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# Stories We Tell: Fragmentation and Convergence in Communication Disciplinary History

William F. Eadie

*The disciplinary status of communication is hindered by the lack of a unified history. While there is a mostly agreed-on history of the development of various types of communication theory, that history is confounded by the histories of the two areas of study—speech and journalism—and eventually became prominent in communication research. This article recounts the speech story, the journalism story, and the communication story and offers some direction for a history that accounts for communication’s disciplinary status while still recognizing the heritage of speech and journalism.*

*Keywords: Communication History; Disciplinary Status; Speech; Journalism*

All of us have stories. Stories are necessary parts of a living human organism, or as Joan Didion (1979) put it in the opening words of her collection of essays titled, *The White Album*, “We tell ourselves stories in order to live.” A good story holds together and either fills in the gaps or provides obvious ways for others to do so. A good story also reflects beliefs and values and gives us good reasons for believing it. Stories are powerful socializing agents. They help us to make sense of not only our environments but also what binds us together (Abolafia, 2010; Weick, 1995).

Likewise, communities of scholars need stories to bind them together. Scholarly stories are of generally three types: the people who formed the area of study and moved it forward in significant ways; the ideas that made the area of study a unique one; and the decisions and deliberations leading to those decisions that proved to be turning points in the area of study’s development. In this essay, I contend that communication scholarship has suffered because its practitioners have no unified story to tell. Rather, communication has a history of three separate stories that serve to confuse scholarship

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and blur communication's identity as a discipline. I outline the three stories, which I will call the "speech story," the "journalism story," and the "communication story." In doing so, I draw upon published accounts of each of these stories and make an effort to indicate how the stories have begun to converge.

### **The Speech Story**

"Speech" has been a contested term for much of its existence. It equally describes the physical act of producing sounds that combine in meaningful ways, the social act of addressing a public audience, and the scholarly study of social performances, as well as the physical problems that could impede those performances. Speech as an academic field of study began by running from other fields of study, rather than toward a coherent set of ideals. As detailed by Cohen (1994), the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking was formed in 1914 by individuals who did not want to be viewed as English teachers and who also did not want to be seen as professional elocution instructors.

They were also running from another relatively new professional association, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). The NCTE was established in 1911 as a means of protesting what were seen as overly specific college entrance requirements, and that organization was dominated by high school teachers. A section for speech teachers had been established, and some among that group had suggested that a separate organization should be formed. When the American Association of Teachers of Journalism was founded in 1912, there was some possibility that the establishment of this group influenced those who wished to break away from the NCTE. At the 1913 meeting of the NCTE's speech section, a poll was proposed to determine the wishes of the membership. The results of the poll, announced at the 1914 NCTE meeting, indicated that the membership was evenly split between remaining in the NCTE and forming a new organization. Nevertheless, a group of 17 met and decided to form a separate organization.

The 17 were all professors, and most of them were from Midwestern universities (the exception, a man who would become most visible in the new association, was James Winans, from Cornell). The Midwestern origin of the revolt was probably no accident. An Eastern Public Speaking Conference had been organized in 1910, and its meetings were aimed at faculty who taught at selective liberal arts colleges. Over time, however, faculty from the Midwest had traveled to the conference to make presentations. Midwestern professors held different values from the Eastern counterparts. Many of them came from Land Grant universities that prided themselves in providing access to higher education from across the economic spectrum. Faculty from selective liberal arts colleges generally taught children of the elite, who sent their progeny to college so that they were prepared to assume the station in life that their family status demanded. Interestingly, Winans may have been an ideal boundary spanner between these groups, as Cornell was not only a member of the Ivy League but also was New York State's Land Grant institution. Midwestern values promptly took over the new organization, and participation by the Eastern faculty waned

(indeed, Irvah L. Winter, a faculty member from Harvard, was one of the 17 founders, but he never rose to prominence).

The new group gave itself the unwieldy title, the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking, which announced simultaneously that its members were neither English teachers (even though a number were housed in English departments) nor non-academics who taught elocution (a profession that had been roundly satirized by George Bernard Shaw in his 1912 play, *Pygmalion*). By 1918, the association's name had been shortened to the more manageable National Association of Teachers of Speech.

