

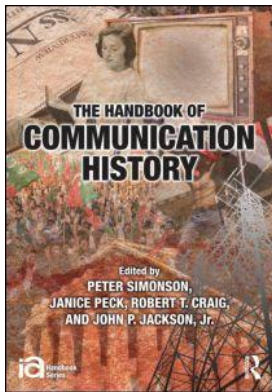
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Communication Research

Jefferson D. Pooley and David W. Park

Communication research is, and has been, unwieldy and balkanized. The same is true of historical accounts of the field's development. In this sense at least, the historiography of communication research resembles its object of study. Consider a few of the field's notable axes of difference: national traditions, methodological loyalties, long-running skills-or-scholarship disputes, mixed disciplinary roots, subfield chauvinisms, and North-South disparities. Each of these points of tension—or mutual indifference—is echoed by the published literature on the history of communication research. One irony is that the historiographical literature, as a result, fails to register the field's cacophonous disorder—except by example.

This chapter, an analysis of published, English-language works on the field's history, maps a surprisingly vast literature. For all the bibliographic abundance, we conclude that the field's historiography is fragmentary and lopsided. For example, historians have lavished Paul Lazarsfeld's Bureau of Applied Social Research with attention, but have ignored the global South. We call out the patterned neglect as one fault among others that, taken together, undercuts the appearance of health in abundance.

The field's history deserves more and better. In fact, communication scholars routinely invoke its past in a thousand small ways, mostly outside the work that this chapter surveys: in the syllabi of graduate pro-seminars and undergraduate survey courses, in journal articles' brief salutes to theories past, in the panoramic first chapters of textbooks. Very often we appeal to the bundle of mnemonic hand-me-downs that comprise the *received* history of the field.

Once some nineteenth-century preliminary preliminaries are acknowledged, that received history begins with the study of propaganda in the interwar United States, said to cling to a “hypodermic needle” or “magic bullet” theory of direct media influence which gave way, during and after World War II, to a more nuanced, methodologically sophisticated understanding of “limited effects.” This story was narrated most influentially by Elihu Katz and Lazarsfeld in the opening pages of *Personal Influence* (1955). The other main strand of the received history was recounted by the American field's energetic booster, Wilbur Schramm (e.g., 1963), who anointed a quartet of prominent social scientists—Kurt Lewin, Carl Hovland, Harold Lasswell, and Lazarsfeld—as the would-be discipline's “four founders.” Schramm would go on to publish numerous retellings of the “four founders” account, and the story found its way into countless survey textbooks. When merged, the Lazarsfeld and Schramm histories describe a young (American) field maturing through professionalization and methodological precision. Despite some recent revisionist work, this account—a kind of social science *bildungsroman*—remains firmly lodged in the field's memory of itself (Pooley 2008).

Trust in inherited shorthands is common in other disciplines too. What is unusual is that, in communication research, we do not have a robust check on the recycling of these origin myths and the like. Instead, work centered on the field's history has tended to fortify those myths. Storytelling, in other words, has been drafted to hold the whole thing—the madcap field—together.

The problem with this kind of history is its goal: to bring order to chaos. Instead we should strive to make the chaos plain. Just because glass shards are scattered about does not mean that there was ever an intact window. To catalogue the shards is to direct our attention to the field's complex and uneven development around the world. "Communication research" has been a department-by-department achievement, won with the aid—and sometime hindrance—of wartime governments, concerned publics, nervous academics, ambitious universities, and needy businesses. It is a hard set of stories to tell, given its sheer complexity, but worth the exertion. For one thing, our particularly rich case could help illuminate some of the broader dynamics of academic life. The other payoff is a service to the field, to invite a self-scrutiny that our published histories have instead deflected.

