https://doi.org/10.21670/ref.2101064

Articles

Fear of others. Digital media representations of the us-Mexico border and COVID-19

Miedo a los otros. Representaciones de la frontera México-Estados Unidos y COVID-19 en medios digitales

Hugo Méndez Fierros[a]* https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0533-7484
Erika Paola Reyes Piñuelas[a] https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7156-1548

[a] Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, Facultad de Ciencias Humanas, Mexicali, Mexico, e-mail: hugomendez@uabc.edu.mx, erikareyes@uabc.edu.mx

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic generated transformations in different areas of human life and socio-digital communication is central to its understanding. Users who post comments in the media and networks contribute elements to the social construction of reality. The objective was to interpret, through content analysis, representations of 1 303 users of four cross-border media from Baja California, Mexico, and California, USA, on Facebook, YouTube and web pages, about COVID-19 and the restrictions to cross the border. The closure of the border and COVID-19 constitute an emerging social phenomenon and previous research studies are scarce, which represented a limitation. In the end, the misinformation-fueled representations were found to project fear onto others; the comments reflect the majority use of unverified information, hatred and attribution of blame for contagion to others. The border was represented as an interstice of intersections and economic, cultural, political, environmental and health interdependence.

Keywords: representations, border, COVID-19, fear, digital media.

Received on August 6, 2020.
Accepted on January 14, 2021.
Published on January 25, 2021.

*Corresponding author: Hugo Méndez Fierros. E-mail: hugomendez@uabc.edu.mx

ORIGINAL ARTICLE LANGUAGE: SPANISH

Resumen

La pandemia por COVID-19 generó transformaciones en distintos ámbitos de la vida humana, y la comunicación sociodigital es central para su comprensión. Los usuarios que publican comentarios en medios y redes aportan elementos para la construcción social de la realidad. El objetivo fue interpretar, mediante análisis de contenido, representaciones de 1 303 usuarios de cuatro medios transfronterizos de Baja California, México, y California, EUA, en Facebook, YouTube y páginas web, sobre el COVID-19 y las restricciones para cruzar la frontera. El cierre de la frontera y el COVID-19 constituyen un fenómeno social emergente y son escasas

CITATION: Méndez Fierros, H. & Reyes Piñuelas, E. P. (2021). Miedo a los otros. Representaciones de la frontera México-Estados Unidos y COVID-19 en medios digitales [Fear of others. Digital media representations of the US-Mexico border and COVID-19]. *Estudios Fronterizos*, *22*, e064. https://doi.org/10.21670/ref.2101064

las investigaciones previas, lo cual representó una limitación. Al final se encontró que las representaciones alimentadas por desinformación proyectaron miedo a los otros; los comentarios reflejan uso mayoritario de información no verificada, odio y atribución de culpa por contagio a los otros. La frontera fue representada como intersticio de entrecruzamientos e interdependencia económica, cultural, política, ambiental y sanitaria.

Palabras clave: representaciones, frontera, COVID-19, miedo, medios de comunicación digitales.

Introduction

A public health crisis that disrupted social, economic and political life on the United States-Mexico (U.S.-Mexico) border began in February 2020 and plunged both countries into an ongoing state of uncertainty. The public health crisis was, of course, the global spread of the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19, an infectious disease that was unknown until the December 2019 outbreak in Wuhan, China.

Coronavirus is not just any infectious disease. It is a viral pandemic. The word pandemic comes from ancient Greek and means "all the people". Indeed, all human beings are being affected. However, it is not clearly understood whether it makes sense to prevent people from traveling across international borders (Markus, 2020, p. 130).

On January 4, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) posted information on Twitter about a cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan. This was the first public communication at the international level about this public health event. A few days later, the WHO published recommendations on its website on how to detect COVID-19 cases and manage potential risks. The WHO ultimately declared a global COVID-19 pandemic on March 11, 2020.

Badiou (2020) contends that the pandemic problem was poorly defined and addressed in the beginning because the complexity of the overlapping and interwoven factors of natural conditioning and social determination were not considered. Byung-Chul Han wrote that the collective panic that ensued was a social immunity reaction that rose to a high level when faced with a new enemy: COVID-19. "The immunity reaction is so violent because we have lived a long time in a society without enemies, in a society of positivity, and now the virus is viewed as a permanent threat" (Han, 2020, p. 108).

The international pandemic required a global response, with contributions from nation-states around the world. However, international media coverage revealed that several heads of state initially failed to comply with the WHO's requests in this regard, including former U.S. President Donald Trump and Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO).

The design of this research study incorporated the central role of media communications in the pandemic, the initial responses of the Mexican and U.S. governments to the health crisis, and the cross-border context of these two countries. These three elements converged to influence events in other parts of the world during this ongoing crisis. The main objective of this study was to identify and interpret how COVID-19 and the U.S.-Mexico border were represented in user comments to the reports of four digital media outlets on the closure of the border from March 19 to

May 31, 2020. The theory of social production of communication was the principal approach applied in the analysis (Martín Serrano, 2017, 2019; Martín & Velarde, 2015) and was complemented by some theoretical-conceptual resources related to digital journalism, the active role of users and the emotional side of journalism.

The first confirmed case of COVID-19 in the U.S. was identified at the end of January 2020, in an American who had traveled to Wuhan Province and returned to Seattle, Washington. That prompted the U.S. centers for disease control and prevention (Center for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2020) to warn the public to take extraordinary precautions when traveling abroad. Meanwhile, a group of researchers from Johns Hopkins University began to track the virus and produce a real-time global map of COVID-19 cases (Santhanam, 2020).

Former President Donald Trump initially assumed a position of denial and dismissiveness regarding the new virus. On January 26, just days after the first U.S. case was confirmed, he told the Davos Forum that his country had the public health crisis under control. As the number of cases grew, he repeatedly made statements to the media that his administration later had to correct (Gil, 2020). The U.S. quickly became the new global epicenter of the coronavirus. Between March and May, Trump's media statements about the virus swung wildly; he veered from initially characterizing it as a highly contagious virus that he had successfully controlled to stating that no country had been able to completely control COVID-19. Trump then proceeded to withhold funding to the WHO, called COVID-19 the "Chinese" virus and recommended the use of unproven medicines. All of this was enveloped in a maelstrom of disinformation, hoaxes and public squabbles (Gil, 2020; Jimenez, 2020; Saenz, 2020).

The former U.S. president's rhetoric soon targeted new scapegoats and culprits. For a time, he focused on Mexico and migration from Central America, two of the biggest foes of the U.S. during the pandemic (Fry, 2020). However, the data reveal the stark truth about the Trump administration's response to the public health crisis. As of July 21, 2020, the number of confirmed infections was 3 819 139, with 140 630 coronavirus-related deaths (The White House, 2020).