The other characteristic of the new association was that it consisted mostly of people who considered themselves to be teachers, as opposed to scholars. Winans (1915) advocated for a scholarly culture from the beginning, and he spearheaded the establishment of a committee on research that continued to function into the 1950s. But much of the early content of the association's journal was reprinted speeches delivered at the annual meeting; only the occasional theoretical article appeared, and most of what we would today consider to be traditional scholarship studied speech disorders such as stuttering.

Charles Woolbert, another founder, emerged as a leading proponent of a scholarly approach to the study of speech and the teaching of speech. Woolbert (1923) published a definition of the discipline of speech that stood until 1968. According to Woolbert, the discipline of speech was defined as "the study and practice of such data of speech the activity as helps the student and the practitioner to adjust himself to his environment and to be useful to his fellows" (p. 2). Woolbert characterized the domain of the discipline as including the study of (1) speaking and all forms of talk, including the rhetoric underlying the speech; (2) oral reading and performance of the words of others; (3) production of sound through the vocal mechanism; and (4) speech science, or a "body of significant and useful facts and principles" drawn primarily from the other three areas of the discipline and contributing to their development (p. 3).

With Woolbert's formulation, speech teachers and scholars settled into a degree of normalcy that would last for many years. Diversity of approaches would remain prevalent, and scholarship would often follow trends in disciplines whose methods were adopted, such as English or Psychology, rather than those developed by speech scholars. But getting together to share ideas and feel like a family continued to characterize the common values of the association. In 1928, Winans reflected on the continued growth of the annual meeting in a manner that might seem all too familiar to contemporary NCA members:

I think that we have succeeded beyond any dreams I had at the time, almost too well. I often regret the passing of the days of small things, when the meetings to me were a delight and a joy that lasted till I could begin to look to the next. That is no longer true. Too big and confused; but I know it is for the best. And still I would not miss going if I could help it in any reasonable way. (O'Neill, 1928, p. 248)

By jumping from this point to 1968, I do not mean to imply that nothing of significance happened in the interregnum. The speech story did change slowly during

this period, though change it did. Primarily, scholarship advanced, and a more pronounced split appeared between those who saw the primary scholarship for a speech discipline as rhetorical and critical and those who demanded a place for behavioral and experimental study. This split manifested itself in a number of ways, including in the formation of the National Society for the Study of Communication (NSSC), in a quiet revolt that resembled the events of 1914 (Weaver, 1977).

The year 1968 was a watershed time for the speech story, however. In February, a group of senior and junior scholars met in New Orleans to determine how best to incorporate “communication” scholarship (a term that had been adopted by the behavioral researchers) into the discipline. The conferees developed a book-length report (Kibler & Barker, 1969) that discarded Woolbert’s definition of the discipline and substituted one that focused on communication scholarship. The group might have succeeded in proposing a name change for the discipline from “speech” to “communication,” but strong arguments from scholars such as Frank Dance (who persistently contended that orality, as represented by the term “speech,” was what distinguished the discipline’s research) resulted in the compound noun “speech communication” as the name of the area of study, as well as of its national association.

In 1968, the association’s annual summer conference focused on social responsibility. A Committee on Social Responsibility was formed from the recommendations adopted at this meeting, and the committee eventually evolved into the Black Caucus and began the sometimes bumpy (Daniel, 1995) process of welcoming cultural diversity into the membership, as well as into the scholarship, of the members. The fact that the NSSC refocused itself by becoming the International Communication Association in 1968 also helped with the development of intercultural and international communication as a new area of scholarship within the discipline. Finally, the December 1968 annual meeting featured a panel titled “The Young Turks Meet the Old Guard.” Attendance at the panel far exceeded the capacity of the room in which it was scheduled, and the panel served to call to attention that young scholars wanted to break with tradition.

