación, sin docencia universitaria ■ Dedicación parcial a la investigación, con docencia universitaria. ■ Dedicación parcial a la investigación, sin docencia universitaria 	
<p>Dedicación a la investigación en España</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dedicación exclusiva a la investigación, con docencia universitaria ■ Dedicación parcial a la investigación, con docencia universitaria. ■ Dedicación parcial a la investigación, sin docencia universitaria ■ Dedicación exclusiva a la investigación, sin docencia universitaria 	<p>Dedicaçãõ à pesquisa</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Si dedica exclusivamente alla ricerca, senza docenza universitaria. ■ Si dedica esclusivamente alla ricerca, con docenza universitaria. ■ Si dedica parzialmente alla ricerca, senza docenza universitaria. ■ Si dedica parzialmente alla ricerca, con docenza universitaria
<p>Recherche/enseignement à temps complet ou partiel</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Recherche à temps complet, sans enseignement universitaire ■ Recherche à temps complet, avec enseignement universitaire ■ Recherche à temps partiel, sans enseignement universitaire ■ Recherche à temps partiel, avec enseignement universitaire 	<p>Time spent on research / teaching</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Full time research, without university teaching ■ Full time research, with university teaching ■ Part time research, without university teaching ■ Part time research, with university teaching
<p>Anteil der Forschung/Lehrtätigkeit</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ausschließliche Forschungstätigkeit, ohne universitäre Lehrtätigkeit ■ Ausschließliche Forschungstätigkeit, mit universitärer Lehrtätigkeit ■ Teilweise Forschungstätigkeit, ohne universitäre Lehrtätigkeit ■ Teilweise Forschungstätigkeit, mit universitärer Lehrtätigkeit 	<p>Tempo dedicato alla docenza/ricerca</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Si dedica esclusivamente alla ricerca, senza docenza universitaria. ■ Si dedica esclusivamente alla ricerca, con docenza universitaria. ■ Si dedica parzialmente alla ricerca, senza docenza universitaria. ■ Si dedica parzialmente alla ricerca, con docenza universitaria

This finding is confirmed if the results are examined across geographical areas (see Graph 2): while education in Social Communication is the most predominant in Latin America, and the country where other qualifications are least predominant is Spain.

Graph 3: Types of dedication to communication research and teaching across geographical areas



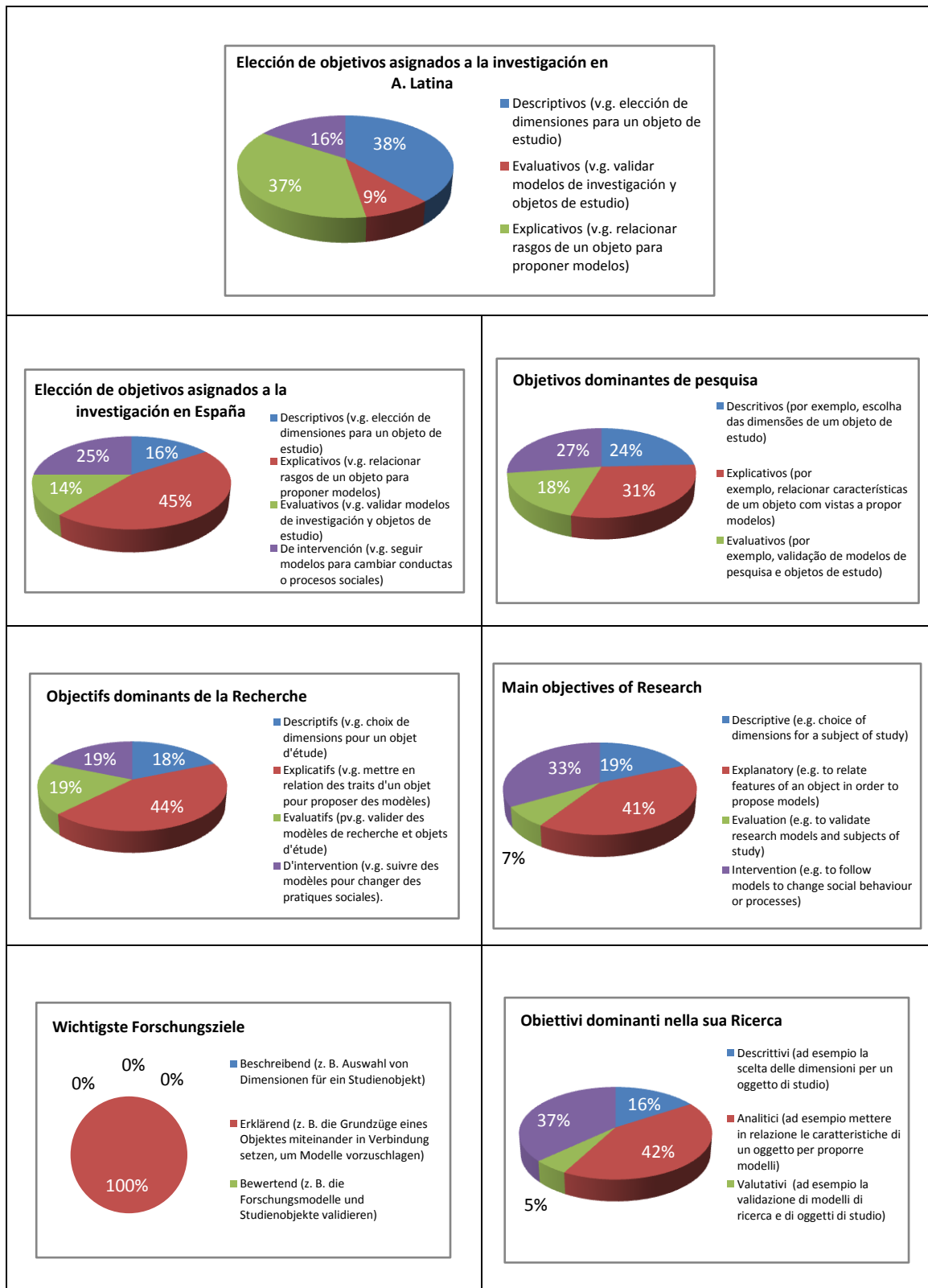
Finally, another feature related to the infrastructure of the research on communication as an object of study is the time and dedication given to research and teaching. Table 8 shows the results across response-language groups, but once again distinguishing between Spanish-speaking researchers from Spain and Latin America. The data shows that about seven of every ten Spanish, Latin America, English-speaking, German-speaking, Italian-speaking and Portuguese-speaking professors combine university teaching and part-time research, while of the French-speaking researchers only one-third combine university teaching and part-time research, and almost half does university teaching but give more priority and dedication to research. Another important finding is the overall virtual inexistence of full-time researchers that do not do university teaching. This finding