Meanwhile, Mexican President López declared at the end of February 2020 that his country was prepared to face this pandemic. He compared COVID-19 to influenza and argued that the political actors who accused him of passivity were exaggerating the facts because they were political opponents (AMLO, 2020a). On February 28, Mexico's first two cases of COVID-19 were publicly confirmed; they involved two people who had recently returned to Mexico from the U.S. (AMLO, 2020b). Mexico finally imposed physical distancing measures ("Jornada Nacional de Sana Distancia") on March 23 that remained effective until April 30. This Phase 1 measure was subsequently extended to May 30 (Secretaría de Salud del Gobierno de México, 2020). The most significant emergency measures taken to date include the stoppage of all non-essential production activities, the cancellation of events with large crowds, and the suspension of in-person classes at all educational levels. As of July 21, the Mexican Ministry of Health had recorded 356 255 confirmed cases and 40 400 deaths.

The California Border Region: Two Juxtaposed but Different Worlds

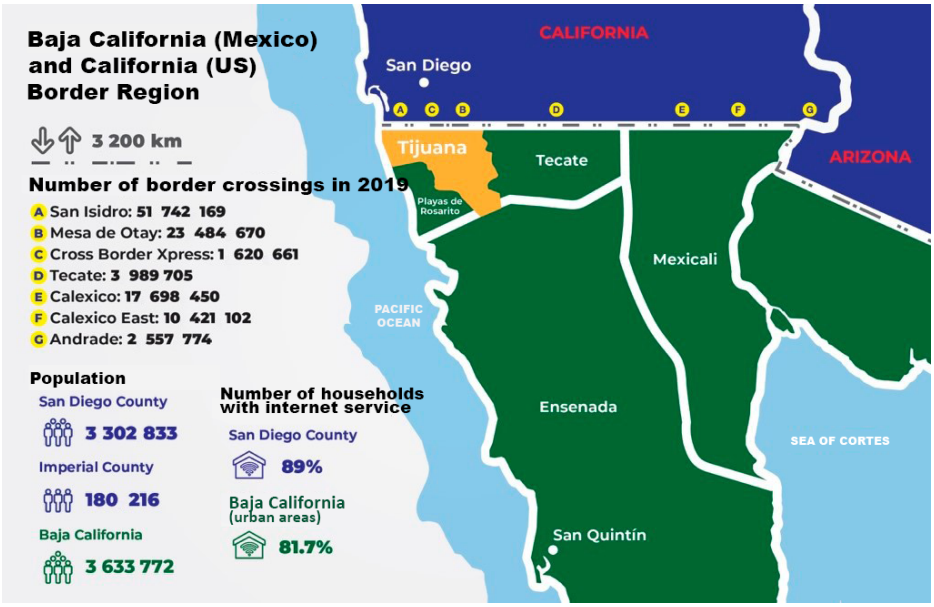
Mexico and the U.S. share a border that is 3 200 kilometers long. There are six Mexican border states: Baja California, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León, Sonora and Tamaulipas. The U.S. has four states on the border: Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas. Baja California and California are the two states in the northwestern section of this vast border region. Both have the Pacific Ocean to the west, and the states of Arizona and Sonora are to the east. The Sea of Cortes separates the Baja California peninsula from Mexico's mainland.

Baja California has a population of 3.63 million (Consejo de Planeación y Desarrollo, 2018), mainly concentrated in the state's urban areas. The state capital is Mexicali, a border city that has experienced considerable growth from the maquiladora industry, exports and increased commercial development. However, the largest urban area in the state is Tijuana, which had 1.72 million inhabitants in 2015 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía [Inegi], 2017).

The U.S. state of California is divided into 58 counties, and its capital is Sacramento. The two counties that border Baja California are San Diego County, with a population of 3.33 million, and Imperial Valley County, with 180 216 inhabitants (United States Census Bureau [USCB], 2020). An important data point for this study is the percentage of households with internet connectivity on both sides of this border. In Baja California, 81.7% of urban households have internet service (Inegi, 2017), and in San Diego County, 89% of households have internet service (USCB, 2020).

Upper and Lower (Baja) California comprise a highly dynamic area. In 2019, 111.5 million border crossings were recorded at seven official crossing points. The Tijuana-San Diego border area accounted for more than 70% of these crossings, which is why it is recognized as having one of the world's highest rates of commercial traffic and sociocultural exchange (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Population, border crossings and internet connectivity in the California border region



Source: Created by the author using USCB (2020) data

The U.S.-Mexico border has historically attracted much attention, which is why it is portrayed in film, literature and other artistic and cultural disciplines as a place of extremes. More recently, border regions, and Baja California-California in particular, have gained worldwide notoriety because of migration, drug trafficking, human trafficking and xenophobic movements. Lois (2020) also noted this history when reflecting on the current circumstances of the pandemic, remarking that the links between the foreigner, mobility, migration and the virus were articulated long ago.

There is a distinct border culture that has emerged in a specific geographical and social context. It has its own identity and differs from other cultures involved in its north-south economic and social interactions. The border is a complex space; it is more complex than can be conveyed by simplistic observations that it is a place where "Mexican" outweighs "American" and vice versa or where a gradual process of social assimilation gravitates towards a "Mexican" or "American" identity. It is a sociogeographic region with various subregions, economic exchanges and social-community networks on both sides of the border. These exchanges and networks exist and replicate according to this complex social system, which includes cultural and normative traits from both countries and forms a third social order that is distinct from its domestic counterparts in either country (Ojeda, 2009).

The interdependence of the people who live in the Tijuana-San Diego and Mexicali-Imperial Valley border regions is the product of a history marked by enormous inequalities and asymmetrical relationships but also characterized by an ability to coexist. The economies of these border cities are more intricately linked to each other than to other parts of their respective countries (Vega, 2016). Hundreds of people cross the border daily to work, study, shop, engage in recreational and tourist activities and visit family members. Family networks have been fundamental to population growth on both sides of the border (Ojeda, 2009).

Therefore, the pandemic had a heavy impact on this interdependent region. After the initial alarm caused by misinformation and uncertainty, certain special spaces and times were designated to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. The quarantines, restrictions on mobility, and border closures all required people to adjust their daily lives (Lois, 2020). On April 10, it was reported that Baja California had the third most COVID-19 cases in Mexico and the second most deaths from the virus, despite its relatively low population density (Secretaría de Salud del Gobierno de Baja California, 2020). There was only one explanation for this outcome – its border with the U.S., specifically California. The Mexican government viewed this as the main reason for the high number of infections in Baja California.

Public health officials in the U.S. also blamed California's high contagion rate on the heavy border traffic between the two countries. They pointed to Mexicans and Americans who crossed the border in both directions to work, but who primarily used health care services in the U.S. (Shoichet, 2020).

Thus, the unprecedented closure of the U.S.-Mexico border for nonessential activities was announced on March 20. The combination of "a border closure, mobility controls and the designation of permitted and healthy activities loom large in the border imaginary as a territorial control device" (Lois, 2020, p. 297).