Quite a lot of tradition broke. New directions in rhetorical theory (e.g., Bitzer, 1968; Scott, 1967) predated two meetings collectively known as the Wingspread Conference (Bitzer & Black, 1971) that revolutionized conceptual and methodological study in rhetoric. New theories (e.g., Bormann, 1972; Hart & Burks, 1972) combined rhetorical with interpersonal concepts. The introduction of qualitative methodologies (e.g., Nofsinger, 1975; Philipsen, 1975) served both to build and to test theories simultaneously. Debates quickly shifted from whether a quantitative or a critical approach produced superior theory to what metatheoretical pattern was superior (Berger, 1977; Cushman, 1977; Monge, 1977). The upheaval was put to rest by B. Aubrey Fisher (1978), who argued convincingly that multiple perspectives on communication had the effect of enriching, rather than stunting, theoretical development.

By 1980, the speech narrative was well on its way to converging with the communication narrative, but it took a while for “speech communication” to be

supplanted with “communication.” Some of the difficulty arose from within (i.e., scholars resisting dropping the long association with the term “speech”), while some of the difficulty arose from without (e.g., rivalries between speech and journalism that made “communication” a contested term). In 1996, however, two-thirds of the voting members of the then Speech Communication Association chose to rename the organization as the National Communication Association.

### The Journalism Story

In some ways, the journalism story is similar to the speech story. Journalism’s professional association, the American Association of Teachers of Journalism (AATJ), was founded in 1912, two years prior to the founding of the speech association. The AATJ was also dominated by professors from Midwestern Land Grant Universities, and its first president, Wilbur “Daddy” Bleyer of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, was not only its instigator but also its conscience. Bleyer was the dominant personality of the organization, and he wrote the first standardized curriculum, one whose general outline is still followed. He advocated for the development of research in a group that was primarily concerned with teaching. He also started the first doctoral program in the field.

Where journalism differed from speech, however, was in its ties to the profession for which the discipline was named. Where speech could point to its origins in classical rhetoric and the debating societies that characterized Nineteenth Century American higher education, journalism was a trade, learned through apprenticing with a printer who published a newspaper as part of the business. As Land Grant Institutions’ technological mission supplanted the apprentice system in American society, journalism education arose, first in Midwestern universities and then eventually elsewhere. Journalism education was made “legitimate,” however, when Joseph Pulitzer, the publisher of the raucously yellow *New York World* newspaper, convinced Columbia University to accept an endowment that created prizes for excellence in journalism, as well as established the first journalism school at an Ivy League institution. Perhaps not coincidentally, Columbia’s journalism school opened in 1912, the same year that the AATJ was established.

Journalism scholarship focused on various aspects of the journalism industry, though there were discussions similar to those in speech scholarship about how to define a discipline of journalism and how to gain academic respectability for such a discipline. Much journalism scholarship tended to be historical or descriptive. Scholars examined key events in the development of the concept of news, the history of technological development and change, or the content of press coverage. Scholars also examined how newspapers, and later, other news-disseminating media, evolved in their presentation of news and features. The legal milieu of journalism provided fodder for analyses as well, particularly examinations of advances of and threats to the First Amendment guarantees of a free press. Much if not all of this work was atheoretical, though it generated interesting case studies and cumulatively provided a scholarly overview of the past, current, and future

state of news gathering, developments in technology, and the journalism profession.

A good deal of scholarly discussion focused on how best to prepare professional journalists. There was no license or certification required to become a journalist, and many of the profession's brightest lights either never attended college at all or majored in a field other than journalism (often English, history, or political science). From early on, journalism professors, led by Bleyer, believed that universities should offer a minimum of professional education, focusing instead on teaching budding journalists to understand the history and politics of contemporary controversies so that they could write about them intelligently. This principle remains a bedrock one for the field's accrediting council. Yet, the council's accreditation is available only to academic departments and schools, not to individuals. Individual accreditation exists only in the field of public relations, and even that accreditation recognizes professional knowledge and accomplishments and is not a requirement to practice in the field.

Journalism's disciplinary history was chronicled by Emery and McKerns (1987) for the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication's 75th anniversary. Much of the nearly 100-page document was devoted to profiles of leading figures in journalism's academic development. The inclusion of these portraits is certainly understandable because some of those portrayed were still alive while others were recalled by their still-living students. Still, there seemed to be more of an emphasis on personal accomplishments in the formation and advancement of the discipline than might be true in other disciplines. Journalism itself is a person-based profession, and its most well-known practitioners hold celebrity status. It would follow that those who taught and researched journalism might achieve some degree of celebrity status with their colleagues and students.

