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—David K. Perry

REFERENCES


Varieties of Pragmatism and Communication: Visions and Revisions From Peirce to Peters

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During the past two decades, literature on pragmatism has exploded. From philosophy to film studies, from law to literary criticism, and from history to religion to communication studies, pragmatism has a new generation of defenders and interpreters. This sometimes breathtaking array of thought should remind us that pragmatism is, as it has always been, a many splendored thing.

Amid plurality, pragmatism has always concerned itself with communication. The current revival offers communication studies an opportunity to rethink and creatively revise its canon. This chapter aims to contribute to that process by revisiting first-generation pragmatism and reviewing revivalist work relevant to the field. I draw attention to pragmatist studies in communication from the late 19th century through the contemporary revival, and I highlight the exciting new intellectual lineage established by revisionist work. This is a project of excavation and review intended to make overlooked texts available as resources for theory, criticism, and other practices within the field. Communication studies would be richer, I argue, if we revisited classic texts and expanded our intellectual canons.

Pragmatism can be approached as a doctrine or a historical tradition. As a doctrine (or method or habit of thought), it typically has advanced the notion that the consequences of their adoption determines the meaning of ideas, truth of propositions, or value of proposed actions. Thus, pragmatism has often tied knowledge to social practices and ethics, taken inquiry as communal and historically situated, and held that the world is open ended and in process. It also typically has rejected hard dualisms of mind and body, knowledge and action, fact and value, individual and society.
However, one must tread cautiously with generalizations. From the beginning, pragmatism has been pluralistic.

Alternatively, one can understand pragmatism as a tradition that is partly constituted by arguments about its meaning and historical lineage. I favor this tack. As a tradition, certain recurring themes, including the idea of communication and allied concepts, have marked it. Like doctrinal pragmatism, however, the deeply plural tradition resists overarching characterizations. The misleading idea exists that pragmatism is distinctly American, but from the beginning, encounters with Continental thought have fundamentally shaped its arguments. Moreover, Continental thinkers have defended it staunchly. Views colored by American exceptionalism are simply inadequate.

I break the tradition down into three main categories. It was classically articulated by Peirce, James, Dewey, and Mead, each of whom formulated ideas and habits of inquiry relevant to contemporary communication studies. Pragmatism then moved beyond that core and in the first half of the 20th century had important defenders not always recognized as pragmatists. This group included Jane Addams, George Santayana, W. E. B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, Walter Lippmann, and C. Wright Mills. Together they pushed the tradition beyond the Protestant Yankee establishment of White males and developed pragmatism’s aesthetics, criticism, sociology, politics, and racial theory. Finally, pragmatism has experienced an energetic revival in the late 20th century, and the final section of the chapter sketches some of its most important theorists. Like their precursors, the revivalists are a diverse lot collectively concerned with communication. Their work ranges from the grand German philosophy of Jürgen Habermas and Karl-Otto Apel to Stanley Fish’s literary antithesis to the varied, politically accented work of Richard Rorty, Richard Bernstein, Nancy Fraser, and Cornel West. They also include three heavyweight theorists in the field of communication—James Carey, Michael Schudson, and John Peters. Together they have replayed the intellectual roles of Dewey, Lippmann, and James and given the tradition a high-profile presence in American communication studies.

PRAGMATISM AND COMMUNICATION IN THE FIRST GENERATION

Pragmatism emerged between the Civil War and World War I paradigmatically in the work of Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), William James (1842–1910), John Dewey (1859–1952), and George Herbert Mead (1863–1931). This was a group of cultural insiders. All were Yankee WASPs trained in or with sympathy for science, with deep interest in Charles Darwin and serious, although varied, encounters with religion. In their milieu, agnosticism was establishing its first cultural beachheads, the academy was becoming professionalized, modern social science was taking root, and positivism was vying for intellectual hegemony with a revived Absolute Idealism. All of these things shaped first-generation pragmatism.

Despite similarities, the classic pragmatists forged distinct and sometimes competing modes of thought, and they bear different legacies for communication studies. One can begin by distinguishing Cambridge from Chicago pragmatism, with Peirce and James in the former camp, Dewey and Mead in the latter. The Cambridge duo was half a generation older, sat uneasily with the emerging research university, and was never attracted to Hegel in the way Dewey and Mead once were. Although the Chicago pragmatists eventually rejected philosophical Idealism, they brought from Hegel a communitarian social ontology that eventually led them to give the idea of communication a central place in their thought. Although attentive to communication, the Cambridge pragmatists never gave the term the same explicit attention. Still they offer important things to communication studies: Peirce a highly sophisticated semiotic theory and links between knowledge, reality, and communicative practices; and James a mode of inquiry open to the radically other and unwilling to reduce pluralistic truths to a singular system.

Cambridge Beginnings

Pragmatism traces its roots to an early 1870s reading group that half ironically called itself The Metaphysical Club. The Harvard-based group included James, Peirce, Nicholas St. John Green, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Chauncey Wright. All had either legal or scientific training, and each wanted to explore the implications of Darwinian theory. Green, largely forgotten today, urged the others to examine the practical significance of every proposition and, according to Peirce, insisted belief was “that upon which a man is prepared to act.” Here appeared one important element of pragmatist thought (Kuklick, 1977, pp. 48–45; Peirce, 1906, p. 270; see also Brent, 1993, chap. 2; Wiener, 1949, chap. 2).