confirms that in European and Latin American universities research on communication as object of study is still a secondary activity in relation to teaching, and this confirmed when analyzing the answers across geographic areas (see Graph 3).

To establish the dominant types of objectives assigned to the research on communication as an object of study, respondents were asked to state whether their preferred objectives were *Descriptive* (e.g. to select of dimensions to define a communication practice as an object of study), *Explanatory* (e.g. to link features of an object of study in the field of communication to propose models), *Evaluative* (e.g. to validate research models and communicational objects of study), or of *Intervention* (e.g. to follow models to change social communication behaviors or processes). As table 9 shows, the most relevant findings in this area are:

- ✓ In Latin America, nearly four of every ten researchers prefer *explanatory* objectives and other four prefer *descriptive objectives*.
- ✓ Almost half of the researchers in Spain prefer *explanatory* research objectives (e.g. to link features of an object of study to propose models) and a quarter prefers *intervention* objectives (e.g. to use action models to change social processes of communication).
- ✓ Almost half of the French-speaking and English-speaking researchers prefer *explanatory* objectives.
- ✓ All German-speaking researchers preferred *explanatory* research objectives (e.g. to explain an object through a representative model).
- ✓ Italian-speaking and Portuguese-speaking researchers have a preference for both *explanatory* and *intervention* objectives. However, while among Italian-speaking researchers the shares are almost equal (four and four out of ten); among the Portuguese-speaking researchers the shares are a bit more different: three out of ten researchers prefer *explanatory* objectives and two out of ten prefer *intervention* objectives.

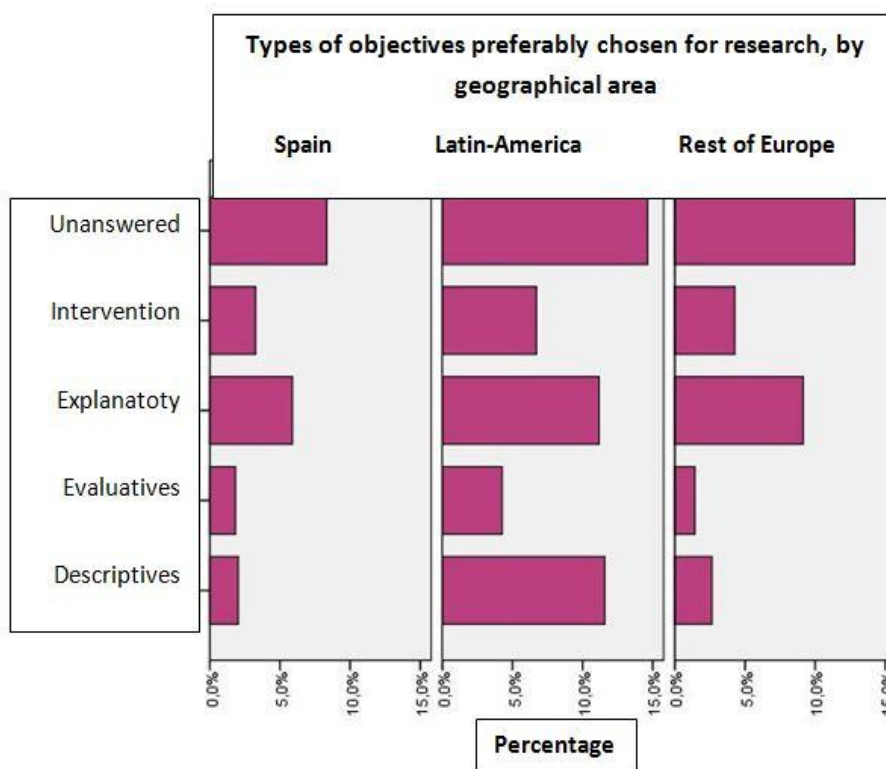
Table 9: Dominant types of objectives in communication research