The Social Production of Communication and Social Representations During a Pandemic

In contemporary times, social structure and individual thought are elements that merge to form public communication processes in both traditional (television, radio and print media) and digital media. They are also present in the symbolic production processes of socio-digital networks. In his theory of the social production of communication, Manuel Martín Serrano says:

> The reference data from the communication materials are the result of an institutionalized production of information that occurs prior to the cognitive production of information that forms subjective representations. It also occurs before another Actor (Sender), who is distinct from the cognizing Subject, acquires any knowledge about something that occurs in the environment and will, within the framework of a communications organization, create and disseminate a communicative product that will provide certain information about the object of reference. Only later will the cognizing Actor (Receiver) consider all or part of those data to create or modify a personal representation of reality in which there may be room for an existing awareness of the story about which the communicative process was initiated (Martín Serrano, 2017, p. 136).

The significance of the actors involved in the institutionalized production of media representations in society lies in their role as mediators in the process of the social construction of reality. These actors create representations of the world based on beliefs, principles and values. In collective imaginaries, elements of change in social, material or conceptual environments work together to absorb anything new. In every era and in every society, the activity of cognitively incorporating what becomes a reality or understanding what disappears from reality is an institutional task aimed at social control (Velarde & Bernete, 2016).

> Like people's social practices, representations of the world are the result of subjective and objective and individual and collective conflicts that arise between needs and values, between desires and constraints. Institutional communication with other equally influential sources of information can activate these conflicts. It can also endeavor to channel the outcome towards a state of consciousness, or an action induced by the Communicator. But the Communicator cannot be certain about the effect of its communicative intervention on the consciousness or the behaviors of the Recipients... [ultimately] the subject's response to the events does not depend so much on how the information is received as on the representations the subject creates with all the cognitively processed information used to consider the personal impacts of the information received (Martín Serrano, 2017, pp. 139-140).

Émile Durkheim stated that representations "are real phenomena endowed with specific properties and which are shared differently depending on whether or not the two parties have common properties" (Durkheim, 2006, p. 15). Serge Moscovici applied a social psychology approach to argue that all representation was composed of socialized figures and expressions, which symbolize acts and situations that

become commonplace. Furthermore, he argued that all forms of representation also communicate and produce behaviors, which determine the nature of the stimuli around us and the meaning we should give to our responses to the stimuli (Moscovici, 1979). Martín and Velarde (2015) explained that communication is where social representations are created and maintained. They are transmitted and culturally appropriated until they become socially shared concepts that are generally accepted as patterns that guide life in the real world. They are visions of being and non-being, which can appropriately be called collective representations.

As previously noted, the COVID-19 health crisis produced profound changes in modes of social interaction and organization that represent a new era for the entire world. These changes have brought about, and will continue to produce, certain adjustments needed to maintain social order and control. Specifically, "communicative mediations are a resource that service these transformations when they are used so people can adapt to living in change" (Martín Serrano, 2019, p. 15). Consequently, new narratives have now been internalized in many countries and in different languages, such as the commonly heard talk of healthy social distances and a new normal:

> Communication organizations assume a mediation role in this collective adjustment. They produce and disseminate public information that recipients use for private consumption. But they frequently make private information public, such as when they reproduce content from social networks. In most cases, this type of information is subject to the same type of cognitive mediation that interprets structural mismatches as private conflicts. Systems analysis shows that it could not be otherwise. When numerous people from a specific population participate in a topical debate on social networks, as seen in this case, redundant and stereotypical discussions multiply, and representations aligned with the established order predominate. (Martín Serrano, 2019, pp. 16-17).

The social production of communication theory is currently relevant and has acquired even greater relevance during the global COVID-19 pandemic because of its capacity to explain the maelstrom of sociopolitical, economic, environmental, cultural and health changes that we are experiencing today. The production of institutionalized communication in digital journalism has undergone a significant transformation in recent decades. Two changes that are fundamental to this study are the increase in the emotional content of journalism and the new, active role of users, as demonstrated in user comments, which will be discussed in the following section.

Digital Journalism, Emotions and User Comments

The digital era and the emergence of social networks have led increasing numbers of people to become involved in the production of news from different perspectives (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019). Social networks such as Twitter and Facebook function today as large vehicles for the projection and distribution of news. They have disrupted the ways in which people access and consume information. In addition, the expression of emotions in journalism has also been transformed, which has reshaped the understanding and practices of public life (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019).

Digital media have diversified and are attracting both young people and older adults, while traditional media are consumed by increasingly older people (Salaverría, 2019). This explains the dynamism of audiences in digital environments, as noted by Loosen et al. (2017) in an extensive review of the transformation of public communication. They note that media companies are experiencing an increasing volume of reader and viewer comments in forums, comment sections and social networks. This trend is changing the way journalists and their audiences perceive, use and manage user comments overall. They conclude that these changes are the result of the proliferation and differentiation of the channels used by journalists to produce and distribute their content, which implies that each channel adds new audience segments. This, in turn, adds different cultural components to the user comments and adds various levels of participation.

Participatory journalism, in which ordinary citizens participate in the various stages of production such as news gathering, selection, publication, distribution, user commentary and public discussion, has helped blur the lines between producers and audiences (Hermida, 2011). The user comment feature has also introduced an opportunity for anonymous participation and inclusive debates, faster and more interactive exchanges among readers and a more diverse and broader group of participants (McCluskey & Hmielowksi in Naab et al., 2020).

A content analysis of reader comments in the U.S. found that based on the range of unique readers posting comments, comment boards appeared to be democratic, but most comments did not contribute to any meaningful or thoughtful discourse (Paskin in Hanusch & Tandoc, 2017). In fact, some media outlets have shut down their comment sections, alluding to issues related to the quality of the discussion and the challenge of moderating online discussions (Ellis in Hanusch & Tandoc, 2017). "The number and quality of comments, and especially the lack of civility of the comments, are conditioned by various contextual elements" (Masip et al., 2019, p. 14).

When a user chooses to comment on a news item, this action demonstrates heightened interest in the content. Therefore, the subject matter of the reported content could be the most important factor in a reader's motivation to post a comment. The degree to which the story format, in terms of multimedia features, engages the user may also affect whether and how the user chooses to comment. Two other factors linked to user comments that may explain the volume and quality of comments are the involvement of journalists in the discussion and organizational policies regarding user comments (Ksiazek, 2018).

However, it has been demonstrated that the digital news items that receive high volumes of comments aren't necessarily posted on the most frequently visited sites. While sensational topics and items that arouse curiosity get many more clicks, political and social topics receive many more comments (Tenenboim & Cohen in Zalbidea et al., 2020). The results of the study by Li et al. (2020) show that from a user's perspective, factors such as having a large number of followers, having followers with significant social capital and having verified user status also positively affect the volume of reposting on social networks.

In their research on the state of the art regarding emotions and user behavior in digital journalism, Segado-Boj et al. (2020) noted that the emotional broadcaster theory maintains that individuals have an innate need to share experiences, and sharing emotional news via digital social networks can satisfy that need. Recent journalism studies have incorporated the emotion factor in journalism studies, which has led to a

new need for a systematic investigation of the role of emotion in the social production of communication and audience engagement. This emotion factor originated from the rapid technological changes of the digital age and has led to a more prominent role of emotion in journalism (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019). Language is the most common and reliable way for people to express their inner thoughts and emotions so that others can understand how they are experiencing the world (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2009).