Accreditation has been a key element of the history of the journalism discipline. According to Peterson's account (in Emery & McKerns, 1987), five years after the AATJ was founded, a group of 10 self-selected journalism program administrators began an administrators group, called the American Association of Schools and Departments of Journalism (AASDJ). The group saw itself as the "A-list" programs, and by the early 1930s, the list had grown from 10 to 28. Programs not included in the AASDJ saw themselves at a disadvantage. Once the AASDJ began an accreditation process in 1939, discussion among those programs intensified until a rival organization, the American Society of Journalism School Administrators (ASJSA) formed in 1944. According to Peterson, competition between these two groups led to the emergence in 1950 of the Association for Education in Journalism (AEJ). Both groups of schools were affiliated with the umbrella organization, but it would not be until 1984 that they would merge.

The AEJ would reorganize itself in 1964 to form interest groups that included ones studying theory and research in mass communication, but it would not be until 1982 that the "mass communication" label would become part of the association's name (as well as being added to the name of the accrediting council, despite the fact that the council only accredits professional programs and not programs oriented to theory

and research). Meanwhile, some of the biggest breakthroughs in theorizing about media and mass communication phenomena would be published by journalism scholars, though not in the national association's journals.

### The Communication Story

The communication story incorporates interdisciplinary scholarship, as well as work that could be classified as sociology or social psychology. The story originated primarily in mass communication textbooks that emphasized what has been called the "received view." The received view saw media research as empirical, social scientific, and focusing on practical problems through careful, step-by-step hypothesis testing.

A version of this history, compiled by Jesse Delia (1987), was included in the *Handbook of Communication Science*, a volume edited by Charles Berger, a speech scholar, and Steven Chaffee, a journalism scholar. A book-length rendition of a similar history was published by Everett Rogers (1994), a communication scholar whose doctorate was in sociology and whose theory and research on the diffusion of innovations made him one of the most well known to those outside of communication. Each of these histories emphasized similar contributions in different ways. Delia's history was primarily a chronological one, while Rogers focused on the work of the primary individuals who explored the concept of communication and brought that concept to general attention through scholarship that became well known outside of disciplinary circles.

Both Delia and Rogers traced the beginnings of communication scholarship to the sociology program of the University of Chicago. The university was founded in 1892 through the largess of the Rockefeller family with the idea that its South Chicago location adjacent to slums and working-class neighborhoods would make it a natural place to research solutions to social problems. The Chicago faculty essentially founded the discipline of sociology and the Chicago sociology department sat at the core of the university's mission. But while sociology was the centerpiece, its scholarly approach to problems was distinctly interdisciplinary, incorporating faculty from philosophy, psychology, and education.

Robert E. Park, the chair of the Chicago sociology department, first identified media as potentially influential in both societal problems and the solutions to those problems. Park (1922, 1952) published some of the earliest work on the potential for media messages influencing audiences. Other Chicago scholars who made significant contributions were: Charles Cooley (1902) with the concept of the looking-glass self; John Dewey (1910, 1916), whose pragmatic philosophy and emphasis on education fit well with the tenor of the project; and George Herbert Mead (1934), who made the first statements about how people interacted with society through symbolic means and who treated the concept of meaning as the product of such interactions.

Propaganda and public opinion were among the first large societal problems toward which empirical research turned. Spurred by the books and newspaper columns of political analyst Walter Lippmann (1922) and recalling the effectiveness of the former



on the latter during World War I, a series of scholars interested in social problems took up the task of conducting both descriptive and experimental research. Among the earliest propaganda investigators was political scientist Harold Lasswell (1927), who realized that the effectiveness of such messages relied heavily on the manipulation of symbols. Lasswell's work prepared the ground for not only the scholarship that was to follow but also for his own (1948) eventual articulation of the received view of the communication process: *Who? Says What? To Whom? With What Effect?*

While Lasswell was highly influential, a great deal of the intellectual heavy lifting in media (and by implication, communication) research was done by a group of Jewish émigrés who escaped the rise of Nazism in Germany during the 1930s. The most prominent of these, from the perspective of the received view, was Paul Lazarsfeld, who traveled to the United States on a fellowship and then found a way to stay as it became clear that Jews were being persecuted by the German regime. As Peters and Simonson (2004) noted in their history of this era, elite American universities were not friendly places for Jewish scholars, so Lazarsfeld and others became entrepreneurs, latching onto research projects that would fund them and provide them with outlets for their intellectual abilities.