As it can notice from Graph 4, it is difficult to establish the preferred research objectives across the three geographical areas:

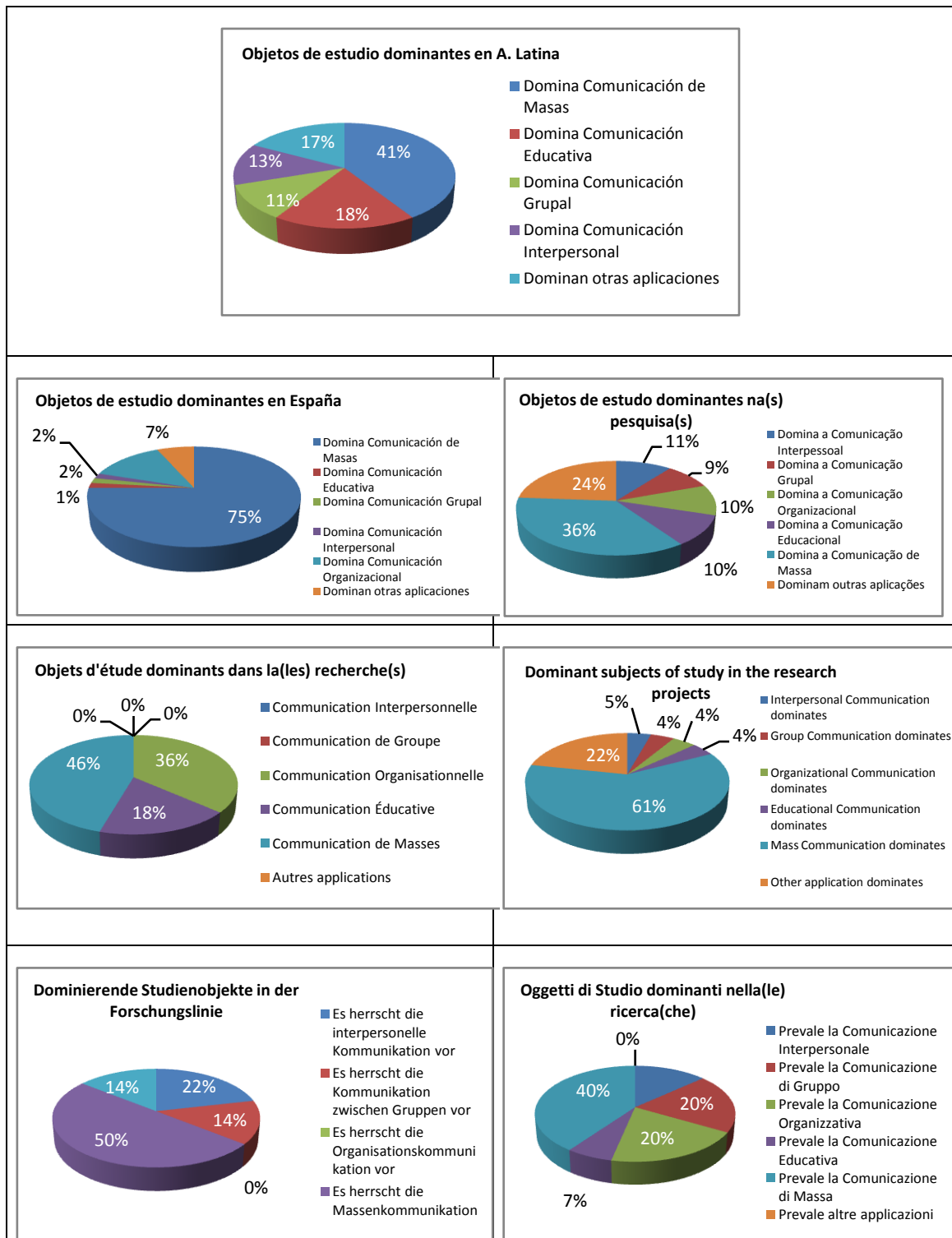
Spain, Rest of Europe and Latin America. What really dominates is not answer this question, but if it is answered, the dominant goal in the geographic area in Latin-America is making a description of the object of study, while in Spain and the rest of Europe, dominates an *explanatory* objective assigned to investigate Communication. In other words, it seeks to relate features of this object of study, to propose models.