As a material souvenir of the group, Peirce wrote an essay in 1872 (published as “How to Make Our Ideas Clear”) that set out key principles later associated with pragmatism. Attacking Cartesian introspective inquiry, Peirce (1878/1955a) argued that “the whole function of thought is to produce habits of action” and “what a thing means is simply what habits it in-

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1Because space is limited, I ignore Oliver Wendell Holmes (1841–1935) and the tradition of legal pragmatism. Readers interested in that area might begin with Grey (1989), Posner (1992), and Brint and Weaver (1991).
In much of Peirce's work, the key habit was disciplined scientific investigation. Inquiry was a decidedly communal affair, so communication was central. He defined truth and reality as "the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate" (p. 38). Logic was also "rooted in the social principle" (1878/1955b, p. 162) and inquiry conducted not by solitary thinkers but rather "for the community of philosophers" (1868/1955, p. 229). Peirce offered an anti-Cartesian philosophy opposed to monological reason and the introspective method and committed instead to communication as the basis of truth, logic, and, in Peirce's (e.g., 1893/1955) grander religious moments, evolutionary love.

Peirce began developing his important semiotic theory in the late 1860s. As James Hoopes has pointed out, it offers an alternative to the Continental tradition that emerged from Ferdinand de Saussure's lectures on linguistics (1906-1911) that subsequently shaped poststructuralism and Marxian cultural studies. While Saussure posited two elements arbitrarily connected with one another, signer and signified (elements Derrida destabilized into endless free play), Peirce's system had three elements: object, sign, and interpretant (see e.g., Peirce, 1868/1955, 1873/1991, 1897/1955; Hoopes, 1991). A sign stands for an object to an interpretant, which is a subsequent thought or action that determines the meaning of the sign. Thoughts are themselves signs that give rise to other signs, including the sign that is the self? The interpretant anchors the signifying process with disciplined habits of thought and action. As a result, "Peirce's semiosis was constructive rather than deconstructive" (Hoopes, 1991, p. 3; see also Eco, 1995; Habermas, 1995, Liszka, 1996, chap. 1; Lyne, 1980).

Although Peirce probably coined the word pragmatism, calling it from Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, the term did not appear in print until William James' 1898 "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results," a work that represents the first rupture in pragmatism. James credited Peirce with the principle, but quickly added that pragmatism "should be expressed more broadly." For James (1898/1992),

the effective meaning of any philosophical proposition can always be brought down to some particular consequence, in our future practical experience, whether active or passive; the point lying rather in the fact that the experience must be particular, than the fact that it must be active. (p. 1080)

This call to particularity departed from Peirce, who in 1903 distanced himself from James by dubbing his own doctrine pragmaticism (see Apel,

Although poststructuralism has given it new resonance, the trope of the self as sign has a long history of Christian expression; Royce used Peirce's semiotics for explicitly religious ends in The Problem of Christianity (1918/1968, chaps. 11, 14), the last important idealist work in the United States.

1981, chap. 8; cf. Hookway, 1985, 1997). James gave the doctrine a public face in 1906 to 1907, delivering lectures at the Lowell Institute in Boston that would become Pragmatism (1907/1981), arguably the most important first-generation document. Soon after, Arthur Lovejoy (1908) counted no less than 13 pragmatisms in circulation. Meanwhile, James defended himself in an overlooked article called "The Pragmatist Account of Truth and its Misunderstanders" (1908/1987). There he pushed the idea of particularity more explicitly, saying pragmatism was about pragmata, "things in their plurality" (p. 931). James was developing a kind of nominalism—an emphasis on particulars at odds with Peircean system and grander semiotic theory. Although Peirce had seen pragmatism as a principle of logic that might aid science, James moved the doctrine in more modernist directions and took it as a philosophical attitude instead (Hookway, 1997).

Chicago Pragmatism and the Idea of Communication

Although Cambridge pragmatism had roots in the Metaphysical Club, the grandest metaphysician of all—G. W. F. Hegel—infected neither Peirce nor James. This was not true of Dewey and Mead. Their Chicago social pragmatism owed much to what Dewey later called the Hegelian bacillus, which was widespread in the Anglo-American world between the Civil War and World War I. Jamesian pluralism, on the other hand, was forged in what he called a death grapple of an embrace with his idealist colleague Josiah Royce (cited in Conant, 1997), as well as criticisms of other Hegelianisms from the 1880s on (see also Kuklick, 1977; Sprigge, 1997). Royce was just one of many important idealists of a period that also included the old Walt Whitman, Charles Horton Cooley, and the British philosophers T. H. Green and F. H. Bradley. In the first generation, idealism served as a rhetorical counterforce shaping pragmatism.

For Dewey and Mead, however, Hegel served a positive resource. Both men drew deeply from the idealist well before renouncing its drink in the mid-1890s. Their mature social theories can be read as Hegel decapitated, lopping off Absolute Spirit but maintaining a social ontology where individuals are always already social beings. In places, the mystic term communication plays the part of Hegelian spirit, and Dewey's and Mead's use of it owes more to Hegel than to anything Peirce or James said. From this perspective, the fact that James rarely used the words communication or community is of a piece with his rejection of Hegel (but see McDermott, 1986).

3For good accounts of Dewey's encounters with Hegel, see Westbrook (1991), Coughlan (1972), and Kuklick (1985). For Mead, see Joas (1991) and Cook (1993). For idealism's encounters with communication, see Peters (1999b, chap. 5).
Jamesian psychology (e.g., 1890) helped turn Dewey in more naturalistic, less idealistic directions, but the two men had important differences. Dewey appreciated the biological basis of Jamesian psychology, along with the contention that the mind is a "fighter for ends" in purposeful action (Westbrook, 1991, p. 666). At the same time, James had Emersonian appreciation for individual experience and the depths of privacy, and Dewey criticized what he saw as dualism and subjectivism in the older man's thinking. Although James (and Peirce) affirmed or left open belief in the supernatural, "Dewey often wrote as if no educated twentieth-century man or woman who understood the scientific method and trusted experience could responsibly give credence to the idea of the transcendent" (Rockefeller, 1991, pp. 370-380). Although Dewey wrote about religion, he domesticated and naturalized it and was never disposed to study the loneliness, extraordinary phenomena James chronicled in Varieties of Religious Experience (Coughlan, 1973, pp. 67-68, 111-112; Rockefeller, 1998).