In various countries during the COVID-19 pandemic, the public's fear and hatred manifested as misinformation in various forms and at various levels. For example, the study by Yu et al. (2020) identified examples of racial discrimination in news coverage, such as headlines with anti-Asian connotations that were viewed as biased. Hate speech can be defined as an expression of hate directed at an individual or group that is based on an opinion or idea of contempt and animus towards them. Cyberhate adds to the surfeit of communication. It must be recognized that hateful comments on social networks are an externalization of underlying problems in a society, regardless of the channel or scenario in which they are disseminated (Cabo & García, 2016).

Methodology

The objectives of this study were to identify and interpret the representations of digital media users through their online comments about the COVID-19 emergency in the cross-border context of Baja California, Mexico, and California, U.S.

Other objectives of this study were to identify and interpret the representations of digital media users through their online comments about the closure of the Baja California-California border during the COVID-19 pandemic and the central and peripheral themes exhibited in these comments.

The epistemological framework chosen to fulfill these objectives was interpretative, which favors the search for meaning in social discourse and interprets the empirical reality in terms understood by the social actors producing the analyzed narratives (Delgado & Gutiérrez, 2007). The methodological approach was qualitative in the broadest sense as it produced descriptive data from the spoken or written words of individuals, groups or institutions in their intersubjectivity (Taylor & Bogdan, 1987).

The content analysis method was used to build the data. From a technical perspective, this approach enables the mining of replicable and valid inferences from all types of data, within their particular contexts. This content analysis technique has evolved beyond its initial journalistic roots and is now applied in various fields and used resolve many methodological problems (Krippendorff, 2019). It includes a set of interpretative procedures in languages, formats and technological support tools derived from the specific previously discussed communications processes, which include both qualitative and quantitative techniques (Piñuel, 2002). In a quantitative content analysis, the empirical process is independent of the researcher, while in a qualitative analysis, the researcher is largely involved in building data. It should be noted that the line between the two is very thin and porous. In any case, it is best to focus on the analytical strategies employed and the underlying assumptions (Neuendorf, 2017).

Participants and Procedures

A total of 117 media reports about the U.S.-Mexico border closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic were digitally published by four media outlets in Baja California and California that provide regional coverage of that part of the U.S.-Mexico border. These companies distribute their communication products on their websites, Facebook and YouTube and reach audiences on both sides of the border (see Table 1).

Table 1: Media reports about the U.S.-Mexico border closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Media outlet	Country	Number of reports published on Facebook, websites and YouTube	User comments
Telemundo 20 (television broadcaster)	USA	41	571
The San Diego Union-Tribune (digital newspaper)	USA	38	107
Frontera (digital newspaper)	Mexico	13	342
Televisa 12 Tijuana (television broadcaster)	Mexico	25	388
Total		**117**	**1 408**

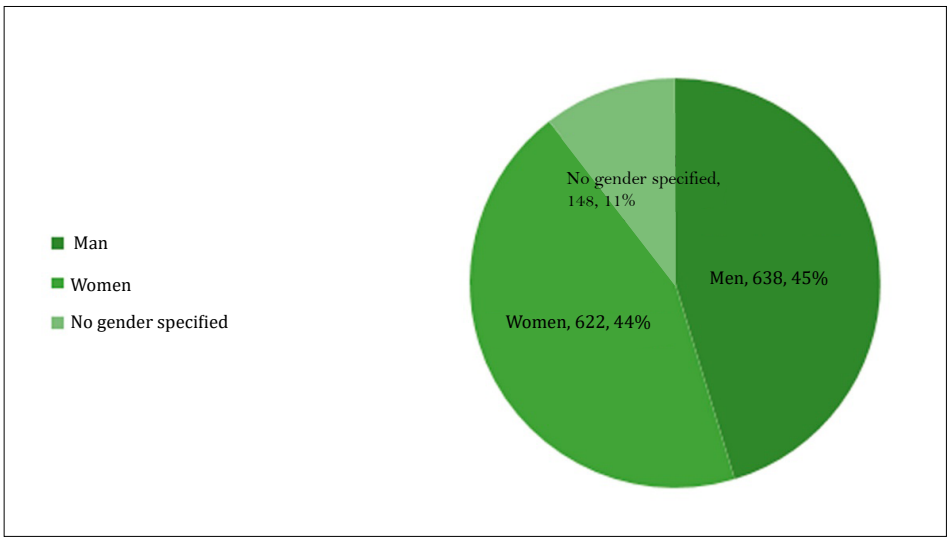
Source: Created by the author

We analyzed 1 408 comments made by 1 033 users on the media reports indicated above during the period from March 19 to May 31, 2020. Authorities from both nations first communicated that the border would be closed from March 20 to April 20, and then communicated multiple temporary extensions of the border after that (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores de México [SRE], 2020)[1]. The data collection was conducted between June 1 and 10. The gender breakdown for commenters with verified profiles was 45% men and 44% women; 11% of the commentators had unverified profiles that did not specify their gender. The user's names have been omitted for privacy reasons (see Figure 2).

Once the universe of communication products was identified and recorded, the information in the comments (the main object of the analysis) was categorized. Based on the theoretical-conceptual approach previously discussed, the empirical data were collected, and the researchers' own experience and the qualitative data analysis software Atlas Ti version 8.4.4 (2019) were used to develop processes for data categorization, coding, analysis, diagramming and identifying relationships and conceptual links. This software was also used to prepare a quantitative data report with word counts and frequencies that revealed the key concepts that emerged from the data. The last step was the preparation of graphs, tables and diagrams with qualitative and quantitative data for inclusion in the report.

[1] At the time of this writing, the U.S.-Mexico border remained closed to nonessential activities, with a projected reopening date of August 21, 2020 (SRE, 2020).

Figure 2: Data for users that posted comments



Source: Created by the author

Table 2 presents the five analytical categories and 16 codes that were defined. Space limitations and relevance considerations led us to focus only on the codes with the highest discursive contribution.

Table 2: Analytical categories and codes for pandemic-related border closure content

Category	Code
COVID-19-related border issues (both sides of the border)	Contribution of useful data
	Criticism of the public
	Disinformation and uncertainty
	COVID-19 health crisis
	The border as a cultural zone
	Religious statements
American things	Criticisms of the U.S. government
	The American side of the border
	Rejection of American things
Mexican things	Criticisms of the Mexican government
	The Mexican side of the border
	Rejection of Mexican things
Media	Media criticism
	Media praise
Hate speech	Hateful comments
	Xenophobia towards undocumented immigrants

Source: Created by the author

The process involved frequent consultations of the theory, multiple readings of the comments, and redefining, separating and grouping categories, codes and quotations. The researchers documented each phase of the process in memos, notes and diagrams. Once the categories were defined, the information was coded (see Table 3). It is important to note that the user comments were mostly written in Spanish, even though two of the media outlets are based in the U.S. This demonstrates a higher level of participation by Mexicans or Mexican Americans. Incorrect use of language was extensive, and the comments were processed with no correction of spelling or syntax.