Graph 4: Dominant types of objectives in communication research across geographical areas



These data can lead us to think that within Latin American and European universities aimed at teaching and researching on communication as an object of study, the research objectives are still mostly limited to the creation of explanatory models, and that the assessment of the proposed models and their use in processes of social intervention are still not dominant objectives. Another outstanding finding is that the evaluative objectives (e.g. to validate research models and objects of study) are always the least pursued objectives in all cases.

Table 10: Dominant objects of study in communication research

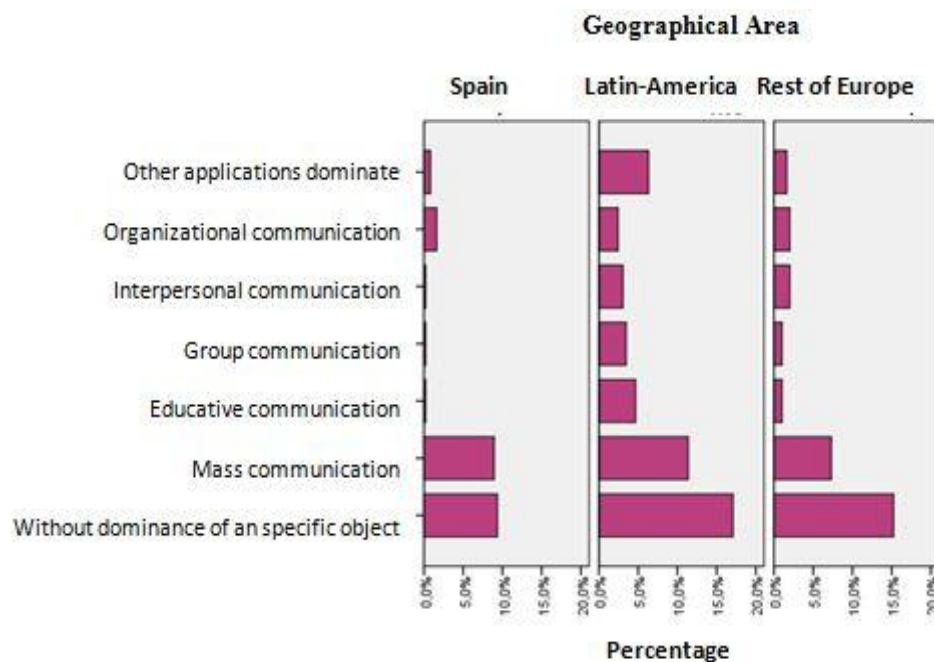


Objects of study in communication research at universities

And what are the social practices of communication selected mainly as object of study? Table 10 shows the more significant

data about this. *Mass Communication* is the object of study most-preferred among communication researchers, especially among the Spaniards, of who eight out of ten marked it as first choice; the English-speaking researchers, of who six out of ten marked it as first choice; and the German-speaking researchers, of who half marked it as first choice. *Mass communication* was also the object of study most selected as first choice by Italian-speaking, Portuguese-speaking, French-speaking and Latin American researchers, but only by 30 to 40% of them. *Educational communication* and *Organizational communication* are the second most preferred objects of study among Latin Americans and French-Speaking researchers.

Graph 5: Dominant objects of study in research, by geographical area



If we examine the responses about the dominant objects of study in communication research (most respondents did not answer this question) across the three geographical areas (Spain, Latin America and rest of Europe), we can notice that *Mass Communication* is the dominant object of study in all areas, although with more preference in Latin America. However, in Latin America *other objects* like *Educational*, *Group*, *Interpersonal* and *Organizational Communication* were also selected in greater proportion than in the other two geographical

areas. In comparison, the Spanish researchers almost exclusively focused on *Mass Communication* (See Graph 5).

Research Methodology in Communication at Universities

Whatever the dominant object of study, it is always necessary to use a technique to produce and analyze the relevant data about the communicative practices under study. In this sense, there are situations that provide the opportunity to better study the communication practices, either through observation techniques, or textual and discourse analyses. Another option is to reproduce situations that allow approaching the participants of such communication practices and better understanding their perceptions and significant reactions. If the aim is to know people's views asking them, more or less open individual or group conversation techniques can be used, or standardized conversations with thousands of people through on time-saving closed and pre-codified questions and answers as in surveys. And if the aim is to understand the development of people's more or less conscious responses to experimental stimuli, the researcher must design artificial conditions that are methodologically comparable to the natural conditions in which the communicative practices under study occur.

Now well, in our survey on Communication Research as an object of study, after asking what were the most frequent conditions for the preparation and recording of data in the investigations, more than half of the Spanish, French-speaking, English-speaking and Portuguese-speaking researchers answered to use documentary techniques and analyses of discourses extracted from those situations in which the communication practices occurred.