Communication became an underlying theme for many of Lazarsfeld's projects (1940, 1944), even though they usually started as problem-based research on propaganda, public opinion, or later, on how groups could influence each other to help with the home front during World War II. Lazarsfeld's "administrative research" was even supported by Jewish émigré scholars from the Frankfurt School, whose scholars had been developing Marxian-based Critical Theory as an alternative to the received view. Eventually, however, these two camps would split apart and their scholarly descendents would quarrel over the proper understanding of the function of communication.

Lazarsfeld's research produced findings that were stunningly different from expectations and lay to rest the assumption that media effects operated like a hypodermic needle to the bloodstream. His 1944 two-step flow model posited that social interaction was much more persuasive than any media message might be, though media messages provided the information base for the formation of opinions. Kurt Lewin (1938, 1948), another German émigré, explored how groups could work with each other for the public good. Lewin's depiction of group dynamics invigorated the study of group interaction, influencing, among others, speech scholars who had become interested in public discussion (Keith, 2007).

The World War II era was a time when great practical advances were made in social science. Wilbur Schramm, the former head of the Iowa Writers Workshop, moved to Washington, DC, to help with the war effort. Schramm, who was bright, curious, and a natural promoter, worked on propaganda research and came into close contact with scholars such as Lasswell and Lazarsfeld. Schramm also shared a morning and evening carpool with the anthropologist Margaret Mead, whose National Research Council program on nutrition funded Kurt Lewin's famous studies on how the group process could affect housewives' willingness to serve cuts of meat that were generally discarded in the butchering process to their families (Schramm, 1997).

At the end of the war, Schramm wanted to return to Iowa. The university had filled his former position as director of the Iowa Writers Workshop, but it offered him instead the position of Director of the School of Journalism. Schramm brought back with him a vision of a communication discipline to supplement and perhaps supplant research on print periodicals and their contents.

Following the end of World War II, scholarly interest in communication exploded. The scholars who began the work on media, propaganda, and public opinion prior to the outbreak of the war continued their work (and, not coincidentally, secured more prestigious positions than they held previously). They were joined by other social scientists. The most productive of these was a group at Yale led by Carl Hovland. Hovland had done his doctorate at Yale and had joined the Yale faculty thereafter, but had participated in the same Washington research group as Lasswell, Lazarsfeld, and Schramm during the war. Trained as a learning theorist and researcher, Hovland had shifted gears while working on propaganda research and began to study how a leader such as Hitler could have persuaded an entire country to follow down a path of clearly evil intent. According to McGuire's (1996) account, this group was productive primarily because Yale's mid-career psychology faculty was particularly excellent and because Hovland was a visionary leader.

Meanwhile, scholars from other fields of study were also drawn to the practicalities of communication. Most prominent among these was Bell Labs engineer Claude Shannon (1949), who with Warren Weaver developed information theory as a theoretical basis for setting research priorities to improve the U.S. telephone system. MIT's Norbert Wiener (1950) had pioneered the field of cybernetics during World War II, and after that time his work became popular not just as a basis for the development of computers, but also as a potential model for information processing by the brain (which was, at the time, largely a "black box" in terms of scientific understanding of its actual functioning). The ability of systems to manage their environments by controlling entropy through the reduction of uncertainty became a hallmark of research into communication within dyads and groups.

Schramm's formation of a communication research institute at Iowa brought several journalism scholars to prominence in the field as they struggled to model the mass communication process in response to Shannon and Weaver's information transmission approach, while also incorporating Wiener's notion of feedback as a potentially corrective element in any system. Speech scholars, led by Elwood Murray, a leading early interpersonal and group communication researcher, and W. Charles Redding, who applied interpersonal communication research to manufacturing and governmental organizations, attempted to bring the theory development process together by forming the avowedly interdisciplinary NSSC and creating *The Journal of Communication* as its scholarly publication. Schramm also recognized the value of interdisciplinarity, and when he moved from the University of Iowa to the University of Illinois, he deliberately created a communication research institute that drew from a number of fields of study. In fact, psycholinguist Charles Osgood, who pioneered the semantic differential as an empirical measure of meaning, had a very successful run as director of the

Illinois institute when Schramm moved on once again, this time to establish a communication research institute at Stanford.