The next section presents the study results and a discussion.

Results and Discussion

Table 3 presents the most frequently occurring codes (i.e., the most comments classified under the same code), which may mean that these were the topics of most interest to the commentators. The theory of social representations establishes that emotions and views of reality are expressed through language and form a central part of the representations of the world. These representations communicate and produce behaviors that determine the nature of the stimuli that surround us and influence our responses to them (Moscovici, 1979).

According to existing research on user participation, choosing to comment on a news item indicates a higher level of interest in the content. Therefore, the topic of a media report is the most important factor in a user's motivation to participate (Ksiazek, 2018). In this case, the topic of the border closure in the context of the pandemic directly touched on an important aspect of the border residents' daily lives.

Disinformation and a Fear of Others as a Response to the Pandemic

The *disinformation and uncertainty* code encompassed expressions of hypothetical conspiracies, as well as a range of emotions such as emptiness, weariness and fear. The comments usually did not present any arguments but could be quite dramatic. Most of the emotions expressed in written form did not include any contrasting data. Researchers have documented that people feeling fear tend to perceive more risk because misinformation produces feelings of uncertainty and lack of control over their situation (Lerner & Keltner, in Oh et al., 2020).

Disinformation was referenced in most of the comments, followed by criticism of the Mexican federal government headed by President Lopez and criticism of the media. Less frequent were posts expressing hateful comments, rejection of Mexican things and xenophobia towards undocumented immigrants. The results of this study reveal a heavy criticism of the safeguards adopted by people and their compliance with the mandated safety measures, as well as a rejection of Americans crossing into Mexico.

These results stand in contrast with the low incidence of comments expressing rejection of Mexican things, since most of commenters were residents of Mexican cities. These commenters often reiterated the government and media narratives regarding the pandemic, which emphasized the higher risk of infection in the American population. As Manuel Martín Serrano (2017) noted, the media perform a mediating function of collective adjustment through the construction and dissemination of information that audiences appropriate by incorporating these data into their worldview. In the present day, with the types of digital media that exist, users frequently make private information public by reproducing content from social networks that often reiterates the same type of cognitive mediation. In other words, it interprets structural mismatches as private conflicts.

Furthermore, the analysis of the comments revealed a rejection of the U.S. or what is on the other side of the wall, from the perspective of Mexican border residents. These comments also discursively projected hatred and xenophobia towards undocumented immigrants from Mexico's southern states, Central America and the Caribbean. This result should be interpreted as a product of pandemic disinformation and the heightened fear of COVID-19 in a heavily trafficked border region, which is represented by users as a crossing point or bridge that is far from Mexico's political power locus and is therefore fragile. Hence, there was heavy criticism of Mexico's central government, while criticism of Trump was lower.

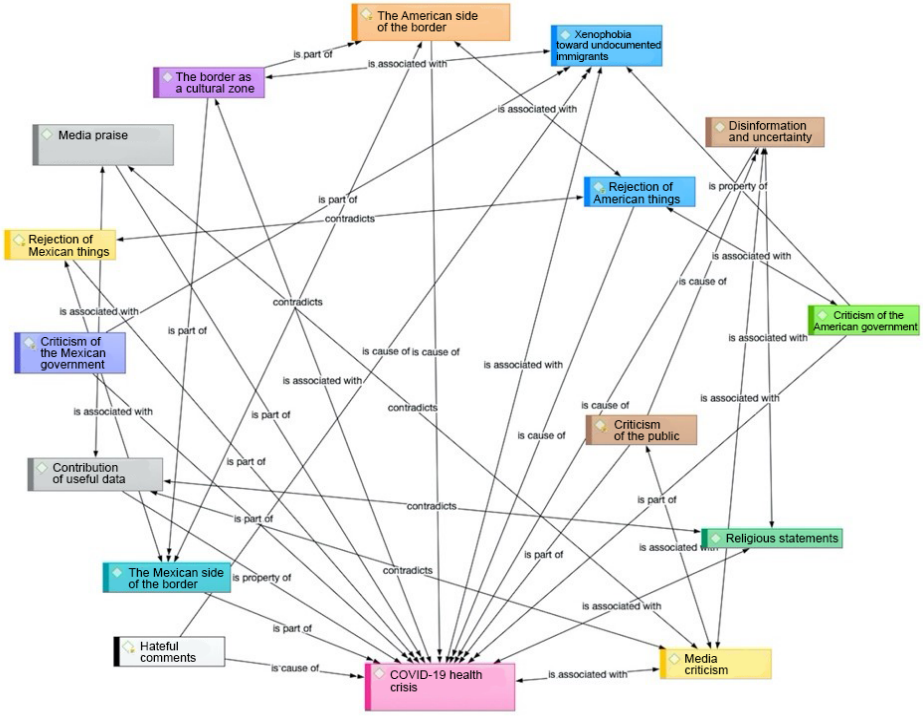
Table 3: Codes in order of substantiation and density

Color	Name	Substantiation	Density
●	Disinformation and uncertainty	214	4
●	Criticism of the Mexican government	177	2
●	Media criticism	137	5
●	Hateful comments	134	2
●	The American side of the border	125	4
●	Criticism of the public	122	3
●	Rejection of American things	116	4
●	The border as a cultural zone	80	4
●	Contribution of useful data	77	4
●	Criticism of the American government	76	3
●	Xenophobia toward undocumented immigrants	74	5
●	COVID-19 public health crisis	64	15
●	Rejection of Mexican things	38	3
●	The Mexican side of the border	30	4
●	Religious statements	29	3
●	Praise of the media	14	3

Source: Created by the author

The code densities resulted from the number of links maintained by each node in the network (see Table 3 and Figure 3). The COVID-19 public health crisis had the highest density value due to its significance in this border-region study. Overall, the network was very balanced in terms of the interrelationships among its nodes, which are associated with each of the thematic categories. The results demonstrated the relationships between the repeated criticisms of the Mexican government and representations of the COVID-19 pandemic in the border region, the high level of rejection of the U.S. and the profusion of xenophobic comments towards the undocumented migrants in the border region. Furthermore, the association between the media criticism node and the disinformation and uncertainty code was highly significant. In contrast were the low densities observed for the codes pertaining to praise of the media and contribution of useful data.

Figure 3: COVID-19 border closure code network during the pandemic



Source: Created by the author

The word count and the frequency of these words in the total volume of the analyzed comments showed that the users' narratives exhibited different levels of territorial anchoring. The first was the Mexico-U.S. national level. Next was a regional level defined by the border, that is, where and individual is located in relation to the border wall (this side or that side). Last was the city level - Tijuana and San Diego. Subsequently, otherness was articulated in relation to the virus: *them, the others, fear, quarantine, pandemic*. These are followed by words calling for action: *close, [not to] cross, closed*. Other concepts that express the everyday border reality also appear: *work, buy,*

cross, life. Lastly, there are mentions of the presidents, Trump and Lopez. The comments reflect the reality perceived, narrated and lived by digital media users (Table 4).