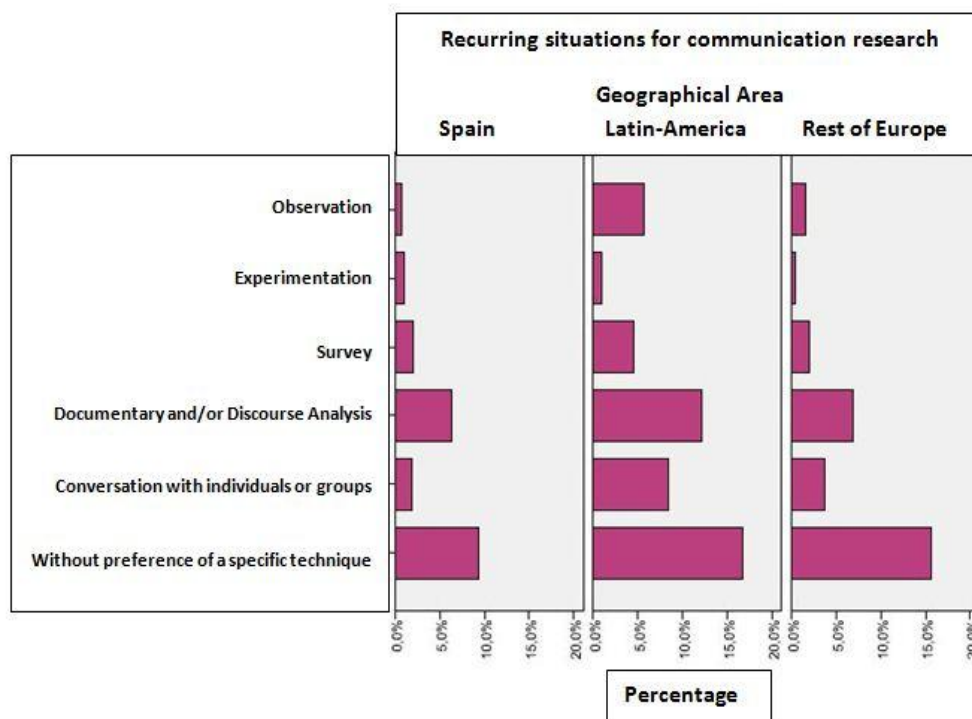
In Latin America, in contrast, nearly four of every ten researchers prefer conversation techniques for the production and registration of data and, secondly, three of every ten researchers preferred documentary techniques to undertake discourse analysis. Instead, among the German-speaking researchers, six out of ten choose survey techniques, which are also preferred by

Table 11: Choice of techniques for processing and recording of data in research of communication

<p>Elección de técnicas de investigación en A. Latina</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elaboración y registro de datos por técnicas de Observación Elaboración y registro de datos por técnicas de Conversación con individuos o grupos Elaboración y registro de datos por técnicas de Encuesta Elaboración y registro de datos por técnicas de experimentación Elaboración y registro de datos por técnicas documentales y/o análisis de discurso 	<p>Situações mais recorrentes para a elaboração e o registro de dados na(s) pesquisa(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elaboração e registro de dados por técnicas de Observação Elaboração e registro de dados por técnicas de Conversação com indivíduos ou grupos Elaboração e registro de dados por técnicas de Pesquisa de opinião Elaboração e registro de dados por técnicas Experimentais Elaboração e registro de dados por técnicas Documentais e/ou Análise do Discurso
<p>Elección de técnicas de investigación en España</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elaboración y registro de datos por técnicas de Observación Elaboración y registro de datos por técnicas de Conversación con individuos o grupos Elaboración y registro de datos por técnicas de Encuesta Elaboración y registro de datos por técnicas de experimentación Elaboración y registro de datos por técnicas documentales y/o análisis de discurso 	<p>Most recurring situations for the preparation and register of data in the research project(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction and register of data by observation techniques Construction and register of data by conversation techniques with individuals and groups Construction and register of data by survey techniques Construction and register of data by experiment techniques Construction and register of data by documentary and/or discourse analysis techniques
<p>Techniques pour l'élaborations des données</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Élaboration et registre de données moyennant techniques d'Observation Élaboration et registre de données moyennant techniques de Conversation Élaboration et registre de données moyennant techniques d'Enquête Élaboration et registre de données moyennant techniques d'expérimentation Élaboration et registre de données moyennant techniques d'analyse de discours 	<p>Situazioni piú ricorrenti per la elaborazione ed il registro dei dati nella ricerca(che)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elaborazione e registro di dati attraverso tecniche di osservazione Elaborazione e registro di dati attraverso tecniche di conversazione con individui o gruppi Elaborazione e registro di dati attraverso tecniche di inchiesta Elaborazione e registro di dati attraverso tecniche sperimentali Elaborazione e registro di dati attraverso tecniche documentali e/o analisi del discorso
<p>Häufigste Situationen bei der Erarbeitung und Erfassung von Forschungsdaten der Forschungslinie</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Erarbeitung und Erfassung durch Beobachtungstechniken Erarbeitung und Erfassung von Daten durch Konversationstechniken mit Individuen oder Gruppen Erarbeitung und Erfassung von Daten durch Befragungstechniken Erarbeitung und Erfassung von Daten durch Experimentellen Techniken 	