This chapter documents what we have so far: over 1,600 published works in English alone, clustered around particular topics, methods, and geographies. In order to make sense of that tall stack of scholarship, we gathered the citations into a bibliography, then assigned digital tags to each entry according to its relevant attributes. We deployed the tags to record, when relevant, (1) historiographical approach (e.g., "biographical" or "institutional"); (2) geography (e.g., "Canada" or "Venezuela"); (3) disciplinary frame of reference, or orientation to a field-within-the-field (e.g., "sociology" or "rhetoric"); (4) substantive topic, subfield, or figure (e.g., "audience research" or "McLuhan"); (5) institutional location (e.g., "Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies" or "Columbia"); and (6) the historical or geopolitical context (e.g., "1920s" or "Cold War"). The number of tags assigned to any single publication varied, according to its relevant attributes; some entries were tagged ten or more times, and others just once.¹

We faced an early dilemma: what to count as work on the field's history. There are, after all, no recognized borders around the field itself. The would-be discipline's scope, moreover, is the main issue at stake in any number of historical accounts. Even worse, a map drawn by a scholar of "film and media studies" may have nothing in common with the territory surveyed by, say, a "speech communication" researcher—except, ironically, claims for catholicity. Even the nomenclature is up for grabs.

Our solution was to erect a very big tent. For inclusion, a published work had to present itself as history, and then meet one of two criteria: (1) to self-describe its subject as "communication" research (an emic indicator) and/or (2) address research that we judged to be centered on mediated or face-to-face communication (an etic designation). There is, for example, an enormous body of history on the "Chicago School" of sociology. We included only those works that refer to the Chicago sociologists as communication scholars, or histories that plainly address Chicago work on media-related topics.

We faced a series of judgment calls in the tagging process too. To apply tags, we consulted abstracts, tables-of-contents, and—when necessary—full text. A mere mention of, say, a topic, name, or country would not merit a tag; the treatment needed to be more substantial than that. To earn the tag "Néstor García-Cañlani," for example, an article needed to reference the Argentinian scholar in the title, or else grant him significant billing in the article abstract.

The advantage of tagging is its flexibility. Tags are non-exclusive, so that an article might claim, for instance, both the "international communication" and "media effects" tags—when a more rigid classification might require a choice. Another benefit of tags is that they spotlight serendipitous affinities: of the fifty-three entries tagged "journalism education," for example,

thirty-nine are also tagged “United States”—which speaks to the imbalance of the historiography, the centrality of journalism education to the American field, or both.

We used the tagged bibliography as a supplement to the traditional survey approach, in which a small subset of relevant works merits brief discussion. The bibliography supplied a big-picture sweep which, in turn, informed our treatment of specific articles and books. The result is a mix of close reading and taxonomic breadth.

Despite its inclusive design, our tagged bibliography has a number of weaknesses. The most notable is its restriction to works published in English. We also certainly missed many publications. Our aims to be exhaustive were, of course, doomed from the start; the bibliography is large, but cannot be considered complete. Moreover, given our backgrounds as U.S. academics trained in mass communication, it is likely that the omissions are patterned by field and geography. Even the choice to create particular tags, and to assign them to particular works, involves context-bound judgment calls open to challenge. There is, finally, a class of omissions already alluded to: textbook capsules and literature-review asides were left out for practical reasons, despite their undeniable importance.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL APPROACHES

The field’s historians have approached their work in diverse ways, and with different—and sometimes clashing—aspirations. Some histories are unapologetically potted, designed to briefly chronicle the evolution of a research concept. Others linger in a particular place and time, attending to footnotes and archival remnants. Some are triumphalist and rousing; others debunk and discredit. Still others are written to memorialize a former colleague.

These aren’t mere matters of style. Historiographical choices have narrative consequences, and certain approaches tend to correlate with certain kinds of conclusions. In our analysis we point to a pair of contrasts to help make patterned sense of the sprawling bibliography. *Field-centric* histories, in our definition, focus on developments within a given discipline, without much concern for what went on beyond its borders. *Contextual* histories, by contrast, are preoccupied with the surrounding environment, and attend to matters like funding, public controversy, or the influence of neighboring disciplines.² The second, related contrast is between *intellectual* and *institutional* histories. Intellectual accounts trace the evolution of ideas and influence, while institutional narratives center on factors like the organization of research and competition over university resources. For our analysis, every entry in the bibliography was tagged as “field-centric,” “contextual,” or both—and as “intellectual,” “institutional” or both. The tags, in other words, were applied nonexclusively, since in practice many studies blend these approaches.