James' attitude toward the supernatural was at bottom an openness to the radically other, something Dewey rarely displayed. As Cavell (1998) wrote, "William James characteristically philosophizes off of the language of the street, which he respects and wishes to preserve." In Dewey, by contrast, "the speech of others, whose ideas Dewey wishes to correct, or rather to replace ... hardly appears—as though the world into which he is drawn to intervene suffers from a well-defined lack or benightedness" (p. 75). James' openness to the language of the street and the experiences of mystics displayed an intellectual cosmopolitanism that Dewey never approached.

If Dewey was open to mysticism, it was mysticism in the service of communication—a term he began using in the mid-1890s. In 1920, for instance, blissfully removed from the postwar cynicism affecting others, Dewey (1920/1948) wrote that,

when the emotional force, the mystic force one might say, of communication, of the miracle of shared life and shared experience is spontaneously felt, the hardness and crudeness of contemporary life will be bathed in the light that never was on land or sea. (p. 211)

In that same work, he suggested that, "distance is an obstacle, a source of trouble," a condition that communication technologies aimed to overcome (pp. 118-119). If mystery appears in Dewey, it is that of social communion. He stresses closeness, not distance, and arguably collapses the world into the social.

Together with his colleague, Mead, Dewey developed a social pragmatism that by 1903 was linked to "the Chicago school." Mead studied under both Royce and James at Harvard in the late 1880s. Like Dewey, he remained an idealist in the early 1890s. Mead quickly fell under Dewey's spell when the two taught at Michigan. "I have gained more from him than from any one man I ever met," Mead said of Dewey in 1892 (cited in Cook, 1993, p. 32). In 1894, both moved to Chicago, where they participated in the Settlement House movement of Jane Addams and in other Progressive social reform causes. There they developed a pragmatism distinct from those of James and Peirce.

Communication was one key element of Chicago-school pragmatism. Dewey remembered later that reading James' Psychology led him "straight to the perception of the importance of distinctive social categories, especially communication and participation" (Dewey, 1930/1962, p. 25). Nonetheless, Dewey's earliest use of communication draws as much on Hegelian social ontology as Jamesian theory of the mind or the social self. His first treatment of the concept probably occurred in an unpublished paper from around 1895, "Plan of Organization of the University Primary School." Addressing a subject that would long concern him, Dewey wrote, "The ultimate problem of all education is to co-ordinate the psychological and the social factors... [T]he child [needs] be capable of expressing himself, but in such a way as to realize social ends" (Dewey, 1895/1972, p. 224; see also 1899/1976, pp. 29-31). Communication named one important mode for this socially anchored expressiveness. For Dewey, it included speech, writing, reading, drawing, molding, modeling, and literature. Together with carpentry, sewing, and cooking, which he called direct modes of expression, communication lay at the heart of Dewey's socially organic curriculum (1895/1972, p. 231 passim).

*James began an appreciative review of a 1903 Chicago publication of Dewey, Mead, and others, Studies in Logical Theory, with a way remark that revealed some of the different intellectual disposition between himself and Dewey: "Chicago has a School of Thought—a school of thought which, it is safe to predict, will figure in literature as the School of Chicago for twenty-five years to come. Some universities have plenty of thought to show, but no school, others plenty of school, but no thought. The University of Chicago, by its Decennial Publications, shows real thought and a real school. Professor John Dewey, and at least ten of his disciples, have collectively put into the world a statement" (James, 1903/1987, p. 1136).

*Mead and Dewey rarely criticized each other, and both were critical of what they saw as the remnants of individualism and dualism in James: "His individual had that in him which was not fashioned in the living process." Mead wrote in 1930 (in 1964, p. 386). For accounts of the relation between Dewey and Mead, see Cook (1993, pp. 27-47, 68-70, 161-166); Coughlan (1973, pp. 112-134, 143-150), and Joas (1985, pp. 35-39, 64-68). For Dewey's and Mead's social reform efforts and relation to Jane Addams, see Westbrook (1991, chap. 4), Ryan (1995, chap. 4), Rockefeller (1991, pp. 205-212, 2281), Deegan (1988, chap. 5), Cook (1993, chap. 7), and Shafin (1991).
Dewey's first extended treatment of communication did not come until 1916, however. By then, both Mead and Michigan's Charles Horton Cooley had made important statements of the concept. Idealism was an important backdrop for each. Communication technologies had resonated with Mead during his Hegelian days. In 1892, he wrote a friend that "the telegraph and locomotives are the great spiritualizers of society because they bind man and man so close together ... bringing the day when every man will be my neighbor ... and acts shall be not simply ours but the processes of the great body politic which is God revealed in the universe" (quoted in Cook, 1993, p. 31). Cooley, an unrefined idealist who, like Mead, contributed to the nascent field of social psychology, had been writing about communication since his 1894 dissertation, The Theory of Transportation. His 1909 Social Organization remains one key document of the first era that explicitly theorized communication (see Czitrom, 1982; Peters, 1999b, pp. 184–188 passim).

Contemporaneously with Cooley, Mead turned to communication more explicitly in a series of articles beginning in 1909. The term helped him fill in his anti-Cartesian view of a social self fundamentally forged in relationship with others. As Lys (1994) showed, Mead's theory drew on James' writings on the social self, the 1890s revival of Adam Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments and its account of sympathy, and Gabriel Tarde's (1890) Laws of Imitation. Against Tarde, Mead argued that society and self grew out of "ceaseless interaction," not imitation—out of communication, a social process that originated in "cooperation, ... where conduct differed and yet where the act of the one answered to and called out the act of the other" (Mead, 1909/1964, pp. 98, 101).