These results are consistent with the theory of digital journalism, which states that language is a commonly used mode for expressing and translating internal thoughts and emotions, and reflect that today's digital media users are not limited to receiving information passively but can participate in the construction of narratives about the issues of the world in which they live (Hermida, 2011; Segado-Boj et al., 2020; Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2009).

Table 4: Frequency of occurrence of key concepts identified in all categories

Concepts	Number	Percentage
Buy	15	1.55
Crossing	15	1.55
Fear	15	1.55
Closed	17	1.77
Family	18	1.88
Side	18	1.88
Life	18	1.88
Quarantine	23	2.4
Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador	24	2.5
Work	25	2.6
[The] Others	26	2.7
Pandemic	27	2.8
San Diego	29	3.01
To cross	40	4.15
Mexicans	42	4.36
Close	47	4.88
Trump	47	4.88
Tijuana	62	6.44
United States	67	6.97
Them	69	7.17
Virus	76	7.9
Border	97	10.08
Mexico	145	15.1
Total	**962**	**100.00**

Source: Created by the author

Connotations of the "American Things" Category

Regarding the "American things" category, the comments that provide verbal evidence pertaining to the U.S. side of the border project fear of what is on the other side of the wall (the U.S. side) and could come into Mexico. "Close Tijuana", said comments about people on the U.S. side (Mexicans or Anglo-Americans); other words used in this context are *virus*, *border*, *that side* and *pandemic*. Other words frequently associated with prejudices also appear, such as "gringo" and "infected" people (see Table 5). According to the guiding theory for this study, these words are also part of the social representations.

The analysis of user comments shows that rejection of American things in the context of the border increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. This rejection can be interpreted as fear of what is on the other side of the wall and could come to Mexico and penetrate the domestic space of Mexican residents. It is the fear of Mexican citizens living in Tijuana and working in the U.S., who leave Mexico and come back every day; the fear of U.S. citizens of Latino origin with roots and socio-community networks on the Mexican side; the fear of non-Latino U.S. citizens, especially older people, who go to Mexico to shop (especially for medications) and consume high quality medical services (cosmetic surgeries, inpatient procedures, dental and ophthalmological services) at low prices. Lastly, it is the fear of U.S. residents who come to Tijuana for the bars and cantinas.

Table 5: Frequency of key concepts identified in the "American things" category

Concepts	Number	Percentage
Infected people	8	3.07
Gringos	8	3.07
Pandemic	8	3.07
[That] side	9	3.46
To cross	10	3.84
Mexicans	13	5.00
Border	21	8.07
Virus	22	8.46
Them	24	9.23
Tijuana	27	10.39
Close	32	12.31
U.S.	36	13.85
Mexico	42	16.18
Total	**260**	**100.00**

Source: Created by the author

During this pandemic, the fear of American things has been repeatedly expressed using labels constructed over the years by certain groups in reaction to U.S. residents who regularly cross the Mexican border specifically to visit brothels and who are drug users or are sick or infected with hepatitis, HIV and other venereal diseases. They are

identified and stigmatized as disease carriers and marked with other discriminatory labels resulting from a historical relationship defined by asymmetries that exhibits traces of irritation in the collective memory.

Connotations of the "Mexican Things" Category

The analysis of the comments in the "Mexican things" category reveals a different perspective. The most frequently appearing words are *virus* and *U.S.*, followed by *Trump*. Unlike the results for the "American things" category, the verb "to work" appears frequently. Other frequently appearing words are *Tijuana*, *pandemic*, *Mexico* and *Mexicans*. One concept that did not appear in the analysis of the "American things" category is *family*. As established in the theoretical-conceptual section of this paper, *family* has been a fundamental factor for people settling in the California border region and has played a key role in the demographic growth of the region (Ojeda, 2009) (see Table 6).

Table 6: Frequency of key concepts identified in the "Mexican things" category

Concepts	Number	Percentage
Close	13	5.70
To cross	10	4.38
Them	28	12.3
Family	11	4.82
Border	21	9.21
Mexicans	20	8.77
Mexico	30	13.2
Pandemic	10	4.39
Tijuana	13	5.70
To work	16	7.01
Trump	10	4.38
U.S.	16	7.01
Virus	30	13.2
Total	**228**	**100.00**

Source: Created by the author

The *rejection of Mexican things*, or things on the Mexican side of the border wall, sometimes includes migrants from Central America. That is, anything on the south side of the border wall is more vehemently rejected during the pandemic. It should be noted that there are migrants from African, Caribbean and South American countries waiting in Baja California shelters for a response from the U.S. government about their petitions for legal entry, and there are also migrants who will attempt to cross the border without documents. As Lois (2020) notes, borders have played a significant role during this pandemic in symbolically blurring the line between "sick" and "not

sick". Due to border closures and travel restrictions, borders have become lines that identified people from certain places as sick and/or transmitters of the virus and, in this case, people who do not belong to the domestic space.

Some Ancillary Themes Pertaining to the COVID-19 Border Closure

In this study, some ancillary themes emerged in addition to the main themes of disinformation, fear of others, the pandemic and the U.S.-Mexico border closure. The ancillary themes that emerged in user comments included "criticism of the Mexican government", "media criticism", "criticism of the public", "hateful comments" and "xenophobia towards undocumented migrants".

Criticism of the Mexican government stems from the public's perception of the government's failure to act to contain the pandemic, inadequate testing, misinformation and the delay in closing the border. This criticism that projected emotions of fear and desperation sometimes devolved into hateful comments (haters) and xenophobia towards migrants from Central America and the Caribbean. The user comments that were analyzed often criticized people for not complying with public health measures and social distancing norms and for their determination to cross the border.

The analysis found that criticisms of journalists and media companies include excessive use of alarmist language and accusations of sensationalism, yellow journalism, lying, corruption, etc. In some cases, the criticisms are from users who compare their own experiences living in the border region with the data presented in media reports. Others exhibit a denial of what is being experienced and what is reported by the media. Some users compare, in real time, the data published by the media with information obtained from other digital spaces and either take critical positions or seek to complement the professional journalism of the media companies. There is a widespread lack of civility in the analyzed comments, a result that aligns with other studies on the democratic spirit of these spaces. However, most of the commenters do not contribute anything that exhibits a measure of reflection. Some studies have noted the issues of poor quality and lack of civility in user comments (Hanusch & Tandoc, 2017; Masip et al., 2019).

In closure, it is important to note that the small number of media outlets (and users) in this study presented some limitations pertaining to the limited volume of information that was processed. On the other hand, the topic that was studied emerged from an extremely specific and novel situation, which limited access to a greater number of theoretical-conceptual resources.