Considered as a two-by-two table, the field-centric/contextual and intellectual/institutional pairings suggest four broad historiographical approaches. The most common approach by far combines a discipline-centric lens with a focus on intellectual developments. Fully 71 percent (or 1,181) of bibliographic entries were tagged “field-centric” and “intellectual.” Even after excluding those works which also received “contextual” and/or “institutional” tags, 56 percent of all entries remained. In other words, 927 works—more than half the bibliography—used an idea-driven, field-bounded approach to their histories. A good example is the historical survey chapter included in the latest *Handbook of Communication Science*, which provides a wide-ranging, though brief and US-centric, account of the field’s general intellectual development, followed by a “more specialized historical overview of various subdisciplines” (Bryant and Pribanic-Smith 2010, 21).

Far less common is the contrasting approach: *contextual, institutional* history. Just 10 percent of entries shared the two tags, and that figure dropped to 5 percent—or 75 publications—when

“field-centric”- and “intellectual”-tagged items were excluded. There is hardly a typical case among this relatively small bundle, but consider William Buxton’s (1999) treatment of the Rockefeller Foundation’s support for various film-education and film-study projects and institutes in the 1930s. His approach is to “begin with particular philanthropic divisions” and follow through to “a particular constellation of projects and initiatives” (189). The focus here is on money and by-laws, not concepts and classic works.

A number of the field’s historians combine a *field-centric*, within-field optic with an *institutional* emphasis. These accounts typically trace the development of departments, schools or curricula, or else tell the story of a particular institute or conference. Twenty-five percent of entries received the “field-centric” and “institutional” tags, though the proportion dropped to 11 percent—or 179 works—when “contextual” and “intellectual” were excluded. Many of these are histories of journalism schools or professional associations. Erik Vroons (2005), for example, charts the relatively lively communication research scene in early postwar Europe, in part to correct the received view that research in the immediate postwar was largely an American affair. His proof is almost exclusively brick-and-mortar: new journals, press institutes, workshops, publishing houses, and departments across Europe. There was, he shows, a “regular system of exchanges and contacts” already underway in 1950s European communication research (515).

The last of the four broad approaches—*contextual, intellectual* history—documents the influence of ideas from other academic disciplines, or traces the impact of environmental factors (like public fears about children’s media exposure) on intellectual currents within communication research. In this approach the focus is on ideas and research, but these are always cast in some kind of contextual relief. Fourteen percent of the bibliography entries carried the “contextual” and “intellectual” tags, though just over 8 percent (or 132 studies) remained after “field-centric” and “institutional” were excluded. Juan Rodriguez (1995), for example, examines U.S. scholars’ research portrait of Mexican media in the postwar years. American research on Mexico, despite claims to objectivity, was suffused with American cultural values, in the “context of a free market of ideas in a free market economy” (1995, vi). Many of these values and assumptions were, Rodriguez concludes, adopted by postwar Mexican scholars. Here an “external” factor—U.S. culture—influenced intellectual developments in the United States and Mexico.

Knowing that a particular historical study used one or another approach does not, in itself, tell you much about the valence of its conclusions. Still, most field-centric/intellectual histories are at least implicitly field-affirming (e.g., Harper 1979), while contextual/institutional accounts tend to critique the discipline (e.g., Simpson 1994). But there are notable exceptions. Bernard Berelson’s (1959) eulogy for the (American) field, for instance, tells a field-centric/intellectual story—but concludes that the field is “withering away” (1). Others (e.g., Carey 1996; Ray 2000) use the approach to critique the field in favor of some neglected or forgotten tradition.

By contrast, Robert Worcester (1987) supplies a contextual/institutional account of the worldwide spread of US-style public opinion research during the early Cold War, but frames the expansion as a salutary development for the field. A handful of field-centric/institutional histories (Sproule 2008; Chaffee and Rogers 1997 among them) narrate the (U.S.) field’s institutional history in Whiggish terms, as a successful story of academic enclosure.