The 1960s saw the influence of social psychology and sociology begin to wane as journalism and speech scholars took up communication scholarship in greater numbers. David Berlo's (1960) *The Process of Communication* served to set the communication research agenda for speech scholars in particular with his insistence that scholars could examine each of source, message, channel, and receiver but that their research needed to account for how each of these elements interacted with each other. Hovland died relatively early in life, and social psychology, led by Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance, shifted focus from persuasion and attitude change to the relationship between cognition and behavior. Bernard Berelson, who had been an influential member of Lazarsfeld's team, eschewed further research on the communication process to concentrate on family planning issues.

Speech scholars eagerly took up the challenge to research persuasion and attitude change, and in particular they concentrated their efforts on source and message elements of the persuasion process. However, the turmoil over civil rights and other social movements of the 1960s brought some speech scholars to research on communication across racial and ethnic groups, as well as a growing awareness of communication difficulties across national cultures. Journalism made room for mass communication scholarship. The NSSC became the International Communication Association and worked to reach out to nascent communication scholars outside of the United States and to establish a communication discipline in universities around the world.

Communication research more or less pushed its way into speech scholarship. Speech had always been an umbrella discipline, taking in for a time scholars in speech pathology and audiology, broadcasting, and theatre. Each of these groups eventually left to form their own scholarly societies, but the tradition of covering as many as possible with the umbrella remained. The last president of the disciplinary society now known as the NCA whose scholarly affiliation was in broadcasting was Sam Becker, in 1974. The last president from theatre was Patti P. Gillespie, in 1987. The last president from speech pathology and audiology was Orlando Taylor, in 1999. It should be noted, though, that each of these individuals comfortably crossed scholarly boundaries, and all had earned respect as people whose vision went beyond the bounds of their scholarly backgrounds. As media research blossomed outside of psychology and sociology, the NCA began to welcome media scholars, to the point where the NCA's Mass Communication Division is currently one of its largest interest groups, though outside of Becker this division has never had one of its members become president of NCA.

Scholars who had been trained as rhetorical critics chafed at having persuasion research co-opted by the empiricists, and for their part empiricists looked down their noses at rhetorical critics, thinking them unsystematic and unscientific. This friction was to continue for a number of years until the emergence of other theoretical and methodological approaches to communication scholarship diffused the idea that one needed to be either a rhetorician or a behaviorist.

Journalism and mass communication scholars, prompted by the work of Schramm and colleagues at the various institutes he created, eagerly took up the mantle of researching media effects (which supplanted propaganda research) and public opinion. Two major theories emerged during the 1960s and 1970s from this work: agenda-setting (McCoombs & Shaw, 1972) and cultivation (Gerbner, 1973). These theories were joined by a quantitative stream of research (McQuail, Blumler, & Brown, 1972) that gathered data on how audiences used media and what gratifications audiences obtained from that use. All of these theories directly challenged the “minimal effects” of media that Lazarsfeld and his associates (1944) had posited based on their early research, but they did so in ways that built on Lazarsfeld’s work.

Agenda-setting theory focused on how media formed public opinion. Rather than negating Lazarsfeld’s two-step flow model, agenda-setting refined the role of media in it. Instead of media influencing only opinion leaders, the theory posited that media coverage provides the topics that citizens discuss with each other. Thus the media don’t tell us what to think, but they do tell us what to think about.

Cultivation theory focused on exposure to media content as much as on the content itself. Taking initially the problem of violence in media and how it might affect violent behavior in society, cultivation theory posited that viewers whose exposure was heavy would be more likely to be affected than viewers whose exposure was light. The more violence to which a person was exposed, the more that person was likely to exaggerate the degree of violence in society, as well as to react to that distortion. According to cultivation theory, media content could affect some people much more significantly than others.