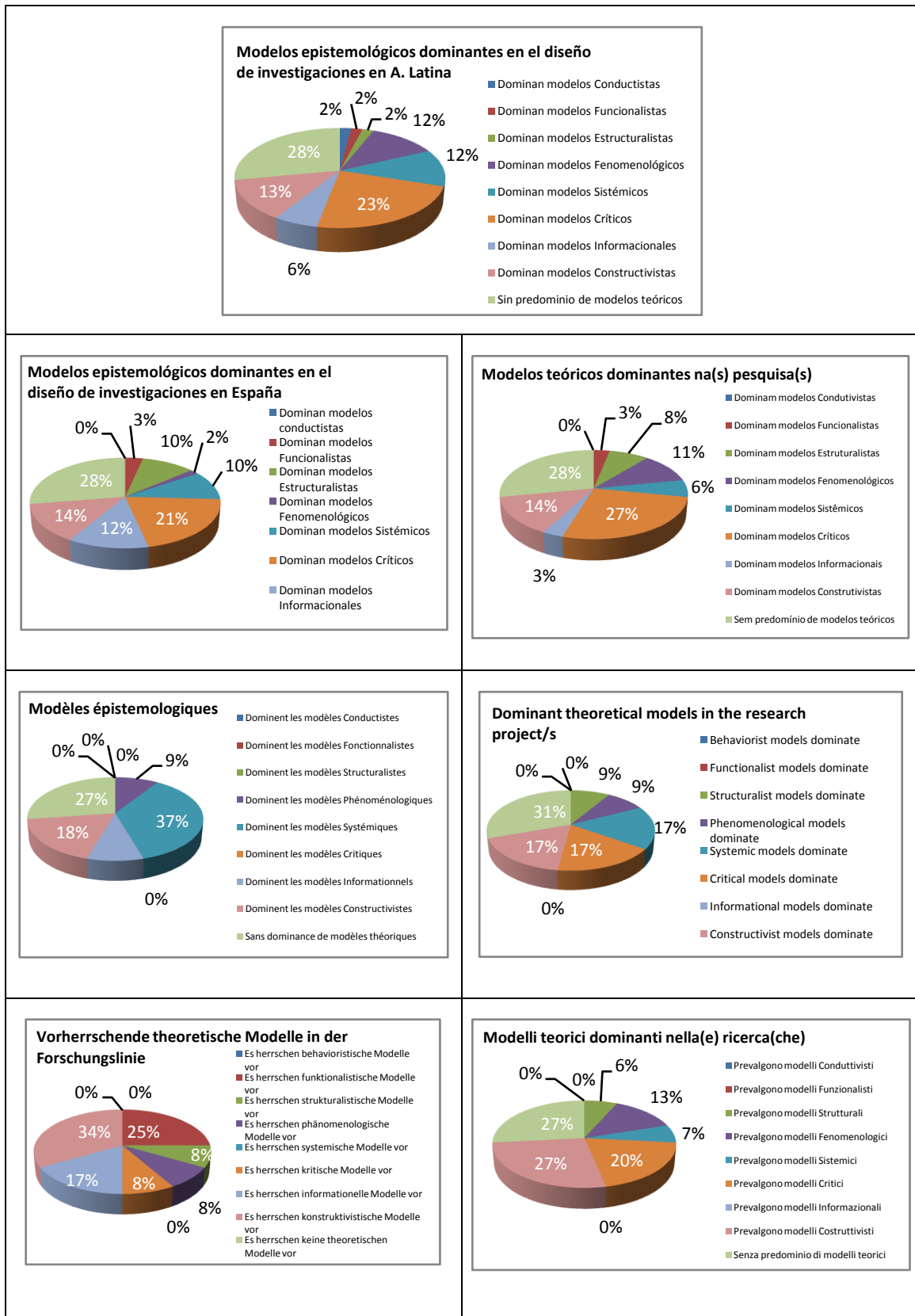
four of every ten Italian-speaking researchers, who also preferred documentary techniques and discourse analysis in equal proportion (see Table 11). Anyway, it is surprising the lack of preference for some techniques for data production and registration among some language-groups. For example, none of the French-speaking researchers selected survey techniques, and none of the German-speaking and Italian-speaking selected experimentation techniques.

Graph 6: Recurring situations of communication research according to geographical areas



Comparing now the distribution of responses on the choice of techniques for data preparation and registration across geographic areas (Latin America, Spain and Rest of Europe), it can be noticed (see Graph 6) that the choice of situations and techniques for data production and registration is, with slight differences, similar in the different geographical areas. Or not answered this question or, if answered, the most recurrent situation is to analyze text and speech communication practices extracted from objects of study, coming second to open conversations, and third to surveys, but in

Table 12: Dominant epistemological models in communication research



Latin-America who prefer the observations; in last place, finally appeal to the use of experiments. (See Graph 6)

Applied epistemological models in the design of communication research

Finally, the survey on the research on communication as an object of study also asked about the epistemological models of reference in the design of projects, which would facilitate the comparison with the dominant epistemological models in communication teaching.