GEOGRAPHY

Peter Simonson and John Durham Peters (2008), in their excellent “Communication and Media Studies, History to 1968,” observe that the “international history of communication and media studies has yet to be written.” Most histories, they note, have been national, with the “bulk of

attention devoted to North America and western Europe” (764). Our analysis of the published historiography supports their claims—resoundingly.

Our procedure was to tag bibliographic entries by geography, if the location of the research episode, institute, tradition, or scholar under study was specified or obvious. To merit a geographic tag, the place-relevance had to be sustained and substantial. For example, Thomas J. Roach’s (2001) brief history of popular and scholarly fears of media potency touches on a number of American and German examples—including a paragraph on Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld’s 1955 Decatur, Illinois study—but did not receive a geographic tag. By contrast, Yung-Ho Im’s (1993) history of critical communication studies in 1980s South Korea was tagged, since its geographic context was unmistakable. Regional tags (like “Europe” or “Latin America”) were used when historians framed their studies in these terms. The relatively few attempts to draw an international history of the field were tagged “international.”

We expected the English-language historiographical literature to favor the Anglophone world, but were not prepared for the dramatic imbalances we found. Taken together, the United States and United Kingdom were tagged more than twice as often as the rest of the world combined. The inequality was far more pronounced in the case of developing countries: the United States and United Kingdom were tagged *14 times* as often as the entire global South. Put another way, more than half (55 percent, or 906 entries) of all studies focused on the United States, the United Kingdom, or both countries. If Canada and Australia are included, the total rises to 1,107 entries, or more than 60 percent of the total. And the global South? Less than 4 percent—a mere 65 entries—covered historical topics in the developing world.

The breakdown by continent followed the same pattern. North America countries (comprising, for our purposes, Canada and the United States) were tagged in over half (51 percent) the studies. The great bulk of these—756, in fact—treated U.S. topics. Canada’s relatively high 97 citation count was dominated by work on just two scholars, Harold Adam Innis and Marshall McLuhan; three-quarters of Canada-tagged publications focused on one or both of the medium analysts.

Just over a fifth (21 percent) of total entries were tagged for European states or Europe as a whole. Europe’s 358 citations paled relative to the United States, but still far outpaced the rest of the world. Britain was most frequently tagged—at 150 studies (9 percent)—and more than half (53 percent, or 79 entries) dealt with the country’s cultural studies tradition. Germany registered 104 tags (6 percent), most often paired (23 times) with Frankfurt School themes. France trailed Germany with just 24 tagged publications, most frequently overlapping (five times) with entries on film theory. There was a large drop-off after Austria (21 entries), with no single country topping Finland’s six citations. Southern and Eastern Europe were relatively neglected, meriting just 17 citations in total.

Latin America—including Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central America—was tagged in only 2 percent of the bibliography’s entries. About a fifth of the articles (six entries) treated Latin American scholars’ prominent roles in the challenge to the prevailing, US-centric international communication subfield in the 1960s and 1970s. Alejandro Barranquero (2011), for example, reconstructs a Latin American “participatory communication paradigm” first articulated in scholars’ published quarrel with the reigning modernization paradigm. A number of other studies review the contributions of critical Latin American scholars like Jesús Martín-Barbero, Néstor García-Canclini, and Ludovico Silva (Berry 2006; Szurmuk and Waisbord 2011; Calles-Santillana 2006). The outline of an institutional history of Latin American communication research can be stitched together from work by José de Melo (1993), Claudio Mellado (2011), and Carlos Gomez-Palacio Campos (1989).