Uses and gratifications theory was an umbrella term for a series of empirical studies on how audiences interact with media of various kinds. It provided an alternative to searching for how media form and content affected audiences, by focusing on the reasons people use media in the first place (Reinhard & Dervin, 2009). These reasons included entertainment, personal integration and social interaction, creation and reinforcement of personal identity, and information and education. Depending on the importance of gratifications in individual lives, media could have greater or lesser effects, thus explaining why media effects could be found to be limited in large-scale studies, while individual media events (such as the famous Orson Wells Mercury Theatre radio broadcast of *The War of the Worlds*) could have a massive and consistent effect on many listeners.

In many ways, journalism scholars had a big head start on speech scholars in developing communication research. They had a consistent and limited agenda that had emerged and focused over time, they had a small and ultimately prestigious group of scholars who drove that agenda (in fact, George Gerbner was a somewhat younger member of the émigré group), and they developed theories and approaches to the study of media that have persisted, even after competing approaches emerged. By contrast, speech scholars were fragmented in their approach to communication research, choosing context (e.g., interpersonal, group, organizational, or intercultural communication) as a means of organizing their efforts and then focusing on limited

numbers of variables to study within those contexts (and disagreeing about which variables were most important to study). It took some years before comprehensive human communication theories emerged, and the ones that did emerge were not adopted by a majority of scholars. As a result, communication scholarship from a speech standpoint became somewhat idiosyncratic until research communities began to form around specific agendas. In addition, these communities were often interdisciplinary, and in some cases the work of scholars from other fields of study drove the theorizing.

On the other hand, speech scholars were much more successful at institutionalizing communication than were the journalism scholars. The New Orleans conference, and Kibler and Barker's (1969) subsequent report, had an immediate impact on speech scholars. It was discussed at the summer conference, only a few months later, and a movement quickly appeared to change the national association's name to the Speech Communication Association (SCA). Communication scholarship increased exponentially, albeit erratically, and rhetoricians were forced to regroup and rethink how their scholarship fit into the new communication paradigm. The SCA's journals reacted by becoming open to communication scholarship, and both *Speech Monographs* and *Speech Education* changed their names, to *Communication Monographs* and *Communication Education*.

Journalism scholars, on the other hand, welcomed mass communication into their midst, but the AEJ did not add "mass communication" to its name until ironically that term started to be supplanted by "media" and "media studies." The AEJ's journals continued to publish mostly traditional scholarship, and mass communication scholars published in interdisciplinary outlets such as *Public Opinion Quarterly*, thus reaching broader audiences for their work than would the scholars who published only in speech communication journals. "Legitimizing" communication as a field of study became a refrain among speech communication scholars (cf., Bochner & Eisenberg, 1985).

As the speech and journalism stories began to converge with the communication story, other approaches became more prominent. Qualitative methodologies became more sophisticated; critical and cultural methodologies other than rhetorical criticism were developed. The work of the Frankfurt School was recognized and built upon by communication scholars, and the methodological warfare that characterized the entry of speech scholars into the communication field was eased by the eloquent advocacy of scholarly leaders such as James Carey, who served both as dean at the University of Illinois of the institute founded by Schramm and as a distinguished professor at Columbia.

By 1999, scholarship in communication had settled to the point where Craig (1999) was able to describe seven research traditions that had been created. He named these traditions, rhetorical (the practical art of discourse), semiotic (intersubjective mediation by signs), phenomenological (experience of otherness, dialogue), cybernetic (information processing), sociopsychological (expression, interaction, and influence), sociocultural ((re)production of social order), and critical (discursive reflection). Craig claimed that scholars affiliated with one of these

traditions and tended to ignore and resist being influenced by scholarship from the other traditions, thus denying the sort of dialogue that needs to be part of a healthy discipline.