During the next several years, Mead developed his social-self concept and added key notions of roles and taking the attitude of the other. These influenced symbolic interactionism and shaped both Burke's dramatism and Habermas' theory of communicative action and discourse ethics. In "The Social Self" (Mead, 1913/1964) called thought "an inner conversation" generated developmentally as children internalized the dramatic stage of actor and accompanying chorus (pp. 146–147). By 1922, he wrote of a "generalized other," whereby the individual addresses himself from the perspective of the whole group—a stance that opens out into a moral and social universalism (Mead, 1922/1964, pp. 245–246; see also 1927/1964, pp. 312–313; 1934/1962, pp. 152–164). In short, Mead tied social communication back to internalized voices and conversations. Out of that, he generated principles of cooperation, group identification, and moral life.

Although Mead is often considered to have followed Dewey's intellectual lead, that flow was reversed with regard to the concept of communication. Dewey wrote intermittently about communication from the mid-1890s, but his first extended treatment of the idea did not occur until 1916, seven years after Mead's had begun serious treatment of it. At the time, Dewey was 12 years out from leaving Chicago and Mead for Columbia, and to be sure, he added his own stamp to the concept—the experiment of communication, he called it, using his favorite scientific trope. However, when Dewey described communication as a process for getting outside one's experience and "seeing it as another would see it, considering which points of contact it has with the life of another," his views were very much consonant with Mead's (1916/1980, p. 8). Both offered philosophies for Progressive politics in which communication was the stuff of morally authentic communities pursuing common ends and cognizant of themselves as a collective.

Communication was most significant to Dewey during the interwar period, from Reconstruction in Philosophy (1920/1948) to Logic: The Theory of Inquiry (1935/1986). As he made clear in a critical response to Bertrand Russell, Dewey saw communication as central to the pragmatist doctrine, a doctrine he equated with "a belief that we do not fully know the meaning of anything till it has been imparted, shared, made common property" (1922/1983, p. 308). As Dewey made clear in Reconstruction, a series of lectures delivered in Tokyo in 1919, communication formed the foundation of "the modern sense of humanity and democracy" (1920/1948, p. 206). This was the land of social caste, emperor cults, and grand military symbols (Westbrook, 1991, pp. 240–242), and Dewey served as a kind of Progressive intellectual carpetbagger who preached the gospel of communication. For him, communication lay at the heart of knowledge, politics, morals, and social being.

Between 1925 and 1934, Dewey published four significant books that extended this project and added an aesthetic dimension. In Experience and Nature (1925/1981), he sometimes waxed rhapsodic," "That the fruit of communication should be participation is a wonder by the side of which transubstantiation pales" (p. 326). He also explored there the central issues for cultural studies of communication: communication as a mode of

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For good discussions of Mead's thought and its development in this period, see Joas (1985) and Cook (1991, 1993, chap. 4). For Mead's relation to symbolic interactionism, see Blumer (1969) and Maines and Couch (1988).

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8 Dewey's account of communication has received much attention. Carey's work in the mid-1970s is key here, especially his essay "Communication and Culture" (1975; reprinted in 1988). He made a strong impression on Daniel Czitrom, then a graduate student, whose Media and the American Mind (1982) still offers one of the best accounts of communication in the Progressive Era (see also Czitrom, 1990). Carey wrote two other important essays canonizing Dewey in 1982 and 1986 (1988, chaps. 3–4), and treatments of communication in Dewey followed (see e.g., Peters, 1989a, 1989b, 1999a, 1999b; Carey, 1988; Hardt, 1992; Jensen, 1995; Langsdorf & Smith, 1995; Schudson, 1998; Simonson, 1996).
generating meaning, establishing social order, and creating human experience, including aesthetic experience. The Public and Its Problems (1927/1984) responded to Walter Lippmann’s Public Opinion (1922/1997). It made communication a central component of democratic life, with “the winged words of conversation” giving breath to newspaper discourse in an early version of the two-step flow. Art as Experience (1934/1987) offered a democratic aesthetic theory and argued that all human activity could be artistic. Art was the consummation of experience and the enactment of social communion. It was an expressive and creative act of communication with the power “to merge different individualities in a common surrender, loyalty and inspiration” (1934/1987, p. 335). Finally, Logic: The Theory of Inquiry (1938/1986), the culmination of 40 years work in the theory of knowledge, portrayed inquiry as a social activity for which language, culture, and communication structure conditions of possibility (chap. 3).

REVISITING THE TRADITION, EXPANDING THE ANCESTRY

When John Dewey died in 1952 at age 92, his influence was near its low point. Pragmatism always had critics, but by the 1940s it had fewer heavyweight defenders. Writers such as Will Durant and Irwin Edman (Cotkin, 1994) had popularized pragmatism between the wars, and it was still “almost the official philosophy of America,” in Henry Gombrich’s (1950) words. Nonetheless, its day seemed to have passed (see Diggins, 1994, chap. 10; Westbrook, 1991, p. 537f). In 1980, Hollinger declared that “pragmatism” is a concept most American historians have proved they can get along without” (p. 88; see also Hollinger, 1995; Kloppenberg, 1996). Since Hollinger’s appraisal, however, pragmatism has become a concept that neither history nor any other field apparently can get along without.

From philosophy to criticism to literary, political, and legal theory, aesthetics, and communication, pragmatism has enlisted a new corps of defenders and interpreters. Largely absent from this list, however, are the social sciences (Wolfe, 1998). This is one sign of the revival’s distance from the first generation. Most revivalists are also long removed from the questions of religious belief that haunted the late Victorians, Darwin rarely echoes through their theories, and defenses of science are generally lacking. However, the tradition continues as this generation calls out the names of the ancestors, quotes from their texts, and embraces the pragmatist mantle.

