INTRODUCTION

On the History of Communication Study

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The study of communication is both a historically specific modern accomplishment and a universal anthropological fact. This volume focuses on the first of these two storylines while casting a few strategic glances toward the second. As John Durham Peters has observed, though Aristotle called humans the speaking animal, “only since the late nineteenth century have we defined ourselves in terms of our ability to communicate with one another” (1999, 1). That shift in collective self-understanding emerged in a transatlantic discourse that would eventually make communication and a family of related idea-terms into fundamental concepts for multiple modernities around the world. At the same time, as Aristotle’s philosophical anthropology suggested, humans have always and everywhere been animals who use speech to address others. Connected to that capacity is the ability to observe other speakers, which we can see as a vernacular form of “communication study,” often given impetus by cultural practices like storytelling or ritual address that call for formal speech. This in turn opens the possibility of seeing longstanding and culturally varied forms of communication study, operating under different names, serving distinct purposes, feeding a diverse array of social practices and institutional imperatives.

This brief nod to the long and broad anthropological view opens toward a central aim of the volume: to recognize a multiplicity of communication studies and lines of interaction, influence, and hegemony among them. Though some chapters briefly dip back before the twentieth century, the collective story runs primarily from the 1920s to the present, focusing especially on the period since World War II. This is the era when a family of fields concerned with communication and media institutionalized themselves around the world. The volume’s view is deeply international, attending to distinct world regions and transnational flows among them. The historical vectors are complex and multi-faceted,
requiring multiple narrators, orientations, and methods. The international view gets us closer to seeing how organized communication study has at once reflected, refracted, and advanced transnational geopolitics, institutional patterns of education and professionalization, and ways of knowing and acting that have significantly shaped the textures of collective life for the past century.

Communication and media studies are at a key historical moment, occasioned by the ever-widening recognition of the social significance of their subject matters, the continued structural transformation of higher education, and the rapid growth of the field around the world. In those contexts, with attention to both globalization and diverse cultures around the world, there have been calls to “de-Westernize” communication studies, whose theory and research has been overwhelmingly grounded in the U.S. and Western Europe, and to develop a more cosmopolitan sense of the field in its heterogeneity (e.g. Curran and Park, 2000; Wang, 2011; Christians and Nordenstreng, 2014). Understanding the international history of communication study is one important piece of these broader efforts. It provides insights into the pathways that brought us to our present ways of doing things as students and scholars of communication; and it brings out submerged counter-traditions and alternatives left behind. Beyond being important in its own right, that history is a vehicle toward greater collective reflexivity about our own locations, aspirations, and projects within the wider global field. It sheds light on patterns of intellectual hegemony, resistance, and plurality that cut across nations and regions—and the geopolitical struggles that have structured them.

Communication has been one of the fastest growing scholarly fields in the world over the past 50 years (Koivisto and Thomas, 2010, 13–14). New, internationally focused efforts are required to understand what that growth means and how it came about. Up until now, the vast majority of work in the history of communication study has centered on research as practiced in academic settings by successful male professors residing in North America or Western Europe; it has limited its geographical ken to individual nation-states. In contrast, this volume (1) broadens the regional focus outside the North Atlantic; (2) brings out the significance of transnational flows; (3) attends to communication study as manifest outside academic settings—in international organizations like UNESCO, in commercial enterprises like marketing research, and among religious and civic groups; (4) focuses on education as well as research; and (5) draws out the contributions not just of successful male professors whose writings entered the canon but also by women and forgotten figures whose work was also significant. We have titled the volume “the history of communication study”—not the history of the field—to capture this expanded breadth. In so doing, we cast our eyes across the three main disciplinary traditions that historically fed the contemporary field: mass communication research/media studies, journalism and newspaper studies, and speech communication. The last receives the least attention, partly because the volume aims to decenter the U.S., where the fields that grew out of speech (e.g. rhetoric, interpersonal, small group, and organizational communication) have
traditionally resided (but see Morooka, chapter 19); partly because the history of speech communication has been well documented in recent work (e.g. Gehrke and Keith, 2015).

This Introduction begins that collective project by casting the history and historiography of communication study in a new international perspective. Our aim is both to situate the volume historically and to offer an overarching narrative whose rich intricacies are developed across the chapters that follow. The volume is organized into sections, each with a brief preface that provides additional orientation for readers. Here we (a) sketch the history of writing histories of communication study; (b) draw out recent transnational frameworks that inform this volume; and (c) provide a compact overview of the international history of communication study. Emphasizing geopolitical eras, national and regional traditions, and transnational flows, we draw out institutional developments, individual figures, and intellectual orientations that open out toward the book. Across that brief history, we highlight communication study as manifested through education, theory/research, practical application, professional associations, and other institutions for organizing them.

Though the volume covers a lot of ground and aims to be international in scope, it also leaves a great deal unsaid and bears the marks of U.S. editors. The same is true for this Introduction. It centers on traditions of mass communication/media studies and to a lesser extent journalism/newspaper studies. It says relatively little about the fields that grew out of speech communication, or about information studies (but see Löblich and Averbeck-Lietz, chapter 1; Ayish, chapter 22). In the Introduction and the volume as a whole, we’ve tried hard to present a broad international story. With the possible exception of Stefanie Averbeck-Lietz’s (2015) superb forthcoming volume, we’ve arguably gone further than anyone to this point. But we have not fully shed the North Atlantic geographic bias. In style and focus, our writing remains all-too-American, grounded too much in the English-language literature. Every collection has its limits, and this one is no different.