The history of Asian communication research barely registers, garnering just over 1 percent

of studies. Of the 23 citations, just eight address pan-Asian themes—a fact noted as well by Chen, Miyahara, and Kim in this volume One, a book-length, UNESCO-sponsored report by Ronny Adhikarya (1983), documents the problematic dependence of Southeast Asian scholars on “US-originated communication knowledge”—in part owing to Asian scholars’ U.S. graduate training. This point is echoed in a literature review on Asian political communication research (Willnat and Aw 2004). The world’s most populous nation merits just six entries, including a meta-review of Internet research (Kluver and Yang 2005), an autobiographic reflection on teaching in Hong Kong (and Austria and Canada) (Reisenleitner 2002), a memorial essay on U.S. scholar Herbert Schiller (with reflections on the Chinese academy) (Zhao 2001), and an important discussion of “academic dependency and the lack of theorizing in research works from outside the Western world” (Wang 2011, 1461). India has just two entries, including Anup Dhar’s (2011) fascinating account of institutional flux in the country’s communication research fields. Japan is limited to a mere three studies, including Seiji Tsukamoto’s (2006) explanation for the placement of journalism ethics within Japanese legal studies.

It is a grim reflection of Africa’s global marginality that the entire continent warranted just six bibliographic entries—not even one-half of 1 percent of the entries in our bibliography. Keyan Tomaselli (1995), in one paper, traces the uptake of Marxist cultural theory in the anti-colonial work of scholar-activists like Frantz Fanon. Frank Ugboajah (1987), in another study, reviews and critiques Western influence on African communication scholars. Ugboajah points to the paucity of natively trained researchers, poor funding prospects, and weak institutional support. “So, for communication researchers in Africa,” he concludes, “the story is one of despondency and endless frustration” (10).

In the African case, we find the same pattern as in Asia and Latin America—only more so. How can we explain this gross imbalance in historiographical treatment? One explanation, no doubt, is language: by limiting our analysis to English, we have cut ourselves off from the bulk of scholarship in regions that tend not to publish in the scholarly world’s aspiring lingua franca: Southern and Eastern Europe, the Francophone universe, and much of Asia. It is also true that communication research, in its various incarnations, was earlier and more widely established in Europe and the United States. Indeed, a substantial proportion of the historiography coming out of the global South is devoted to what might be termed “intellectual colonization,” alongside indigenous push-back. Still, disparities in age and institutional scale between the communication disciplines in Western Europe and North America, on the one hand, and the rest of the world, on the other, cannot explain the immense width of this historiographical chasm. We suspect that there is also a Matthew effect at work, by which established clusters of historical research attract still more interest—not least because certain narrative sign-posts, like Paul Lazarsfeld’s “limited effects” findings, are good to teach with. Regardless of the reasons, it seems reasonable to conclude, for now at least, that John Downing’s claim about media theorizing also applies to the field’s historiography: “an intellectual monologue within the mainstream West with itself” (1996, xi). John Sinclair’s engagement with the notion of “cultural imperialism” in this volume explicitly sets out to expand that conversation to Latin America, India, and China.

FIGURES

The geographic disparities we found in the literature as a whole were, not surprisingly, reflected in those works centered on one or more individuals. Over 75 percent—or 177 scholars—were tagged with U.S. affiliations. North American and Western European scholars, taken together, made up over 95 percent of the 229 tagged names. Only nine figures outside the West received

treatment substantial enough to merit a tag, and of these only five—Fanon, Silva, Martín-Barbero, Canclini, and Faut Firat—hailed from the developing world.

For an entry to receive a named tag, the study needed to maintain a preponderant focus on the scholar in question. In most cases, the individual was named in the title, or else called out prominently in the abstract. For example, David Riesman and his *Lonely Crowd* (1950) are the main focus of Eugene Lunn's (1990) discussion of the 1950s mass culture debate, so the entry was tagged for Riesman. But the tag was left off of Abraham Nosnik's (1986) dissertation on communication research and the philosophy of science, since only passing reference to Riesman is made.

In most cases, a scholar was identified with a single nation-state, based on the setting of his or her career. Multiple national affiliations were assigned, however, if a scholar's principal work was produced in more than one country. Nazi-era émigré Siegfried Kracauer, for example, was identified with both Germany and the United States, since he wrote major film theory before and after his emigration. The idea here is not to "claim" scholars for one or more national traditions in any essential way, but instead to measure relative geographic attention in the published history.