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The revival is marked by new (and contested) accounts of the tradition—revisionist tales that have broadened the pragmatist ancestry and resuscitated Dewey and others. West’s (1989) American Evasion of Philosophy, for example, offers a creative genealogy that begins with Ralph Waldo Emerson (a move Cavell [1998] resisted) and includes figures like W. E. B. Du Bois, Lionel Trilling, and C. Wright Mills. For West’s teacher, Richard Rorty, meanwhile, Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault count as pragmatists. Dewey is the patron saint of the tradition for both West and Rorty, although it is a Dewey not everyone recognizes. Indeed, some revisionist accounts have been criticized for “all but making it up” (Hollinger, 1995, pp. 32–33; see also Haack, 1997; Kloppenberg, 1994; Rorty, 1998, chap. 15; Westbrook, 1998).

Revisionist histories have moved pragmatism beyond its traditional origins in the Protestant philosophizing of White Yankee males. They have drawn in writings by African Americans like Du Bois and Alain Locke, women such as Jane Addams and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the novelist Henry James, and Catholic-born cultural outsiders like Mills and George Santayana. Others can also be included, even Walter Lippmann, sometimes portrayed as Dewey’s anti-pragmatist foil.

The revised pragmatist ancestry provides new openings for communication studies. Du Bois, Locke, and Santayana offer aesthetic theories that supplement Dewey’s often plodding accounts, and they point toward and exemplify pragmatist modes of criticism. Locke and Du Bois also theorize race and thus fill a clear void in first-generation pragmatism. They offer insights about intercultural communication and point toward social theories of communication attentive to difference. Meanwhile, Addams’ (1911) Twenty Years at Hull House should be seen as the founding document in the community studies tradition, while Lippmann’s Public Opinion should be brought back where it belongs—squarely within the pragmatist fold. There it might remind us that participatory democracy is not the only mode of pragmatist politics. Collectively, this ancestry shows us that pragmatism did not die with Dewey and wait for Rorty to be resuscitated.

Pragmatism, Race, Aesthetics: Du Bois, Locke, and Literary Pragmatism

Both West and Ross Posnock have argued that Du Bois (1868–1963) was a pragmatist. A Harvard PhD, Du Bois remembered in his autobiography that he had been “a devoted follower of James at the time he was developing his pragmatic philosophy.” He also credited James with pushing him toward social practice, turning him “back from the lovely but sterile land of philosophic speculation, to the social sciences as the field for gathering and interpreting that body of fact which would apply to my program for
the Negro" (cited in West, 1989, p. 139). Posnock maintained that Du Bois' (1903) classic *Souls of Black Folk* and its attendant concept of *double consciousness* were statements of Jamesian pragmatism. To Posnock, Du Bois' work as editor of the NAACP journal, *The Crisis* (1910–1934), was pragmatist sociology. Overall, "Du Bois seems to have internalized pragmatism as a method and style of thinking ... in good pragmatist fashion [interrogating] the limits of James' thought" (Posnock, 1998a, p. 114; see also Posnock, 1997, 1998b; Rath, 1997). Posnock also sees a pragmatist aesthetic in Du Bois' "Criteria of Negro Art" (1926/1996)—one that "prefigures Dewey's own project a few years later in *Art as Experience*" (1998a, p. 139; see also Hutchinson, 1995, pp. 42–50). Some scholars, however, have found little that is pragmatist in Du Bois' thought (e.g., Gooding-Williams, 1991; Zmiri, 1995, pp. 11–16, 153–168).

Posnock and others have also drawn attention to Alain Locke (1886–1954), the African-American philosopher and aesthete who was a key figure in the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s. Like Du Bois, Locke studied philosophy at Harvard. He was an undergraduate (1904–1907) when James taught there and a doctoral student a decade later. In 1925, Locke edited the important anthology of African-American writings, *The New Negro*, a work that consolidated a literary movement Locke dubbed "the Negro Renaissance." According to Shusterman (1999), the book articulated a historically informed, critically and socially engaged pragmatist aesthetic that "not only antecedent but probably also ... influenced Dewey's" (p. 97). The anthology includes important essays on the popular arts (jazz, spirituals, drama, folk tales), humanistic community studies (of Harlem and Durham, NC), and cultural theory penned by Locke, Du Bois, and others. It is a rich intellectual and historical source for cultural studies of communication.

Locke's social theory has also been of interest. The political theorist Nancy Fraser (1998; see also Fraser, 1989), for instance, has argued that Locke's 1916 lectures, "Race Contacts and Interracial Relations," not only drew on pragmatism to reject racial essentialism, but also went further. They offered an alternative to "the overly integrative and idealist" social thought of the classical pragmatists. She sees in Locke resources for "an alternative multiculturalism that would integrate a nonessentialist cultural politics with an egalitarian social politics" (pp. 158, 159, 172; see also Harris, 1989). Posnock (1997) meanwhile has discussed Locke in comparison with another of William James' students, Horace Kalten, a friend of Locke's who coined the phrase *cultural pluralism* in his essay "Democracy Versus the Melting Pot" (1915/1996). In Posnock's view, Locke is the true inheritor of the Jamesian mantle, unlike Kalten willing to enter "into what is radical in James's pluralism—skepticism toward identity and the exclusionary bias of concepts" (p. 337).

Posnock's work on Du Bois and Locke are part of a broader excavation of Jamesian pragmatism and its literary influences. In good pluralist fashion, *The Trial of Curiosity* (1991) used the comparative method to discuss Henry James and his brother William, along with other intellectual figures, including George Santayana. In the process, Posnock argued that Henry James was not a fastidious and genteel elitist, but rather an "active, empirical, and pragmatic" thinker. Literary pragmatism is also part of the focus of Posnock's (1998a) *Color and Culture: Black Writers and the Making of the Modern Intellectual*. That book portrayed Du Bois and African-American novelists Zora Neale Hurston and Ralph Ellison as Jamesian pragmatists and deep pluralists who rejected appeals to identity as a grounding social and cultural category (chap. 6). Finally, Poirier (1992) argued that Gertrude Stein, Wallace Stevens, and Robert Frost (all students of James) gave the Jamesian legacy new literary and aesthetic dimensions.