**A History of Histories of Communication Study**

As many have noted, Communication (we will use the capital when we refer to the institutionalized field that operates under that name) grew out from a number of parent disciplines. In its initial institutional home, the U.S., it congealed out of empirical social sciences, journalism, and speech (see Delia, 1987) The speech inheritance was distinctive though not unique to the U.S. (Junya Morooka maps its Japanese iteration in chapter 19). The journalism inheritance was, on the other hand, common around the world—some influenced by the American educational model, others looking more to German newspaper science (Zeitungswissenschaft, about which more below). There are also forms of communication and media studies that grew out of literary studies. Given the range of parent disciplines and
traditions, there is a large and unwieldy array of literature on the history of communication study. One indication is found in the online History of Communication Research bibliography, which at this writing contains more than 1,800 works, though it limits itself to English-language publications (http://historyofcommunicationresearch.org; see Pooley and Park, 2013). Accounts of the historiography are always, by necessity, simplifications.

That said, it wasn't before the 1990s that one could begin to talk about a historiography of communication study in the sense of a body of recognized literature. To be sure, there were predecessors. Otto Groth's (1948) History of German Newspaper Science and Karl Wallace's (1954) edited History of Speech Education in America stand out as early examples. But from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s, the fledgling field of Communication narrated its history mostly through more-or-less fictional tales reproduced through undergraduate textbooks and focusing on the rise of mass communication research in the U.S. Two entwined stories emerged. One revolved around the myth of a naïve prewar belief in the media’s “hypodermic” power supplanted by sophisticated postwar empiricism proving more limited effects (see Simonson, 2013; Lubken, 2008). The other lionized four great “founding fathers,”—Paul Lazarsfeld, Harold Lasswell, Kurt Lewin, and Carl Hovland (see Pooley, 2008). Both were legitimating myths influentially advanced by key actors in the early field: the first by Columbia University's Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz, the second by Stanford’s Wilbur Schramm.

The 1970s and early ’80s saw scholars fighting contemporary epistemological and political battles through accounts of the field’s history, an effort that cut across national contexts. This was particularly important for critical and cultural scholars who rejected what they called (under the influence of Thomas Kuhn's Structure of Scientific Revolutions) “the dominant paradigm” of positivist, behavioral social science represented by the likes of Schramm and Lazarsfeld. Left-leaning critical researchers critiqued the hegemony of the social scientific mainstream by challenging the mythic tales. A young Finn, Kaarle Nordenstreng (1968), who would later become an international leader in media studies, opened the gates with a withering criticism that pivoted from the four founding fathers story. His was followed by Latin American critiques that referenced the history of U.S. development communication research in the region (e.g. Beltrán, 1975). Cultural studies in both its American and British variations carved out space for itself through critical historical tales of mass communication research (e.g. Carey, 1977; Hall, 1982; Czitrom, 1983). The critical media sociologist Todd Gitlin (1978) published a carefully argued and influential historical critique of Lazarsfeld and the dominant paradigm. In what was then called West Germany, history became a tool to both critically revisit the Nazi past of Zeitungswissenschaft and advance a more politically progressive, sociological communication research to combat the conservative, U.S.-influenced Kommunikationswissenschaft that had dominated German communication study since the early 1960s (e.g. Borhmann and Kutsch, 1975). Meanwhile, representatives of the dominant paradigms offered their own
While there were scattered instances of careful historical research utilizing archives and oral history along with close textual analysis, it was only in the 1990s that sounder histories began to reach a critical mass. They were part of what Jeff Pooley (2008), focusing on the U.S. case, calls the “new history of mass communication research” (e.g. Simpson, 1994; Sproule, 1997; Glander, 2000). In contrast to the “internalist” focus on individual figures and their ideas that had characterized earlier work, the new history was strongly “externalist” in its attention to funding institutions, geopolitical contexts, and social networks of scholars. Often barbed and debunking, the new histories rejected heroic tales of founding fathers or linkages of communication research to expanded knowledge and liberal democratic social progress. In this regard, they complemented the feminist histories that began emerging in the 1990s as well (see Ashcraft and Simonson, chapter 2). The history of communication study was cast partly in terms of political struggles, from the global geopolitics of the Cold War to the gender politics of knowledge production.

Around the world, scholars turned serious attention to the history of communication study in the 1990s. One major base was Germany, where Arnulf Kutsch’s professorship at the University of Leipzig provided the base for students and a network of scholars that continues to grow and is well represented in this volume. (Michael Meyen and Stefanie Averbeck-Lietz studied with Kutsch in Leipzig, and Thomas Wiedemann and Maria Löblich are former students of Meyen’s in Munich.) This network of scholars has developed a theoretically informed history of the field that draws upon European sociology of knowledge, particularly Pierre Bourdieu, opens into comparative and cross-national directions, and combines attention to ideas, persons, institutions, and contexts (see e.g. Löblich and Scheu, 2011; Meyen, 2012). In the U.S., James Carey influenced or taught a number of scholars who formed a looser but analogous network.

Outside the U.S. and Germany, distinct perspectives arose on the history of communication studies in pioneering efforts that catalyzed broader lines of inquiry represented across this volume. Finnish scholars led the way with a Nordic history of the field (see Pietilä, Malmberg, and Nordenstreng, 1990 and subsequent work by all three authors); Tore Slaata extends it here (chapter 8). Latin Americans took up cross-national perspectives that cut across the region and critically examined patterns of influence from elsewhere. It fed a distinctive regional style of history that has sometimes taken a long view dating back to the pre-Columbian era, cast attention across the Ibero-American world, and attended carefully to larger geopolitical forces and institutional structures within a framework attentive to the sociology of knowledge (see Fuentes Navarra, chapter 15; Vassalo de Lopes and Romancini, chapter 16). In Canada, whose rich tradition of historical studies of media date back to the 1940s and ‘50s, the history of the field also came in for close attention that combined institutional, intellectual, and biographical approaches (e.g. the Canadian
Journal of Communication 25.1 [2000]; see Darroch, chapter 13). In the U.K. and
Australia, the history of Cultural Studies came in for treatment (e.g. Turner, 1990),
as did the history of mass communication research (see Lodge, chapter 9).