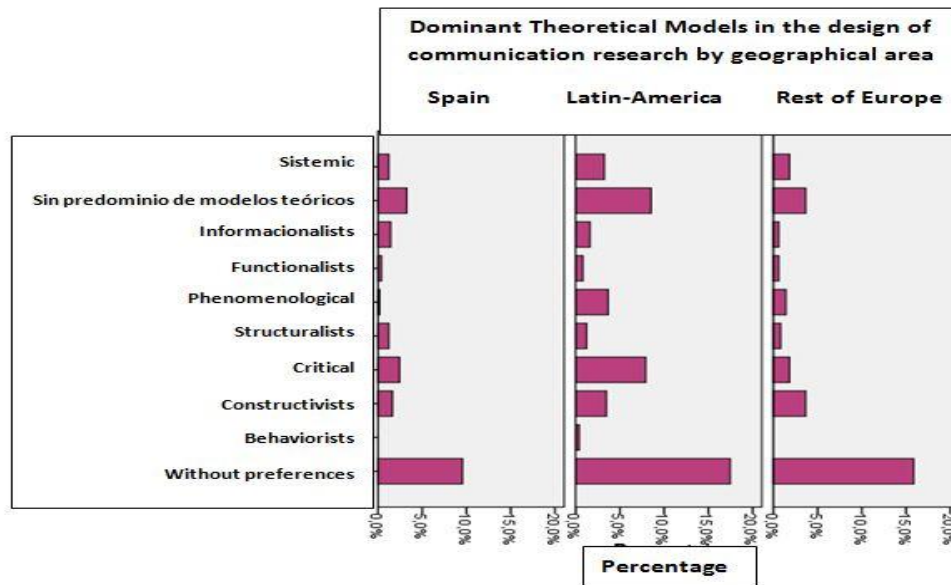
As Table 12 shows, Spanish, Latin American and Portuguese-speaking researchers generally stated that there are not dominant epistemological models in their work, and if one is appointed, two out of ten quote out that the *critical models* were privileged in their research designs, which is similar to the choice of dominant models in teaching (see table 4), although the absence of dominant theoretical models is absolutely majoritarian in teaching. Almost four out of ten French-speaking researchers prefer systemic models; while the second-largest majority does not have a dominant theoretical model in their research. However, in teaching the preferences among French-speaking researchers were inverted: they privileged the lack of dominant theoretical models. It is equally surprising that none of the French-speaking researchers pointed out as dominant the behaviorists, structuralist or functionalists models.

English-speaking researchers cite mostly (although only 3 out of ten) the lack of theoretical models in their work and never selected as dominant the behaviorist and functionalists models, there are present in teaching, where lack the informational models.

Meanwhile, of the German-speaking researchers one-third prefers constructivist models and 25% prefers functionalist models, while in teaching they do not prefer any epistemological models, and never mentioned any preference for behavioral, functionalist, structuralist or informational models. Finally, of the Italian-speaking researchers, a quarter prefers constructivist models, but another quarter does not have a dominant

epistemological model; however, in teaching the majority do not have a privileged epistemological model (four of every ten professors) but prefers to explain critical models (two of every ten teachers).

Graph 7: Dominant epistemological models in the design of communication research, across geographical areas



Examining the dominant epistemological research models across geographical areas (see Graph 7), it can be noticed that the majority of researchers did not answered this question. Of those who answered it, the majority does not have a dominant theoretical model, except in Latin America where a similar majority privileges critical models. Constructivist model is the second most dominant model in three geographic areas. The functionalist and behavioral models were the least dominant models in the design of research. And if we compare these results on theoretical models and research designs across geographical areas, with the results on the dominant applied epistemological models in teaching across geographical areas (see table 5), we can notice a certain complementarity, which suggests that in the teaching and research on communication there is no preference towards any theoretical models. Although in teaching there were certain disparities across geographical areas, these disparities almost disappear in the research designs

Conclusions

The results presented and examined in this article only reflect trends that have been established based on the opinions of those who voluntarily answered our survey. In order to summarize and illustrate, by way of conclusion, the previously examined data on teaching and research on communication as an object of study in Europe and Latin-America, we can see what are the profiles that throws the majority view, taking into account only the categories with the highest frequency range for each of the teaching and research variables analyzed here.

Table 13: Major features of the teaching of communication as an object of study

By language	Objects of study	Dominant disciplinary perspective	Dominant theoretical models
Spanish-L. America	Mass communication	Interdisciplinary	None in particular
Spanish-Spain	Mass communication	Interdisciplinary	None in particular
Portuguese	Mass communication	Interdisciplinary	None in particular
French	Mass communication	Sociological/interdisciplinary	None in particular
English	Mass communication	Interdisciplinary	None in particular
German	Mass communication	Interdisciplinary	None in particular
Italian	Mass communication	Interdisciplinary	None in particular

As Table 13 shows, in the teaching of communication, “Mass Communication” is the social practice that dominates in all cases as an object of study, and is mainly addressed from an interdisciplinary perspective, with the sole exception of the French-speaking respondents, who apart from privileging this perspective also privilege the sociologic perspective. Moreover, in all cases the teaching of communication as an object of study is

conducted without the predominance of any epistemological model.