**Cambridge Reconsidered: Lippmann and Santayana**

Walter Lippmann (1889–1974) also deserves recognition as part of the Jamesian lineage, something not typically done in communication studies. Lippmann is usually read via his differences with Dewey in the 1920s—an encounter sometimes made out to be a founding episode in media studies. Carey (1982) influentially made this argument. He championed Dewey as a democratic pragmatist and argued that Lippmann endorsed "a new priesthood" of experts and redefined "the problem of the press from one of morals and politics to one of epistemology" (pp. 78, 76). Peters (1989a) largely followed this characterization and claimed that Lippmann turned away from "the pragmatic insights available to him" and fell back on old dualisms of fact and fiction, objective and subjective, dualisms leading him to champion "a technocracy of experts" (pp. 208, 209). Without the same disdain for Lippmann, Schudson (1998) recently discussed the difference with Dewey similarly (pp. 211–219; see also Lasch, 1991).

Lippmann (like Schudson, as I argue in a moment) is recognizably pragmatist, and we should read his disagreements with Dewey as part of an ongoing intramural debate within the tradition. Lippmann studied with James at Harvard; the two met when James knocked on Lippmann's door impressed with an article the undergraduate had written in the college newspaper. When Lippmann left Harvard, he was among the first to go from the Ivy League to the rough world of journalism—like Du Bois, a public intellectual engaged in civic affairs. Diggins (1994) and Posnock (1997) demonstrated that Lippmann's first two books, *A Preface to Politics* (1913) and *Drift and Mastery* (1914/1961), maintained James' pragmatist legacy.

*Public Opinion* also bears clear pragmatist marks. Lippmann's valorization of expertise is simply one variation on the broader turn to science as
metaphor or mode of inquiry, which characterized much of first-generation pragmatism, including Dewey's. One could read Lippman's expertise as Deweyan experimental inquiry with finitude built in; he recognized that we might only practice disciplined investigation on a limited range of topics. Moreover, Lippmann's ide of stereotypes, ammunition for Carey's (1988) criticism of him, is recognizably informed by Jamesian psychology: that our stream of sensations are picked out selectively and framed by what we take to be meaningful categories of experience (e.g., James, 1891/1952, chap. 9). For Lippmann (1922/1997), stereotypes are simply the cultural forms that shape and preclude direct experience—forms that we might modify through scientific discipline or by holding them loosely with tolerance for other competing stereotypes. In other words, stereotypes arguably fit in with a Jamesian pluralistic universe. Lippmann also studied with George Santayana (1863–1952), James' and Royce's colleague at Harvard and also the subject of revisionist scholarship on first-generation pragmatism. Santayana was a Spanish-born cultural Catholic and a closeted homosexual dandy. He quit his tenured Harvard professorship in 1912 and fled genteel, Calvinist New England to spend his remaining 40 years as a wandering expatriate in Europe (Posnock, 1995). Henry Levinson has shown Santayana's persistent pragmatism—from his five-volume Life of Reason (1905/1954), hailed at the time as the first comprehensive presentation of pragmatism, through his later work, explicitly critical of John Dewey and "the pragmatic school" (Levinson, 1992, pp. 3–19, 138–147, passim). Santayana offered a rich alternative vein of pragmatism. He blurred the lines between philosophy and literature and gave criticism and intellectual expression ironic and comic distance from social and civic realms (chaps. 6–7; see also Kuklick, 1977, chap. 19; Posnock, 1991, chap. 8).

Pragmatism and Sociology: Addams, Symbolic Interactionism, and Mills

Besides Cambridge-based pragmatism, the Chicago school has also been revised, and scholars have productively drawn attention to the women who helped shape it. Jane Addams (1860–1935) is the key figure. She and Dewey had contact even before he moved to Chicago, and—along with Mead—were involved together in the Settlement House movement. Life-long friends (Dewey dedicated his 1935 Liberalism and Social Action "To the Memory of Jane Addams"), they exercised mutually acknowledged intellectual influence on one another: Addams' social practice and thought helped focus Dewey's and Mead's philosophy (James was also appreciative); pragmatist philosophy came back to guide Hull House; and practice and theory alike influenced the new discipline of sociology (Deegan, 1988, pp. 118–121, 249–254; Mills, 1964, p. 307; Seigfried 1996a, 1996b, pp. 44–45, 73–79). Like Addams, Charlotte Perkins Gilman has also been designated as a pragmatist, although here it is less a matter of direct influences and more convergence of her own and Dewey's thought (Upin, 1993; see also Egan, 1989).

Pragmatism has had a varied career in U.S. sociology. Its early influence, especially on Chicago sociology, is clear. Like philosophy, however, by World War II, sociology was establishing new paradigms. Paul Lazarsfeld's more quantitative and behavioral work and Talcott Parsons' grand structural-functional theory took precedence over Chicago-school community studies. Still pragmatism retained a place in symbolic interactionism—a term Herbert Blumer invented in 1938 to describe a method indebted to his teacher, Mead (Joas, 1993, pp. 37–38; see also Blumer, 1969; Duncan, 1969; Meltzer, Petras, & Reynolds, 1975).