A more international view haltingly appeared, too. The new Slovenian journal
Javnost (5.1 [1998]) addressed communication research in Asia, the Arab World,
and Europe—regions and historiographical subjects represented in multiple chap-
ters that follow. The International Encyclopedia of Communication (2008) included
entries on communication as an academic field in ten world regions, providing
useful overviews, albeit of varying quality. In the last decade, a number of works
have pushed the international view further (Averbeck, 2001, 2008; Averbeck-Lietz,
2012; Malmberg, 2005; Vroons, 2005; Park and Pooley, 2008 Simonson and Peters,
2008; Pietilä, 2008; Islas and Arribas, 2010; Koivisto and Thomas, 2010; Simonson

Still, a recent analysis of the English-language literature indicates some of the
limitations in what we know. Surveying more than 1,600 publications, Pooley and
Park (2013) found that more than 70 percent of the work dealt with Anglophone
North America and Western Europe. The overwhelming majority was limited to
single nation-states. They also classified work through a useful fourfold heuristic
for historiographical approaches: field-centric versus contextual and intellectual
versus institutional history. Field-centric histories focus on developments within a
discipline while contextual illuminate the surrounding environment (e.g. funding,
geopolitics, and surrounding disciplines). Intellectual histories then trace ideas and
their influence while institutional narratives center on the social organization of
research. More than two thirds of all entries were field-centric and intellectual,
with institutions and contexts receiving far less attention. This has been true of a
great deal of American work, well represented by the nation-bound, field-centric,
and overwhelmingly intellectual centennial history of the U.S. National Com-
munication Association (Gehrke and Keith, 2015). In comparison, histories ema-
nating from Latin America, the Nordic region, and other locations outside the
presumed intellectual centers have long been deeply attentive to cross-national
flows and comparative analysis. In this regard, “peripheries” have arguably led the
way toward understandings of communication study as a global development.

Transnational Turns

In recent years, recognizing that fields are not confined by the borders of
nation-states, historians of the human sciences have developed transnational
frameworks of analysis. Transnational history takes shape alongside comparative,
international, world, and global history, each of which, despite important differ-
ences from the others, has been “characterized by a desire to break out of the
nation-state or singular nation-state as the category of analysis, and especially to
eschew the ethnocentrism that once characterized the writing of history in the
West” (Bayly et al., 2006, 1441). This volume participates in those trends, aiming
to break free from the nation-bound ethnocentrism that has at least implicitly marked the ways we have understood the development of Communication in the twentieth century. As a collection, it takes a deeply international perspective, offering storylines and contexts that traverse world regions. To varying degrees, all the essays in the volume draw attention to multiple national settings. Some essays go further, offering comparative analyses as well (e.g. Ribeiro, chapter 7; Löblich and Averbeck-Lietz, chapter 1). And more than a few chapters chart decidedly transnational dimensions of the history of Communication, attending to “connections across national boundaries and the circulation of ideas, people, and products these enable” (Heilbron et al., 2008, 147).

Transnational histories of Communication focus on movements of people, texts, ideas, methods, paradigms, organizations, and research initiatives. They typically emphasize how those movements and cross-border interactions serve not merely as lines of transmission or dissemination but are rather constitutive of Communication as an organized endeavor. As we elaborate below, three mechanisms are particularly relevant in structuring such transnational flows: (a) international scholarly institutions and social networks; (b) the transnational mobility of scholars; and (c) the geopolitics of transnational exchange through nonacademic institutions (Heilbron et al., 2008). This framework thus makes room for people, social relationships, institutions, geographical movement, and politics of all scales. Maria Löblich and Stefanie Averbeck-Lietz (chapter 1) propose an overarching theoretical heuristic for it, combining one important type of transnational history, histoire croisée (entangled history), with comparative analysis—the former emphasizing flows and cross-national dynamics, the latter similarities and differences between national contexts. Their turn toward flows can be compared to Karen Aschraft and Peter Simonson’s (chapter 2), which draws upon post-humanist and feminist theory in a theoretical framework of communication study as gendered work that opens toward transnational movement as well.

Though histories typically haven’t tended to amplify the fact, transnational movements of people, ideas, and institutional initiatives have long had major impacts on the development of communication study. Nineteenth-century European texts and ideas about newspapers, publics, and social communication influenced thinking in many parts of the world, and European universities educated sociologists, philosophers, and literary scholars who would make major contributions to communication study in the first half of the twentieth century (Lang, 1996; Hardt, 2001). Émigré scholars fled Nazi-controlled Europe in the 1930s (Averbeck, 2001), bringing Viennese and German modes of research to North America, the Netherlands, and the U.K through figures like Herta Herzog (Klaus and Seethaler, chapter 11), Paul Lazarsfeld, and Kurt Baschwitz. The Englishman Charles Siepmann migrated for personal reasons that same decade, bringing his British social democratic sensibilities to American media research and policy circles (Pickard, chapter 12). Gallup-style methods of scientific public opinion polling spread from the U.S. to Europe and Latin America in the 1940s.
After the war, communication research spread through transnational and governmental organizations and flows of people and texts. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was a major force (Wagman, chapter 3), and among other initiatives founded the International Association for Mass Communication Research (IAMCR; see Meyen, chapter 4). Governmental and non-governmental agencies from the global North brought mass communication research to the South in the form of development research in the 1950s and ’60s, funding initiatives, founding institutes, and funneling students toward U.S. universities (McAnany, 2012; here see Park and Grosse, chapter 14; Vassalo de Lopes and Romancini, chapter 16; Thomas, chapter 20; Skjerdal and Tomaselli, chapter 21; and Ayish, chapter 22). Texts flowed across oceans in sometimes complex patterns—for instance the 1960s and ’70s South American translations of European critical theories that found readers in Portugal and Spain (Ribeiro, chapter 7). Individual figures traveled widely for education, academic conferences, professional visits, or temporary and long-term employment.