Of the top twenty-five most frequently tagged figures, eighteen were based in the United States. Four of these eighteen were also identified with Germany, all interwar émigrés: Theodor Adorno (13 citations), Kurt Lewin (12), Max Horkheimer (9), and Kracauer (16). The other Germany-linked scholar in the top 25 was Friedrich Kittler (14), whose theory-inflected media histories have only recently attracted English-language attention (e.g., Winthrop-Young 2011).

Canada was identified with three of the top twenty-five most-tagged figures. Unsurprisingly, Innis (45 citations) and McLuhan (43) appeared high on the list, in the third and fourth positions respectively. Both scholars have attracted multiple book-length studies, and the pair are invariably prominent in efforts to establish a putative "media ecology" tradition (e.g., Strate and Wachtel 2005). Radical political economist Dallas Smythe was tagged in 10 publications, among them a number of treatments of his "audience commodity" thesis (e.g., Caraway 2011).

Two British scholars, Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart, were frequently tagged, and almost always in connection to cultural studies. Published work on Williams (18 citations) tends to place the literary scholar in the context of the late 1950s and 1960s British New Left (e.g., Redal 2008) debates on culture. Other works place the stronger accent on Williams as a key first-generation figure in what became known as "British cultural studies" (e.g., Green 1974). Hoggart, a founder of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (BCCCS), is the subject of twelve bibliographic entries. Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy* (1957) (Corner 1998), his roots in adult education (Steele 1997), and the Centre's establishment (Lee 2003, ch. 3) have all attracted historiographical attention.

The most frequently tagged figure by far was Austrian émigré Paul Lazarsfeld. Indeed, his ninety-five entries were enough to account for 10 percent of the individual-tag total. A large share (46 percent or 44 entries) of the Lazarsfeld-linked studies examined his Columbia-based Bureau of Applied Social Research (e.g., Barton 2001). The Bureau's classic *Personal Influence* (1955) study, co-authored by Elihu Katz and Lazarsfeld, was the main focus in fifteen publications (many of them collected in Simonson 2007). A number of studies revisited the complex relationship between Lazarsfeld and Frankfurt School scholars Adorno and Horkheimer (including Morrison 1978).

After Lazarsfeld, James W. Carey was the most often tagged. Of his sixty-two citations, over a third (23) were memorials published after his 2006 death (e.g., Nord 2006). A cluster of works reviewed Carey's contributions to journalism studies (e.g., Nerone 2009), and a number of others explored his role in establishing an "American" cultural studies (among them Grossberg 2009).

Wilbur Schramm was a substantial focus in twenty-eight studies, enough to place him in the

fifth slot after McLuhan. Most of these (19 studies) emphasized his institution building at Iowa, Illinois, and/or Stanford (e.g., Hudson 1977) and a handful present him as the field's "founder" (including Glander 1996). A comparatively small number explore his intellectual legacy (though see Cartier 1988).

John Dewey (with 25 citations) and Walter Lippmann (16) were tagged together 12 times, almost always in connection with the so-called Lippmann-Dewey debate (e.g., Carey 1982). Superb revisionist work by Sue Curry Jansen (2009) has established that the 1920s debate was really more of an exchange between longtime allies. Chicago sociologist Robert Park (15 citations) is frequently grouped with Dewey and Charles Horton Cooley as the core members of a "Chicago School" approach to communication and democracy (as in Carey 1996, though see Pooley 2007).

Like so much else in the published historiography, the distribution of attention paid to individual scholars is markedly uneven. The citation counts—and, for that matter, the depths of scholarly engagement—are not aligned with historical or intellectual significance. No one could argue, for example, that Lazarsfeld's contributions to the field were 95 times as important as his colleague and former wife Herta Herzog—who, along with 124 other figures, was tagged just once (Liebes 2003). Indeed, the case of female scholars like Herzog is instructive. Just 18 women were among the 229 figures tagged, or 10 percent of the total. Only a pair of female researchers—German public opinion researcher Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann (6 citations; e.g., Löblich 2007) and British film theorist Laura Mulvey (3; e.g., Loshitzky 2003)—even rose above two tagged entries, and then just barely.