Moreover, as West (1989) has reminded us, C. Wright Mills maintained pragmatist sensibilities. Like Santayana, Mills was a cultural outsider, raised a Catholic in Baptist Texas, a Southerner on the faculty of Columbia University, a humanist sociologist equally critical of Lazarsfeld's abstracted empiricism and Parsons' grand theory (Mills, 1959; see also, Westbrook, 1995). Mills' 1941 dissertation, "A Sociological Account of Pragmatism" (published in 1964 with the misleading title Sociology and Pragmatism), examined "the pragmatic movement." It focused on the context of the social institutions where pragmatism flourished: from the Metaphysical Club to a professionalizing educational system to Hull House to the print-based publics for whom Dewey wrote (see also Mills, 1942/1968). This was a pragmatist approach to the sociology of knowledge—one Mills articulated in essays around 1940 (see 1964, pp. 423–468). In those, Mills drew on Mead, Dewey, Peirce, and Kenneth Burke to develop an alternative to Karl Mannheim and Marxian sociologies of knowledge. Mills worried that, because of what the Frankfurt School called the culture industry, "the means of effective communication are being expropriated from the intellectual worker" (1944/1963, p. 297). Still as a "neo-Deweyan radical social critic" (West, 1989), Mills found a way to be a pragmatist public intellectual in mid-century.

COMMUNICATION AND THE REVIVALISTS

Even more than the first generation, contemporary pragmatism speaks many dialects. Ray Carney (1994) drew on the doctrine to explore the experimental, independent films of director John Cassavetes, for instance,
while Hans Joas (1996) put it in the service of a grand German sociological
to theory of action. The revival traverses many disciplines, primarily in the
humanities. These include philosophy, history, literary theory and criticism,
communication studies, political and legal theory, aesthetics, film studies,
and religious studies.11 Revivalists often draw on different first-generation
thinkers, and one can usefully distinguish friends of James from friends of
Peirce or Mead. Dewey has probably attracted the most attention, but his
admirers often see different things in him. To modify a line from William
James, there are a variety of Dewey experiences.

Like the first generation, however, contemporary pragmatism has been
forged in deep contact with European thought. Instead of Hegel, Darwin,
and Kant, this generation has confronted Nietzsche and his descendants,
Martin Heidegger, Jacques Derrida, and Foucault (see e.g., Mouffe, 1996).
This is especially true of Richard Rorty, who often read the Nie-
tzscheans as halfway pragmatists (e.g., 1982, 1996). Marxian theory has
also served as a resource and counterweight: Jürgen Habermas’ launching
pad was the Frankfurt School, whereas Cornel West’s prophetic prag-
matism warmly embraces Antonio Gramsci.

Moreover, like their predecessors, revivalists have often privileged
tropes of communication. In so doing, they update the intellectual tradi-
ction of pragmatism and communication, calling out the names of the an-
cestors and adopting their dramatic personae in multiple and competing
ways. From Habermas’ communicatively grounded social and moral theo-
ries to Stanley Fish’s interpretive communities and West’s prophetic prag-
matism, scholars from outside communication studies have developed
pragmatism in communication-friendly directions. Meanwhile, within
communication studies, Carey, Schudson, and Peters have reenacted the
intellectual scripts of Dewey, Lippmann, and James.

Before (and Beyond) Rorty: Grand Philosophy
and Antitheory

I resist the usual place to begin talking about the pragmatist revival, Richard
Rorty’s (1979) Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature. When he wrote that
book, Rorty was just one of several powerful writers and intellectuals calling

11For useful, if sometimes selective, accounts of the revival, see Westbrook (1991, p. 537f),
pp. xxv–xxix), Dickstein (1998, pp. 1–17), and Ciels (1999). The preface to Bernstein’s
(1983) Beyond Objectivism and Relativism offered a personal account of Bernstein’s intellectual
friendships with Rorty and Habermas as well as Hans-Georg Gadamer and Hannah Arendt.
The varieties of pragmatism are displayed in three pragmatist collections: Goodman (1995),
Menand (1997), and Dickstein (1998).
and phronesis (practical judgment). This social-democratic pragmatism featured metaphors of dialogue and conversation (an ideal the book followed in is tightly argued encounters with Gadamer, Arendt, Rorty, and Habermas). Like Dewey’s pragmatism, it also yoked communication to the idea of democratic community (see also Bernstein, 1998).

Rorty’s was then one of several significant interpretations of Dewey and first-generation pragmatism in the late 1960s and 1970s. His *Consequences of Pragmatism* (1982), a collection of essays from the 1970s, continued Rorty’s canonization (some would say re-invention) of Dewey—one developed during the past two decades and distinct from the social-democratic pragmatism of Bernstein. Rorty instead used Dewey to defend "post-modernist bourgeois liberalism," a form of life marked by a dichotomy between public and private selves and the modes of communication characteristic to each. In private, individuals are ironists who invent themselves as *strong poets* and entertain doubts about their *final vocabularies* (the terms they use to explain the world). In public, however, they maintain communal ties of solidarity and shared commitment to reducing cruelty. This political project has no ultimate, universal theoretical justification, and philosophy in this world is akin to bourgeois literary conversation (see e.g., Rorty, 1989, chaps. 2–4; 1991, pp. 175–202). Ironist conversation differs from the more sincere dialogue that marks Bernstein’s pragmatisms, where a more blurred line exists between private and public communication.

Stanley Fish is often associated with neopragmatism, and he offered another important account of communities and communication. His 1980 *Is There a Text in This Class?* introduced the idea of interpretive communities and spawned arguments against theory and for pragmatism in literary studies (e.g., Mailloux, 1995; Mitchell, 1985; see also Gunn, 1992). Fish’s (1998) antitheory is linked to his notion of interpretive communities, local formations engaged in particular practices of rhetoric and persuasion and guided by *perceptuous meanings* that are "conveyed by public structures of language and image to which you and your peers can confidently point" (p. 419). Practice and interpretation are always local for Fish, and theory, which is general, can never guide it. Indeed, Fish (1998) insisted that "if pragmatism is true, it has nothing to say to us; no politics follows from it or is blocked by it; no morality attaches to it or is enjoined by it" (p. 419). From one angle, Fish’s antitheory is a Jamesian defense of pragmatists—things in their plurality expressed in the idiom of interpretive communities that resist being subsumed to any grander system of thought or practice.