The pace and volume of these flows have of course accelerated in the last two decades owing to digital media, systems of transportation, and available capital. They have fed the continued growth of communication research and education around the globe. Students enmeshed in global flows of media enroll in courses that promise relevance and, in some cases, the chance to work in media and communication industries. Graduate programs draw students from distant countries, a longer practice whose current form is underwritten by contemporary media and patterns of mobility (Park and Grosse, chapter 14). Digitization has intensified the flow of ideas, which circulate faster and more broadly. For those with access, texts from far away become available alongside other circulating texts and local forms of knowledge and belief. Transnational academic networks maintain themselves through email and travel to conferences. Computers, jets, high-speed trains, and automobile systems underwrite them. This volume was itself constituted through all of those things, as is your reading of it right now. It is no longer possible to be a reflexive scholar without attending to these patterns.

This collection offers genealogies of our presents, charting flows and transnational interactions mediated through institutions, individuals, networks, texts, and broader geopolitical landscapes over the past century. Transnational organizations and professional associations are key agents across a number of chapters. Mobile figures and at least hints of their social networks are actors in most chapters as well and centrally featured in several. These individuals aren’t advanced as great individuals (though many were quite impressive) but rather as institutionally constrained agents, members of generations, and participants in social networks of mutual influence. Chapters shed new light upon a remarkable array of men and women, remembered and forgotten, who engaged in communication study around the globe, from a variety of intellectual perspectives and with politics that ranged from liberal to fascist, communist, Zionist, and Afrocentric. Across those chapters, we gain a new sense of the international development of communication research and education.
A Short History of Communication Study

To help hold the volume together and orient readers new to the field, we close this Introduction with a short synthetic overview of the history of communication study. We gesture toward its long prehistory before moving to four main eras: (1) 1870–1938, when an intellectual problem space develops around communication and allied concepts, research begins to be organized and funded, and formal education begins in journalism, Zeitungswissenschaft (newspaper science), and speech; (2) 1939–1967, when a field named “Communication” is institutionalized in the U.S., moves into the commercial sphere, and as part of postwar American hegemony flows transnationally and entangles itself with other traditions and emergent forms of inquiry; (3) 1968–1988, when dominant paradigms were challenged from multiple quarters issuing in ferments that fundamentally altered the communication study socially, politically, and intellectually; and (4) 1989 to the present, when the field became increasingly global, with pronounced and competing tendencies toward pluralization of paradigms and subfields on the one hand, efforts to consolidate an overarching discipline of communication science on the other. Across the historical sketch, we conceive communication study as taking place in three broad ways: through pedagogy and educational systems, through practical application and other modes of reflective practice, and through research and theory. It is worth keeping in mind the ever-present historiographical limitations of narrativization and periodization. Many of the complications we face when attempting to tell Communication’s story stem from the fact that—despite the best efforts of those who have attempted to tidy it up with clean-cut narratives, founding fathers, and definitive moments—Communication’s history is shot through with contradictions, reversals, and complications. Historiographical fidelity demands that we not pretend otherwise.

To start with the long prehistory, we point toward the Greco-Latin rhetorical tradition as probably the most consequential form of proto-communication study, and one whose cross-border flows are deeply fitting for this volume. This is not to deny that other cultures have their own precepts about speech, which scholars of comparative and non-Western rhetoric have begun to excavate (see Swearingen, 2013), but the Greco-Latin tradition is distinctive partly because it took speech as a separate discipline. Mobility underwrote it from the time of its first teachers, the sophists who came to Athens as outsiders from other city-states. Rhetorikē, or the art of the public speaker, became a cornerstone of the Hellenistic educational system, spreading in time to Rome. The Latin tradition of rhetoric became part of European Christendom from St. Augustine forward. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it was carried across seas to European colonies and cultural contact zones in the Americas, India, and Japan, among other places.

Rhetoric came to be associated with communication in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, during which time the latter concept was beginning to take on new and expanded significance (Heyer, 1988; Sproule, 2015). Communication——in
the forms of print, literacy, and enlightenment—were the ends in view that separated educated classes from masses and civilized from “primitive” peoples who often lacked alphabetic writing. This became an article of faith for liberal modernity in Europe and its former colonies in the nineteenth century, with the “communication” idea having particular resonance in Anglo-American liberalism from John Locke to Graham Wallas and John Dewey (for a more extended discussion, see Simonson et al., 2013, 17–20).

1870–1938: Concepts and Domains of Social Attention Emerge

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, sociologists like Albert Schäffle in Germany and Charles Horton Cooley in the U.S. conceived communication as the central mechanism through which society constituted itself (Hardt, 2001; Simonson, 2010). By the 1920s, an intellectual problem space had opened around the idea of communication, particularly in the U.S., where it had both descriptive and normative dimensions connected to liberal democratic politics, moral progress, and community. In Germany, the preferred term would be Mitteilung (message), though the sociologist Karl Mannheim introduced Kommunikation into scholarly discourse in a 1924 paper (Averbeck, 2001).