However, this work opens up future opportunities to further the study of user participation in digital media through user comments and phenomena that provoke collective emotions, such as fear, pertaining to U.S.-Mexico border issues. Future studies could identify and interpret the social representations linked to the social production of communication within a historical framework, in physical or virtual places where population groups from two or more countries interact.

Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic was represented in the user comments as an extraordinary, high-risk situation for which important information verified by the Mexican and U.S. governments was unavailable, especially regarding testing, hospital status and infection and death rates. It was also represented as an attack by a virus that had an unimaginably devastating impact on economies due to mandatory quarantines and as a time of profound changes in the history of humanity that will lead to a new way of life.

The discourse found in the user comments represented the border as a region characterized by economic, social, cultural, political, environmental and health interdependence. The border wall simultaneously separates and unites large population networks on both sides of a space marked by a continuous flow that is impossible to stop, even with the pandemic-related restrictions imposed by both nations. The user comments contained a strong groundswell of opinions about the border closure decision that was driven by misinformation, uncertainty and confusion. In short, these comments were driven by a fear of the other, of what is on the other side of the wall and headed in our direction.

Similar to its economy, the health situation of the Mexican side of the border region has more in common with cities on the U.S. side than with the rest of Mexico.

Lastly, the study found that the verified information exchanged in the user analyzed comments was of poor quality. There was a distinct tendency to post hateful comments and comments blaming others for spreading the virus. The perception of risk and the intensity of social network communications caused rapid escalations of fear that led to ancillary themes such as criticisms of the Mexican government, the general public and communications media as well as comments with xenophobic content.

References

AMLO. (2020a, February 27). *Versión estenográfica de la conferencia de prensa matutina del presidente Andrés Manuel López Obrador*. https://lopezobrador.org.mx/2020/02/27/version-estenografica-de-la-conferencia-de-prensa-matutina-del-presidente-andres-manuel-lopez-obrador-265/

AMLO. (2020b, February 28). *Versión estenográfica de la conferencia de prensa matutina del presidente Andrés Manuel López Obrador*. https://lopezobrador.org.mx/2020/02/28/version-estenografica-de-la-conferencia-de-prensa-matutina-del-presidente-andres-manuel-lopez-obrador-266/

Badiou, A. (2020). Sobre la situación epidémica. In G. Agamben, S. Zizek, J. L. Nancy, F. "Bifo" Berardi, S. López Petit, J. Butler, A. Badiou, D. Harvey, B.-C. Han, R. Zibechi, M. Galindo, M. Gabriel, G. Yáñez González, P. Manrique & P. B. Preciado, *Sopa de Wuhan: Pensamiento contemporáneo en tiempo de pandemias* (pp. 67-78). https://lareverde.files.wordpress.com/2020/04/sopa-de-wuhan-aspo.pdf

Cabo, A. & García, A. (2016). *El discurso del odio en las redes sociales: Un estado de la cuestión*. Ajuntament de Barcelona. http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/bcnvsodi/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Informe_discurso-del-odio_ES.pdf

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2020). *COVID-19*. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html

Consejo de Planeación y Desarrollo. (2018). *Población 2018*. http://www.copladebc.gob.mx/publicaciones/2018/Mensual/Junio.pdf

Delgado, J. & Gutiérrez, J. (2007). *Métodos y técnicas cualitativas de investigación en ciencias sociales*. Síntesis.

Durkheim, É. (2006). *Sociología y filosofía*. Comares.

Fry, W. (2020, June 15). Pacientes estadounidenses encuentran medicinas baratas en Tijuana. Y una larga fila en la frontera. *The San Diego Union-Tribune en español*. https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/en-espanol/noticias/bc/articulo/2020-06-15/medicinas-baratas-en-tijuana

Gil, T. (2020, March 31). Coronavirus: cómo Estados Unidos se convirtió en el nuevo centro de la pandemia de COVID-19. *BBC News Mundo*. https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-internacional-52114455

Han, B. (2020). La emergencia viral y el mundo de mañana. In G. Agamben, S. Zizek, J. L. Nancy, F. "Bifo" Berardi, S. López Petit, J. Butler, A. Badiou, D. Harvey, B.-C. Han, R. Zibechi, M. Galindo, M. Gabriel, G. Yáñez González, P. Manrique & P. B. Preciado, *Sopa de Wuhan: Pensamiento contemporáneo en tiempo de pandemias* (pp. 97-112). https://lareverde.files.wordpress.com/2020/04/sopa-de-wuhan-aspo.pdf

Hanusch, F. & Tandoc, E. (2017). Comments, analytics, and social media: The impact of audience feedback on journalists' market orientation. *Journalism, 20*(6), 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884917720305

Hermida, A. (2011). Mechanisms of participation how audience options shape the conversation. In J. Singer, A. Hermida, D. Domingo, A. Heinonen, S. Paulussen, T. Quandt, Z. Reich, & M. Vujnovic (Eds.), *Participatory journalism: guarding open gates at online newspapers* (pp. 13-33). Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (Inegi). (2017). *Anuario estadístico y geográfico de Baja California*. https://www.inegi.org.mx/contenido/productos/prod_serv/contenidos/espanol/bvinegi/productos/nueva_estruc/anuarios_2017/702825094874.pdf

Jiménez, J. (2020, April 2). Así ha sido la respuesta de Trump a la pandemia de coronavirus y la secuencia de errores que lo llevaron a ignorar la urgencia. *Noticias Telemundo*. https://www.telemundo.com/noticias/2020/04/02/asi-ha-sido-la-respuesta-de-trump-la-pandemia-de-coronavirus-y-la-secuencia-de-errores-que-tmna3734482

Krippendorff, K. (2019). *Content analysis: an introduction to its methodology*. Sage.

Ksiazek, T. (2018). Commenting on the news. Explaining the degree and quality of user comments on news websites. *Journalism Studies, 19*(5), 650-673. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1209977

Li, L., Zhang, Q., Wang, X., Zhang, J., Wang, T., Gao, T., Duan, W., Tsoi, K. & Wang, F. (2020). Characterizing the propagation of situational information in social media during COVID-19 epidemic: a case study on Weibo. *IEEE Transactions on Computational Social Systems, 7*(2), 556-562. https://doi.org/10.1109/TCSS.2020.2980007

Lois, M. (2020). Los Estados cierran sus territorios por seguridad... pero los virus están emancipados de las fronteras. *Geopolítica(s). Revista de estudios sobre espacio y poder, 11*(especial), 293-302. https://doi.org/10.5209/geop.69370

Loosen, W., Häring, M., Kurtanović, Z., Merten, L., Reimer, J., Van Roessel, L. & Maalej, W. (2017). Making sense of user comments identifying journalists' requirements for a comment analysis framework. *Studies in Communication and Media, 6*(4), 333-364. https://doi.org/10.5771/2192-4007-2017-4-333

Markus, G. (2020). El virus, el sistema letal y algunos virus. In G. Agamben, S. Zizek, J. L. Nancy, F. "Bifo" Berardi, S. López Petit, J. Butler, A. Badiou, D. Harvey, B.-C. Han, R. Zibechi, M. Galindo, M. Gabriel, G. Yáñez González, P. Manrique & P. B. Preciado, *Sopa de Wuhan: Pensamiento contemporáneo en tiempo de pandemias* (pp. 129-134). https://lareverde.files.wordpress.com/2020/04/sopa-de-wuhan-aspo.pdf

Martín, M. & Velarde, O. (2015). La mediación comunicativa de las identidades individuales y colectivas. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social,* (70), 552-565. http://www.revistalatinacs.org/070/paper/1059/29es.html

Martín Serrano, M. (2017). *La producción social de comunicación.* Alianza.