West’s *prophetic pragmatism*, in contrast, uses a religious trope of communication to name a doctrine with explicit public overtones and plenty to say to us politically. Instead of ironists or dialogians, West (1989) championed Gramscian intellectuals and called on critical individuals engaged in

“practice that has some potency and effect or makes a difference in the world” (p. 232). West actively embraced religion and “the Jewish and Christian tradition of prophets who brought urgent and compassionate critique to bear on the evils of their day” (p. 233; see also West, 1993). Although West held up Dewey as the greatest figure of the tradition, he offered a pragmatism of prophecy, not conversation. An African-American public intellectual like Du Bois and Locke, West continues a tradition of pragmatism that directly confronts issues of race.

**Carey, Schudson, and Peters**

Like Bernstein and Rorty, Carey also wrote forcefully about Dewey in the 1970s. His 1975 "A Cultural Approach to Communication" (the lead article in his 1988 collection, *Communication as Culture*) put Dewey’s *Experience and Nature* (1925/1981) and *Democracy and Education* (1916) in the service of Carey’s classic distinction between communication as transmission and ritual. Dewey is mostly a jumping off point for a distinction that owes less to the pragmatist than to Harold Innis’ theory of space- and time-binding media. Still the ritual view can be read as a Catholic extension of the largely Protestant tradition of American pragmatism. Like Bernstein and Rorty, Carey has also championed conversation as a communicative form (e.g., 1982, 1987, 1995) and tied it to Dewey’s democratic theory.

Schudson (1997) rejected the *romance of conversation* (p. 307), and, in the process, played Lippmann to Carey’s Dewey. At the end of *The Good Citizen*, Schudson (1998) defended the ideal of *monitorial citizens*—people with no single communicative role but rather engaged in a variety of roles. They scan the information environment and practice "environmental surveillance more than information-gathering"; occasionally they write letters or become involved, but "monitorial citizens tend to be defensive rather than proactive" (pp. 310, 311). Lippmann’s (1922/1977) *Public Opinion* is often remembered as a technocratic argument for expertise, but he sketched a role for citizens similar to Schudson’s: They look to newspapers to *signalize* events, concern themselves with the procedural fairness of public decision making, and occasionally go beyond that monitoring to join voluntary associations (pp. 226, 251–252). Public life involved individuals in a pluralistic array of roles, some of them relatively passive, others more organized and action-oriented, all of them part of a democratic life, like Schudson’s, with no single communicative soul.

Joining Schudson and Carey in reviving dramatic personae of the first generation, John Peters recently weighed in as William James. *Speaking into the Air* (Peters, 1999b) is an intellectual history with Jamesian attention to the paranormal: attempted communication with the dead, animals, and extraterrestrial life, which for Peters are not categorically different from
more ordinary communication. It also displays a 19th-century breadth of reading and historical imagination: from Jesus and Socrates to Heidegger, Peirce, and Emerson and many others. In Jamesian spirit, Peters (1999b) defended "a pragmatism open to both the uncanny and the practical," one with ample room for "the splendid weirdness of being" as well as "the curious fact of otherness" (pp. 19, 21, 22; see also Peters, 1999a). Dialogue is important, but it holds no privileged place, and what Emerson called *the condition of infinite remoteness* is central to the human condition. Communication does not name a way to eliminate that remoteness, but to live with it as bodily humans, the only way we could.

### Pragmatism and the Canons of Communication Studies

If there is a canon in communication studies, it is one that is disputed, argued for, and periodically reinvented. The field is not a discipline in any narrow sense of the word, not one that is governed by common methods, common standards, common focus, or common knowledge. Nor should it be any of these things. The field is rather a set of questions pursued by a sometimes motley assortment of guerrilla bands that raid other disciplines for tools and texts. This pluralism and structural open-endedness are the strength of communication studies and offer it reservoirs for creativity. Unfortunately, these reservoirs are too seldom tapped.

The conditions of our intellectual production are partly established by the texts we read, teach, think with, and write about. The pragmatist revival gives us the opportunity to enrich our practices with a new collection of older texts and classic texts reinterpreted in new light. From the beginning, pragmatism has been about communication, although what *communication* and *pragmatism* mean have always been up for grabs. It is a variegated and rich intellectual tradition. If communication studies is a discipline, it should periodically discipline itself to visit old texts with new eyes, and pragmatism, expansively construed, is a good place to start.[13]

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1. PRAGMATISM AND COMMUNICATION


Pragmatism as a Way of Inquiring With Special Reference to a Theory of Communication and the General Form of Pragmatic Social Theory

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Pragmatism places communication at the center of human concerns. In 1916, John Dewey wrote, "Society not only continues to exist by transmission, by communication, but may be fairly said to exist in transmission, in communication" (1916/1944, p. 4). This chapter concerns inquiry and, for pragmatism, human inquiry is a communication process. It also discusses the ways that pragmatist ideas about inquiry can inform communication research, theory, and practice. Because of our long involvement with the tradition of pragmatism, we cannot easily sort out its most important aspects for us. We are reminded of a story set in the mythical town of Chelm, where all inhabitants are either crazy or fools.

Early one morning a resident of Chelm frantically knocked at the door of the rabbi's house. "Rabbi, you must help me!" The rabbi, half-asleep, let the man in. "Rabbi! My house has caught fire! Everything I own is in there, money, furniture, food for the winter, clothing, everything! What should I do?" Groggy with sleep, the rabbi said: "Hmmm, a fire? Let me remember what to do. Ah, take a stick and draw a circle around your house. Pace off four paces beyond that and draw another circle around the first." "Yes rabbi, what else?" "Next," said the rabbi, "Stand outside the outer circle looking toward Jerusalem and pray." "Thank you rabbi," said the man as he rushed out. The rabbi, now more awake, opened the door of his house and shouted to the man, "Wait! I think there is one more thing. What was it? Oh, yes, water! That's what I forgot! Before you draw the circles and pray, put lots and lots of water on the fire until it goes out!"
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