Also in 1999, John Durham Peters examined the intellectual history of the idea of communication. Relying primarily on philosophers and the problems relating to communication that they addressed, Peters melded several strands of the communication story into the idea that communication is important because it fulfills several spiritual desires of humankind: (1) the desire for *eros*, that is to connect with another at the level of the soul; (2) the desire to connect at the level of minds; (3) the desire to connect with those we cannot experience directly, including those in the “spirit world”; (4) the desire for connection at an authentic, non-superficial, level; and (5) the desire to connect with other living organisms, such as plants and animals, that do not share our facility for using symbols. What cohered in Peters’ account was that communication is about a search for connection, particularly for connection with the unseen, the ineffable. Media and technology allow us to “speak into the air” with impunity and it is that impunity that enhances the mystical dimension of the communication experience. Peters’ vision of communication may seem to be at odds with the standard history of communication study, but it is probably less of an outlier than one might think.

### **Conclusion: A Disciplinary Story**

By now, both the speech story and the journalism story have in many ways converged with the communication story. After roughly 1980, one cannot really separate the three without doing damage to the other two. Even so, the stories communication scholars tell each other and pass along to their students still seem fragmented.

Some of the fragmentation comes from reluctance of speech and journalism scholars to let go of their heritage. This reluctance is natural, even though the early histories of each area of study are remarkably similar. Both groups broke from English to form separate academic departments, and both struggled to distinguish respectable scholarly enterprise from shamanism, speech from elocution, journalism from propagandists. Both attracted teachers who focused on curriculum and teaching techniques and were at sea as researchers, having difficulty identifying what to study, as well as how to study it. Both struggled for academic respectability. Both fields of study were probably “saved” by the ability to study communication instead of speech or journalism.

Yet there were cultural differences in the fields of speech and journalism that created a chasm between them. Chief among those differences was speech’s adherence to the liberal arts, as opposed to journalism’s pride in educating professionals. The divide between liberal arts and professional education was reflected in different approaches to curricula: journalism laid out a series of knowledge and skills needed by professionals and prescribed a sequential curriculum, emphasizing skill building in particular. Journalism valued the liberal arts as a means to be able to understand and analyze political, civic, and cultural events so that they could be covered effectively,

but its accreditation mechanism insured that professionalism would always be in the forefront of its curriculum.

Speech valued the liberal arts as an end in itself. The speech curriculum, by contrast, generally took a “cafeteria” approach to learning: take a little from each area or approach for background and then take more in areas of particular interest. In speech, uniformity of knowledge was considered a disadvantage; students should be able to make their education reflect their interests. Journalism often deliberately limited access to its curricula, while speech often welcomed all comers. Journalism made a concerted effort to respond to the changing needs of its industries; speech was mostly accountable only to its own faculty. Speech was the “big tent,” while journalism was the “little tent,” and these differences were reflected in the character of their professional associations, the NCA and the AEJMC, as the NCA grew larger and larger, while the AEJMC grew only slowly. Speech and journalism faculty sometimes cooperated and sometimes battled over academic turf (including over who got to use the word “communication”). But the two groups remained separate and surprisingly unaware of each other’s history. Attempts to combine them administratively in colleges and universities were often met with tension and suspicion.

There seems to be a generational difference in how this cultural divide is perceived, however. Younger scholars often identify more with communication than with speech or journalism, and with the advent of media studies as an area of scholarship and social media as a communication technology quarrels about whose turf is whose have been deteriorating. Indeed, as the practice of journalism is changing rapidly and curricula planners race to adjust to new realities, a disciplinary scholarship in communication is already starting to provide enough data to support a revisionist thinking about how communication practices form the kinds of connections that Peters (1999) emphasized.

The communication story will continue to be influenced by scholars from outside the discipline, but rather than copy that scholarship, as in the past, communication researchers have already formed networks and partnerships that generate cross-disciplinary knowledge. Indeed, there may be some devolution toward specialized research groups working on specific theoretical and social problems, but the central mystery of communication should remain as the organizing principle for research of the various stripes described by Craig (1999). We may value disciplinary dialogue less than Craig would find to be healthy, but we may also become more productive by pursuing cross-disciplinary scholarly opportunities.

Nor will we forget our roots as speech and journalism scholars, but those differences will matter less and less as the connections now being forged are shown to matter more and more. I am essentially an optimist, tempered, I hope, by a fair degree of pragmatism. We have made enormous progress as a discipline since the 1980s, and by appreciating the stories that formed us, I expect that we will, eventually, have a clear and coherent identity, both within the academy and in the public sphere.

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