Running parallel to the emergent discourse of communication was an increasing focus on newspapers as an object of study. In the nineteenth century, national histories of the press appeared in many countries, while writers like Alexis de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill connected newspapers to the formation of public opinion. In the first third of the twentieth century, journalism began to professionalize itself across a number of countries and became a subject taught in some universities. The U.S. and Germany led the way. The American model focused on the practical training of journalists and granted Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees. German Zeitungswissenschaft, meanwhile, conceived itself as a scientific discipline that broadly educated journalists and other professionals dealing with public affairs (Averbeck, 2001). Shaped by the influence of circulating texts and people, these models traveled to other countries in the interwar years (on China, see Hu, Ji, and Zhang, chapter 17). At Cambridge University, meanwhile, the literary critics Q.D. and F.R. Leavis turned to newspapers as key indicators of contemporary and historical culture in Britain, publishing studies that would influence Marshall McLuhan and Raymond Williams, laying down some of the roots for cultural studies of media in Canada and the U.K. respectively.

The interwar years brought an explosion of interest in phenomena that would, by the 1940s, be classed as forms of communication. In the U.S., the term mass communication was coined in the 1920s, spurred by the invention of radio broadcasting and soon coming to encompass newspapers, magazines, movies, and television as well. It was sometimes a rhetorical alternative to propaganda, which was the subject of worldwide attention after its use during World War I, spawning both research and educational efforts to promote a kind of critical literacy. Public
opinion was also an important focus. A cornerstone of liberal democratic ideology, it was an object for theory and empirical analysis alike, cutting across philosophy, sociology, political science, history and, until 1933, Zeitungswissenschaft; it was spurred by the growth of scientific polling after 1935. Public relations developed as a professional field in the interwar years, underscoring the social importance given to public communication captured by the new German term Publizistik coined by Karl Jäger (1926) as a more spacious alternative to Zeitungswissenschaft that captured publicity, media, and the formation of publics.

Other developments were also key. Radio was the dominant new medium, and in the 1930s it spawned its own empirical, theoretical, and educational initiatives. Some of the most influential research came out of the transnational vector extending from Vienna to New York City, and organized around Paul Lazarsfeld, Herta Herzog, and the networks of émigré and American researchers that passed through their Office of Radio Research (Klaus and Seethaler, chapter 11; Ashcraft and Simonson, chapter 2). This included the exiled Frankfurt School, which along with Lazarsfeld’s institutes is among the most written-about subjects in the history of communication and media studies. The Rockefeller Foundation played an important transnational role in developing the emergent field of study, providing fellowships for scholarly travel and underwriting research initiatives in U.S., Norway, France, and Latin America among other locations (Buxton, 2009; Averbeck-Lietz, 2012; Slaata, chapter 8). Based in New York and maintaining an office in Paris, Rockefeller provided scores of fellowships for European scholars to come to the U.S., including a number who studied media and communication. After 1933, this flow overlapped with the forced migration of Jewish scholars fleeing Germany and Nazi-controlled Europe. Finally, in the U.S. the discipline of speech organized itself, originally led by teachers of public speaking housed in English departments. Embracing both “speech science” and the humanistic study of “public address” (mostly oratory), teachers of speech formed their own professional association in 1915, three years after U.S. teachers of journalism had done the same. Scores of other professional associations would follow, mostly after 1945, helping to structure networks, research, education, status, and social perceptions of a field.


World War II and its geopolitical aftermaths played major roles in the organization and dissemination of Communication around the world. The warring nations waged some of their battles through propaganda and national morale campaigns that made use of all available channels of communication. In the U.S., these efforts utilized an empirical social scientific infrastructure that was the best developed in the world, which built social networks, methodologies, and bodies of knowledge alike. Through research coordinated by government agencies like the Office of War Information and the Library of Congress, researchers developed methods
of analyzing content and audience responses to purposive campaigns designed to mold sentiments and opinions of domestic and foreign audiences (Gary, 1999). These would migrate into the commercial sector, where through figures like Herta Herzog focused interviews and other audience analysis became staples of advertising and marketing research (Klaus and Seethaler, chapter 11). Questions of effects dominated, crowding out attention to meanings, policy, and control. After 1945, with “the European scientific infrastructure and human capital depleted by the war, the United States found itself in a dominant position that ensured the hegemony of its theoretical and organizational models” (Heilbron et al., 2008, 155). This was true across the social sciences, including the new and strategic field of mass communications research.

As term, idea, and field of study, communication was part of this hegemony, built out from the American domestic scene itself. As an important U.S. volume of essays observed, “nearly every thoughtful student of human behavior today, no matter what he calls his field, is likely to find something which he will have to call ‘communication’” (Bryson, 1948, 1–2). There were many tributaries to this broad river. One flowed through the communication movement in U.S. higher education, which advanced a model for the integrated teaching of reading, writing, speaking, and listening that cut back against specialization among disciplines (Finnegan and Wallace, 2015). In the late 1940s, the first departments of communication were established, Wilbur Schramm founded the Institute for Communications Research at the University of Illinois, and the National Society for the Study of Communication was established as an offshoot from the Speech Association of America (in 1969 it would become the International Communication Association, a year before the SAA renamed itself the Speech Communication Association; Meyen, chapter 4). The disciplines of speech and journalism slowly moved to embrace the term and paradigm of communication for their fields (Phillipsen, 2015; Eadie, 2011), though it was a better fit for social scientific modernizers than traditionalists in rhetoric or press history.