No doubt the gender disparity reflects, to some extent, barriers to the academic career in place throughout most of the last century. We would expect, in other words, the historiography to reflect that discrimination, and yield a gender imbalance. The inequity is so pronounced, however, that past discrimination isn't explanation enough. Likewise, the gigantic gap between the West and the rest of the world in these ranks could not survive a neutral measure of scholarly or historical significance.

What's going on here? A measure of unconscious discrimination, we think, along with the rich-get-richer dynamic we identified earlier. It is also possible that another factor is contributing: the presence (or, more to the point, absence) of mnemonic champions. Robert Park had his James W. Carey, Lazarsfeld his Elihu Katz: figures committed to the tending of their forebears' legacies in part through historical tribute. "What gets written about," observed Jennifer Platt (1996) in her history of sociological research methods, "has been to a surprising extent dependent on the enthusiasm of strategically placed individuals" (1996, 6). She cites two telling examples: Lazarsfeld and the Chicago School.

DISCIPLINARY FRAME

Communication studies' relationship with its disciplinary forerunners and fellow-travelers is predictably messy. Should interdisciplinary fields like film studies and cultural studies even be counted within the wider field? Or are they something like cognates? The fact that most film studies scholars would never refer to themselves as "communication researchers" certainly complicates matters. Many cultural studies scholars resist the label too (cf Grossberg 1996).

Then there are the more direct institutional ancestors: speech and rhetoric in the United States, and journalism in the United States and elsewhere. In intellectual terms the family of ancestors is much larger, and includes not just the core social sciences—sociology, psychology, and political science especially—but also English and late nineteenth-century political economy.

Mass communication research, without the label, preceded a recognized field of “communication research” by at least seventy-five years. In the case of speech and rhetoric, intellectual roots sink much deeper, to ancient Greece. Communication research is much older than “communication research.”

Named departments and PhD programs were not established in large numbers until the mid-1950s, first within journalism schools at large U.S. universities in the Midwest. By the early 1960s, pre-existing speech and rhetoric departments across campus were also adopting the “Communication” label. To make matters more complicated, speech- and journalism-derived programs were underwritten by vocational training agendas, which however remained in unrelieved tension with these units’ academic missions (see Pooley 2011).

Native research traditions soon emerged, but even these were generated, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, by “communication” scholars trained in other disciplines like psychology and sociology. Meanwhile, social scientists and literary scholars *outside* communication departments continued to produce scholarship on communication-related themes.

From one perspective, none of this mattered. From the first days of the organized field, entrepreneurial scholars like Wilbur Schramm were busy elaborating a species of intellectual imperialism. All communication, from cave painting to radio, was the new discipline’s domain (Schramm 1955). Soon Schramm drafted four putative “founders”—sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld, political scientist Harold Lasswell, and psychologists Kurt Lewin and Carl Hovland—with no institutional ties to the new field (Schramm 1963). Since then, many other scholars have been retroactively dragooned into the field, from classicists like Eric Havelock (Gronbeck 2000) to anthropologists like Gregory Bateson (Rieber 1989). There is, to be sure, a defensible intellectual rationale for all this poaching: the field and its conceptual repertoire are thereby enriched.

Still, there is an unmentioned slippage that takes place when the “communication research” label gets invoked. Perhaps it is a productive tension, but there is, regardless, a large gap between the institutionalized field and the intellectual project (Peters 1986). If the one was merely an island within the other, the slippage might be manageable. But with the emergence of *other* semi-organized fields with media research claims, like film studies and cultural studies, the situation has become hopelessly muddled. Communication research, like any other social fact, is what we call it. But the fact is we call many things “communication research” without coming close to an agreement about what those things are.