As Table 14 shows, regarding research on communication as an object of study, we can consider, firstly, the initial conditions that contribute to its sustainment. In this regard we considered the economic resources, the cognitive resources and researchers' commitment and time dedicated to research. Secondly, we focused on the objectives pursued when examining an object of study. And thirdly, we focused on establishing the dominant methodologies and techniques employed to produce and register data, and the epistemological models used to design the processes of production, registration and treatment of research data.

Table 14: Main features of research on communication as an object of study

Language Groups	Infrastructure: Capital			Tasks		Methodology	
	Financial	Cognitive	Dedication	Objectives	Objects of study	Techniques	Epistemological models
Spanish-L. America	Basic R.- Public F.	Social Communication	Partial + Teaching	Descriptive	Mass Communication	Conversation	No dominant model
Spanish-Spain	Basic R.- Public F.	Social Communication	Partial + Teaching	Explanatory	Mass Communication	Discourse analysis	No dominant model
Portuguese	Basic & Applied R. - Public F.	Social Communication	Partial + Teaching	Explanatory	Mass Communication	Discourse analysis	No dominant model
French	Basic R. – No Funding	Social Communication	Total + Teaching	Explanatory	Mass Communication	Discourse analysis	Systemic models
English	Applied R.– Mixed F.	Social Communication	Partial + Teaching	Explanatory	Mass Communication	Discourse analysis	No dominant model
German	Basic R. – Public F.	Sociology	Partial + Teaching	Explanatory	Mass Communication	Surveys	Constructivist models
Italian	Basic R.– Public F.	Sociology	Partial + Teaching	Explanatory	Mass Communication	Surveys/ Discourse A.	No dominant model / Constructivist

As Table 14 highlights, there has been public funding for basic research in all cases, except among Portuguese-speaking researchers for whom public funding is split between applied and basic research, and among English-speaking researchers, who mostly receive mixed funding and mostly undertake applied research. Regarding the dominant qualifications or cognitive resources among researchers, “Social Communication” stands out in most cases, except among German-speaking and Italian-speaking researchers, among which sociology is dominant. And regarding the time dedicated to research (combining it with teaching or not), which is considered also as a condition of the

infrastructure of research, the most common dedication is part-time dedication to research combined with teaching, except for French-speaking researchers among whom the exclusive dedication to research combined with teaching is predominant.

In relation to an object of study the objectives can be *to describe it* (e.g. choosing dimensions for it), *to explain it* (e.g. linking its features to propose models that are verifiable with the object's behavior), *evaluate* or validate explanatory models) in a third level or to use the investigation to conduct *intervention processes* pursuing, in a higher level of development, to change social behaviors or processes). Well, except among Latin-American researchers whose objective is limited mostly to describe their objects of study, for the rest of researchers that answered the survey in several languages, appears as the majority objective to explain its objects of study that, without exception, belong to the universe of Mass Communication.

Finally, we have fixed attention on the received responses to the question about recurring situations oriented to the design and recording of investigation(s) data through techniques for observation, conversations (individual and group), to the surveys, experiments, to the analysis of speeches and / or texts from relevant communication processes, and the responses to the question of epistemological models applied to methodological designs

Regarding the dominant research techniques, *discourse analysis* was revealed as the most used technique among Spanish, Portuguese-speaking, French-speaking and English-speaking researchers, while Latin America researchers privileged conversation techniques, and the German-speaking and Italian-speaking privileged surveys. However the Italian-speaking researchers equally privileged surveys and discourse analysis. And the option of not privileging any epistemological model in particular was selected by the majority of Spanish-speaking, Portuguese-speaking and English-speaking researchers, while the French-speaking researchers privileged *systemic models* and the German-speaking and Italian-speaking privileged *constructivist models*, although the Italian-speaking researchers share similar

proportion of responses to the alternative of excluding any predominance of epistemological models.

The pertinent question after this exposition that here becomes to an end, is University Teaching and Research on Communication as an object of study may have arrived in Europe and Latin America to deserve aspiring institutionalization as a field of knowledge?

The information provided by professors and researchers from both sides of the Atlantic, through the surveys that I have personally directed as head of the MDCS research group of the Complutense University of Madrid, allow to affirm that this process of institutionalization has been preceded by social pressure to create teachers before than researchers, that consequently has been claimed the legitimacy of the field of knowledge which is sustained more by the creation of schools than by the productivity of institutions and projects of investigation, and therefore is up to teachers to conduct research methodologies and scientific policies able to articulate in the same field of knowledge, still in development, richness and diversity of theoretical models focused to review the knowledge on Communication.

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