The dissemination and uptake of communication was complex and met by resistances and alternative traditions of inquiry. There are politics and cultural grammars to fields’ names. Driven by the U.S. delegation, in 1945 UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) added a fourth division devoted to Mass Communication as part of its founding mission. Conceiving mass media as means for advancing the mutual understanding of peoples, it linked open communication as a means for advancing peace, knowledge, and cultural expression. From 1947 on, UNESCO would organize surveys, develop on-the-ground research, and underwrite educational initiatives in Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa as well as establishing IAMCR (Wagman, chapter 3; Meyen, chapter 4; Vassallo de Lopes and Romancini, chapter 16; Thomas, chapter 20; Skjerdal and Tomaselli, chapter 21). The U.S. proposal was initially met with skepticism by delegates from other countries worried about domination by American media or attuned by their own wartime experiences to the propagandistic dangers of media.
Mass communication was also a distinctly American term that didn’t translate particularly well, which UNESCO would handle by also using the French l’information and the Spanish comunicación social. The Spaniard Juan Beneyto’s 1957 book Mass Communications was perhaps the only major Spanish-language book of the era to use the term, which he adopted as a means of taking a global approach, only to advance comunicación comunitaria (communitarian communication) as a preferred alternative (Ribeiro, chapter 7). The first Chinese translations of the term appeared at about the same time: “organization of mass transportation” and “transportation of the masses’ thought” indicating the cultural and linguistic challenge (Lin and Nerone, chapter 18).

The Germans would adopt Massenkommunikation, but through the 1950s Publizistik was the name for the field that concerned itself with media and public communication, replacing the discredited Zeitungswissenschaft (which had colluded with the Nazis) and representing an alternative to the harder, behavioral social science of U.S. mass communications research. The latter model would win out in the early 1960s, championed by the conservative pollster Elisabeth Noelle-Neuman, who had studied in the U.S. before the war and wrote a dissertation on American survey research (Löblich, 2007; Wiedemann, chapter 5; Thiele, chapter 6). Communication was not a word used in the opening volume of the Gazette, the Dutch journal whose vision of a reformulated European press science was consonant with Publizistik as advanced by Walter Hagemann. That field blended history and more humanistic interpretive methods in a field that would speak to scholars, practitioners, industries, and students alike. It was closer to the model represented in the U.S. by the British émigré Charles Siepmann than it was to Lazarsfeld’s or Schramm’s (see Pickard, chapter 12). In Paris, the American term found its way into the name of the important Centre d’Études de Communications de Masses, founded in 1962 by Roland Barthes and colleagues with Rockefeller Foundation support, but the dominant French model was instead a science of information initially guided by structuralism and social semiotics instead of U.S. functionalism or behaviorism (Averbeck, 2008; Löblich and Averbeck-Lietz, chapter 1). In the Nordic countries, where the exchange of ideas and personnel with the U.S. had a major impact on postwar social science, media research developed in ways that both bore the imprint of American hegemony and struck out in distinctive directions (Slaata, chapter 8).

Other, culturally oriented alternatives to U.S. mass communication research were articulated in Canada and Britain in the 1950s and 1960s. One was organized around the University of Toronto, where the political economist Harold Innis had taught and published highly original studies of media in history before his early death in 1952. As Michael Darroch shows (chapter 13), the interdisciplinary Explorations Group headed by Marshall McLuhan drew upon anthropology, literary studies, urban design, psychology, and political economy to work out a distinctive and highly creative understanding of communication and culture. Historically wide-ranging and comparative in its approach, the group was
made up of an international array of scholars whose cosmopolitan outlook connected them to varied intellectual influences. In contrast, Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart in the late 1950s adopted a more nationally-embedded understanding of media and communication, which as Tarmo Malmberg describes was “foocussed on the British working-class still clinging to its traditional way of life against Americanisation and ‘bourgeoisment’” (2005, 9). In 1964, Hoggart would establish the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, two years before the sociologist James Halloran founded the Centre for Mass Communication Research at the University of Leicester (Lodge, chapter 9). Birmingham would take off under Stuart Hall’s direction in the 1970s and achieve international fame a decade later. By then, British Cultural Studies was in deep conversation with Continental theory, assuming an internationalist stance even as it stayed rooted in British culture.

Outside the liberal democracies of the North Atlantic, communication study developed in the postwar era through particular kinds of transnational flows and national structures. Though ideologically similar, right-wing dictatorships in Spain and Portugal exerted different kinds of control over journalism and communication study, as Nelson Ribeiro shows in his beautiful comparative history (chapter 7). Influenced by Italian fascism, the Spanish government created official schools for journalists and other media professionals, allowed Catholic institutions like the University of Navarra to create a program, and promoted limited research under the concept of a “Spanish information doctrine.” Portugal, in contrast, had no university-based education in the subject until before democracy arrived in 1974, and its dictatorship never promoted research. Communist regimes in Eastern Europe typically exerted tight control over journalism education, which in some countries was extensively developed. (In the German Democratic Republic, for instance, there were more than 80 professors serving some 400 journalism students in the 1980s [Michael Meyen, personal communication]). In the more open national context of Yugoslavia, however, dominant Marxist tendencies overlaid traditions of Zeitungswissenschaft dating back to the interwar years and mixed with lines of U.S. intellectual influence facilitated in the 1960s by Fulbright Grants (P eruško and Vozab, chapter 10). In China, by contrast, where the People’s Republic was established in 1949, Marxist scholars drew upon Leninist and Maoist doctrine to articulate principles of news and propaganda that would advance the proletarian revolution and Marxist social evolution as organized by the Party (Hu, Ji, and Zhang, chapter 17). And at Hebrew University of Jerusalem, whose historical mission was intertwined with the project of Zionist nation building, Elihu Katz drew upon American models to propose a new program in communication that combined research and professional training (First and Adoni, chapter 23).