Martín Serrano, M. (2019). La comunicación y la información en un mundo que se virtualiza. Desarrollos y funciones previsibles. *Comunicación y Sociedad, 16*, 1-29. https://doi.org/10.32870/cys.v2019i0.7478

Masip, P., Ruiz-Caballero, C. & Suau, J. (2019). Active audiences and social discussion on the digital public sphere. Review article. *El profesional de la información, 28*(2), 1-40. https://doi.org//10.3145/epi.2019.mar.04

Moscovici, S. (1979). *El psicoanálisis, su imagen y su público.* Huemul.

Naab, T., Heinbach, D., Ziegele, M. & Grasberger, M. (2020). Comments and credibility: how critical user comments decrease perceived news article credibility. *Journalism Studies, 21*(6), 783-801. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2020.1724181

Neuendorf, K. (2017). *The content analysis guidebook.* Sage.

Oh, S., Lee, S., & Han, C. (2020). The effects of social media use on preventive behaviors during infectious disease outbreaks: the mediating role of self-relevant emotions and public risk perception. *Health Communication,* 1-10. https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2020.1724639

Ojeda, N. (2009). Reflexiones acerca de las familias transfronterizas y las familias transnacionales entre México y Estados Unidos. *Frontera Norte, 21*(42), 7-30. http://www.scielo.org.mx/pdf/fn/v21n42/v21n42a1.pdf

Piñuel, J. (2002). Epistemología, metodología y técnicas del análisis del contenido. *Estudios de sociolingüística, 3*(1), 1-42. https://www.ucm.es/data/cont/docs/268-2013-07-29-Pinuel_Raigada_AnalisisContenido_2002_EstudiosSociolinguisticaUVigo.pdf

Sáenz, I. (2020, March 20). Todo lo que Trump dijo durante semanas para negar la gravedad de la crisis del coronavirus. *elDiario.es.* https://www.eldiario.es/internacional/coronavirus-trump_1_1015794.html

Salaverría, R. (2019). Digital journalism: 25 years of research. Review article. *El profesional de la información, 28*(1), 1-26. https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2019.ene.01

Santhanam, L. (2020, 22 de enero). Track the spread of novel coronavirus with this map. *PBS News Hour*. https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/track-the-spread-of-novel-coronavirus-with-this-map

Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores de México (SRE). (2020). Iniciativa conjunta de México y Estados Unidos para combatir la pandemia de COVID-19. Comunicado No. 92. https://www.gob.mx/sre/prensa/iniciativa-conjunta-de-mexico-y-estados-unidos-para-combatir-la-pandemia-de-covid-19

Secretaría de Salud del Gobierno de Baja California. (2020). Información oficial del nuevo coronavirus (COVID-19). http://www.bajacalifornia.gob.mx/coronavirus

Secretaría de Salud del Gobierno de México. (2020, March 23). Información del nuevo coronavirus. https://coronavirus.gob.mx/informacion-accesible/

Segado-Boj, F., Díaz-Campo, J. & Navarro-Sierra, N. (2020). Emociones y difusión de noticias sobre el cambio climático en redes sociales. Influencia de hábitos, actitudes previas y usos y gratificaciones en universitarios. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social, 75*, 245-269. https://www.doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2020-1425

Shoichet, C. (2020, June 29). People with coronavirus are crossing the US-Mexico border for medical care. *CNN*. https://edition.cnn.com/2020/06/29/health/border-hospitals-coronavirus/index.html

Tausczik, Y. & Pennebaker, J. (2009). The psychological meaning of words: LIWC and computerized text analysis methods. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 29*(1), 24-54. http://jls.sagepub.com/content/29/1/24

Taylor, S. & Bogdan, R. (1987). *Introducción a los métodos cualitativos de investigación*. Paidós Básica.

The White House. (2020, July 21). Coronavirus (COVID-19). https://www.coronavirus.gov/

United States Census Bureau (USCB). (2020). Tables ACS demographic and housing estimates. https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=California&g=0400000US06&tid=ACSDP1Y2018.DP05&hidePreview=false

Vega, G. (2016). Población commuter de la frontera norte: el caso de Mexicali-Calexico y Tijuana-San Diego. *Estudios Demográficos y Urbanos, 31*(1), 207-238. http://dx.doi.org/10.24201/edu.v31i1.1508v

Velarde, O. & Bernete, F. (2016). The social production of communication when the world becomes globalized. *JANUS.NET e-journal of International Relations,* 7(2), 90-103. http://hdl.handle.net/11144/2785

Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2019). An emotional turn in journalism studies? *Digital Journalism, 8*(2), 175-194. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2019.1697626

Yu, M., Li, Z., Yu, Z., He, J. & Zhou, J. (2020). Communication related health crisis on social media: a case of COVID-19 outbreak. *Journal Current Issues in Tourism, 23*. https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2020.1752632

Zalbidea, B., Urrutia, S., Camacho-Markina. I. & Pastor, J. M. (2020). Clics y comentarios como expresiones del dilema de intereses de los usuarios ante las noticias: el caso del agregador de noticias de lengua hispana Menéame. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social, 75*, 327-339. https://www.doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2020-1429

Hugo Méndez Fierros
Mexican. PhD in Global Development Studies from the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (UABC). Full-time professor-researcher at the Faculty of Human Sciences of the UABC. Specialized in communication and culture studies. Research lines: representations, regional identity, and border; communication, identity and collective pride in universities. Recent publication: Piñera, D. & Méndez, H. (2019). *Simbología universitaria, el caso de la UABC. Patrimonio, representaciones e identidad.* UABC.

Erika Paola Reyes Piñuelas
Mexican. PhD in Educational Sciences from the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (UABC). Full-time professor-researcher at the Faculty of Human Sciences of the UABC. She has participated in research projects with funding from the Sectoral Fund of the National Council of Science and Technology-National Institute for the Evaluation of Education (Conacyt-INEE). He belongs to the base team of the Life Skills Network (Colombia). She has conducted research stays at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and the Universidad Computense de Madrid. Research lines: study of psychological phenomena associated with education. Recent publication: Reyes, E., Luna, E. & Caso, J. (2020). Evidencias de validez del Cuestionario de Evaluación de la Competencia Docente Universitaria. *Perfiles Educativos*, *42*(169), 106-122.