While the Chinese and Soviets yoked media to different kinds of Marxist theories of modernization, the U.S. pursued its own geopolitical interests. One took the form of government-sponsored psychological warfare, which made use
of communication researchers to wage Cold War battles for hearts and minds (Simpson, 1994). Another, intertwined strand ran through liberal modernization theory, which was a part of American foreign policy and development work and cast mass communication as a means of public education and the diffusion of modern ideas and practices in traditional societies. The development paradigm for mass communication research spread across the Global South in the 1950s and 1960s through national and international agencies, the mobility of scholars, and the movement of texts shaped by the geopolitical climate of the Cold War. It also appealed to “a technocratic ethos suiting modernizing national elites” in the so-called Third World (Heilbron et al., 2008, 156). Students came to the U.S. to study at Stanford, Michigan State, and other research universities (Park and Grosse, chapter 14). In the Arab Middle East (Ayish, chapter 22), Sub-Saharan Africa (Skjerdal and Tomaselli, chapter 21), Latin America (Fuentes Navarro, chapter 15; Vasallo de Lopes and Romancini, chapter 16), India (Thomas, chapter 20), and elsewhere, development research mediated North-South flows of perceived expertise about mass communication. At the same time, politics of national autonomy and regional solidarity countermanded, fueled in the late 1950s and early 1960s by African Independence Movements, the Cuban Revolution, the pan-Arabism of Egypt’s Gamal Abdel Nasser, and the Non-Aligned Movement, among other forces.

Ferments in the Field, 1968–1988

The iconic year 1968 is a convenient but imprecise shorthand for marking political and intellectual unrest that played out globally, setting changes in motion that would deeply alter communication study over the next decades. Radical protests involving workers and students erupted around the world, fed by a mix of local and transnational forces that included the flow of media images of protests. Cutting across culture and politics and blurring the difference between them, unrest that reached its peak that year challenged establishment lines of authority. Anti-American sentiments were widespread, fueled by a war in Vietnam that many considered to be unjust and imperialist. Universities were hotbeds of ferment that helped organize an international New Left devoted to change. From very different quarters, Mao’s Cultural Revolution in China reached its peak the same year, purging “impure” elements and persecuting intellectuals. In complex and sometimes competing ways, these and other forces would reshape communication study.

These changes played out across communication research and education alike, expressed both intellectually and sociologically. The women’s movement fueled feminist critiques of media and other social institutions, including the university and its dominant forms of knowledge production. Women entered the professoriate in some countries, and in the 1970s and 1980s organized caucuses within academic associations in communication. While there had been a handful of female
academic communication researchers in the 1950s and 1960s (see Thiele, chapter 6; Ashcraft and Simonson, chapter 2), they now began to develop social networks and collective consciousness. Civil rights and anti-colonial movements opened up new space for members of racial minorities and other non-dominant groups to develop analogous critiques and begin to find more opportunities within academia, though progress was slow (see Jackson and Givens, 2006). Undergraduate students demanded relevance in their courses, a sentiment that gave new appeal to Communication. From very different quarters, expanding media industries influenced undergraduate education systems around the world as well, increasing the demand for professional and technical training. As a UNESCO study of mass communication teaching confirmed, tensions between professional training and academic instruction were prevalent around the world (Katzen, 1975), an issue that persists today.

Intellectually, the fervor of 1968 catalyzed critiques of dominant, American-style objectivist social scientific research. They arose from multiple quarters, resulting in an intellectual and political “ferment in the field,” in the title of the landmark 1983 special issue of the *Journal of Communication* (33.3). Behaviorism and structural-functionalism were seen as deeply flawed, premised on a scientific universalism that undervalued particular cultural meanings and a liberal pluralism that valorized centrist consensus over conflict and voices from the social margins. Technocratic social engineering was critiqued in the name of participatory democracy. Development organized by experts and institutions from the Global North were recast as elements of a larger neocolonial dependency, an argument that had been articulated by the Latin American Left since the early 1960s. By the early 1970s, it was joined to critiques of “cultural imperialism” and taken up in the Arab world, Sub-Saharan Africa, and elsewhere (Ayish, chapter 22; Skjerdal and Tomaselli, chapter 21). The Brazilian philosopher-educator Paulo Freire penned an influential 1969 critique of rural development efforts in the name of “dialogic communication,” contributing to a broader paradigm of “participatory communication” that would be a hallmark of Latin American thought from the 1970s forward (Vasallo de Lopes and Romancini, chapter 16).

Marxist and neo-Marxist theory circulated widely, sometimes linking itself with turns toward processes of cultural meaning making as embedded in media, language use, and the interpretive processes of people. French semiotics, structuralism, and post-structuralism provided a base with which to understand and critique broad systems of signification and the lines of socio-political power that maintained patterns of domination. The Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks* were translated into English, French, German, and Arabic in the early 1970s, making his concept of hegemony widely available and advancing understanding of how power is maintained through communication and culture. (Latin American translations had appeared in Spanish in 1950 and Portuguese in 1966.) Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was translated into English in 1972, a year before Martin Jay’s (1973) important study of the Frankfurt School.
Under the leadership of the Jamaican-born Stuart Hall (1968–1979), the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham developed powerful new critical frameworks for understanding hegemony and resistance, establishing a loose and sometimes anarchic set of approaches that took root in the U.S. and around the globe.

A distinctively Latin American cultural studies also took root in the 1970s and 1980s, like its British variant growing originally out of literary studies (see del Sarto, Ríos, and Trigo, 2004). It overlapped with a Latin Americanization of communication study in the region that was paralleled in the 1970s and 1980s by analogous efforts in Africa and the Arab world (Fuentes Narvarro, chapter 15; Ayish, chapter 22; Skjerdal and Tomaselli, chapter 21) and, in a more complex way, in China (Hu, Ji, and Zhang, chapter 17; Lin and Nerone, chapter 18). They all included both intellectual projects to develop theories arising from the cultures of the regions and institutional efforts to create professional associations, journals, and other infrastructure for the field, which have grown steadily around the world since the 1970s.

The post-1968 era also witnessed a growing internationalization in communication research as an organized activity. Institutionally, this was driven by globally focused organizations like UNESCO and IAMCR, as well as transnational regional associations like Nordicom (the Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research, est. 1972) and the Latin American Association of Information and Communication (ALAIC, est. 1972). In the 1970s, UNESCO and members of the Non-Aligned Movement advanced the idea of a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) that would remedy the deep discrepancies across developed and developing regions (see Wagman, chapter 3; Fuentes–Narvarro, chapter 15; Ayish, chapter 22). IAMCR, always the most international of all the professional associations in communication, provided an organized base for Non-Aligned voices too, but also for alliances between researchers in Communist Eastern Europe (especially the German Democratic Republic) and critical scholars from the West (Meyen, chapter 4). Following its own unique path, in China, where the Cultural Revolution had severely limited communication research from 1966–1976, the 1980s marked a new era of openness to the outside world that also included the importation of Western theories of communication, which occasioned an invited visit by Wilbur Schramm in 1982 (Lin and Nerone, chapter 18). The geopolitics of the field cut in multiple directions.

1989–Present: Neoliberalism, Global Growth, Pluralization, Discipline

We might mark the most recent era of communication study with the revolutions that began in Eastern Europe in 1989, resulting in the fall of communism, the end of the Cold War, and the acceleration of neoliberalism as transnational phenomenon altering the shape of media, education, and much else. Since that time, digital
technologies have transformed communication practices, media industries, and social imaginaries. These developments would create new national and transnational spaces for Communication, enhance the social and occupational relevance of education in the subject, and shape both the topics of research and the means of conducting it. Since the early 1990s, there has been a dramatic growth in undergraduate and graduate education and research around the world, leading to a situation that some Germans have called “the ‘Unübersichtlichkeit’ of the field”—a lack of clarity and an inability to gain a comprehensive view of it in both its units and contradictions (Koivisto and Thomas, 2010, 27). It is a situation marked at once by the pluralization of subfields, paradigms, and communities of scholars and by efforts to organize an overarching scientific discipline of communication on the other (Craig, 2008).

Since the early 1990s, communication study has grown dramatically around the world, fed by the growth of information societies, media consumption, and public discourses about the widespread social importance of communication (Donsbach, 2006). This is true both in nations where before it had relatively limited presence and in those with longer standing traditions. In Eastern Europe, the field began to take off after the fall of communism. Courses, departments, journals, and professional associations were formed, and people and information flowed more freely with the unlocking of earlier restrictions (Perusko and Vozab, chapter 10). On the Iberian Peninsula, where democracies supplanted fascist regimes in the late 1970s, Communication has experienced a boom since the 1990s. Undergraduate programs have proliferated, graduate education has become firmly established, and research output exploded (Ribeiro, chapter 7). In Africa, where multi-party democracies replaced many dictatorships in the 1990s, educational programs, scholarly exchanges, and research all expanded, though the continent continue to lag behind other regions (Skjerdal and Tomaselli, chapter 21). In the Arab world, where satellite television networks like Al Jazeera and other transnational media have linked the region since the 1990s, and privatization opened new career possibilities, undergraduate education has also grown significantly. Flows of graduate students have shifted from the U.S. toward Europe, enhancing critical and qualitative research organized through newly formed national and regional professional associations (Ayish, chapter 22). In Israel, where Hebrew University had maintained a monopoly on communication study since its inception in the mid-1960s, new departments were formed, often peopled with U.S.-trained doctorates (Adoni and First, chapter 23). Meanwhile, students and research outputs have continued to grow in the U.S. and in Germany, where after reunification in 1991 professors from the former West Germany moved into positions in the former East.

New and existing organizations facilitated the transnational development of research. By the late 1990s, the U.S.-based International Communication Association was taking steps to merit the first word in its name, though lines of American hegemony persisted through training of international students, exported textbooks, and geo-institutional control of the scientific capital that helped maintain
lines of power in the field (Meyen, 2012, ch. 4). English increasingly became the lingua franca for research, and young scholars in Europe faced pressures to publish in that language (Löblich and Averbeck-Lietz, chapter 1). This was true within the region as well, seen for instance in the new European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA, est. 2005), which conducts most of its business in English and is dominated by Northern Europeans. This continues to disadvantage scholars not proficient in English, a competency with its own geography and global lines of power.

In this context of growth, subfields and journals proliferate, and multiple intellectual traditions and paradigms inform research and teaching around the world. The politically charged ferment of the post-1968 era has settled out and changed locations and forms. Scholars and students alike continue to draw upon communication knowledge for activist ends. Practitioners in the whole range of communication-related industries and occupations engage in reflective practice through organizations and routines that are informed by social and technical knowledge generated through organized communication study as it has developed over the last century. Research proliferates in ways that no one can stay abreast of. Encyclopedias and handbooks appear in great numbers, each attempting to organize knowledge and focus fields of study and feeding an academic publishing industry that takes its place among other media industries in our neoliberal global present. Some argue that communication is or should be a social scientific discipline, while others insist that it is a looser field made up of variably interdisciplinary subfields—one of which is the history of the field and study of communication. Despite rapid growth, Communication continues to lag the longer-established human sciences in what scientific capital and authority (Meyen, 2012). The chapters in this volume speak into that moment and aim to give a pluralistic account of the international history of communication study.1

Note

1 The authors would like to thank Ted Striphas, Karen Ashcraft, Michael Meyen, and Raúl Fuentes Navarro for their generous and very helpful comments on earlier drafts of this Introduction.

References