This state of definitional chaos is certainly reflected in the historical literature itself, which is all over the map (figuratively, if not—alas—literally). Bibliographic tagging was especially difficult, and in many cases individual works received more than one disciplinary tag. Without being comfortable with the distinction, we distinguish between “fields-within-the-field”—speech/rhetoric, film studies, journalism, and cultural studies—and cognate disciplines, like literature and sociology. We followed field-historians’ own labeling whenever possible. Frank Webster’s (2004) treatment of the relations between cultural studies and sociology in Britain, for example, was tagged for both disciplines.

To a striking degree, journalism, film studies, speech/rhetoric, and cultural studies have segregated histories. Synthetic narratives are rare indeed, and even self-styled generalist accounts tend to omit, at the very least, film studies. Cultural studies, if mentioned in a generalist narrative, is typically relegated to a brief, Stuart Hall-centered Birmingham survey. We tagged ninety-four studies (or 6 percent of the total) as “general” in their scope, but the tagging was generous: country-specific narratives and two-country comparative histories were included. Jesse Delia’s (1987) history, flawed and U.S.-centric as it is, remains unusual for its mix of intellectual and institutional stories, and its balanced treatment of the journalism and speech traditions. Typical in this grouping is a study like William Paisley’s (1984), a literature-review-cum-history with

a Whiggish cast. The strongest general accounts (like Nordenstreng 2004 and Simonson and Peters 2008) dispense with field-encompassing ambitions, in the absence of a more dependable specialized literature. These studies foreground their limits, and identify the many lacunae that prevent—for now—meaningfully integrative narratives.

CONCLUSION

Our review suggests a number of tentative conclusions about the state of the field's historiography:

- the field is dominated by work that takes a field-centric/intellectual approach, relative to studies with an institutional/contextual lens;
- to an overwhelming extent, existing histories treat topics and themes centered on North America and Europe;
- very few studies attempt to compare national traditions, and fewer still attempt international histories;
- while robust literatures now exist for fields-within-the-field like cultural studies, speech, journalism, and film studies, only the rare account addresses their interactions—cross-cutting rivalries, points of intellectual and institutional overlap, and patterns of mutual indifference;
- our existing histories of departments and research institutes concentrate on just a handful of settings like Birmingham's CCCS, the Chicago School, and the especially attention-lavished Bureau of Applied Social Research, while neglecting most everything else;
- a similar and related winner-take-all dynamic characterizes the historical treatment of individual scholars, and the winners are nearly all male and Western.

The energies and attention of the field's historians have been misallocated. One contributing factor is the part-time commitment—spread-out and sporadic—of these scholars. We counted over 1,200 authors in the bibliography, the vast majority of whom appear just once. Only fifty-one researchers have published five or more studies, and well over half of these are (or were) major figures in the field with wide-ranging research agendas and—in some cases—reputational stakes in the stories they tell. What we have—to borrow Wilbur Schramm's description of mid-century U.S. communication research—is a crossroads where many pass but few tarry. There is nothing like the small but vibrant communities of disciplinary historians that work on anthropology, economics, political science, psychology, and sociology. And historians of communication research are notably absent from the developing conversation on Cold War social science (see Isaac 2007; Crowther-Heyck 2006; and Engerman 2010, for overviews).

Though difficult to document in our tagging analysis, many of our most widely-circulated histories contain “partially submerged dragons and exaggerated coastlines” (Pooley 2006). Certain mnemonic tropes, especially those centered on a putative powerful-to-limited-effects storyline and the claim that the (U.S.) field had four founders, continue to circulate widely despite their dubious veracity—even in book-length studies like Everett Rogers' *A History of Communication Study* (1994). Every discipline has its legitimacy-seeking origin myths, but what communication research lacks is a substantial body of corrective history. To adapt a phrase from James Carey, there is, strictly speaking, very little history of communication research.

We can do better. The first and most urgent task is to de-Westernize the field's historiography—to produce histories of the field beyond North America and Western Europe. More to the

point, monolingual, English-speaking scholars like us need to engage with the existing literature in other languages, rather than presume its nonexistence. The casual ethnocentricity of most U.S. historiography needs to be challenged too—especially to the extent that its local particularities masquerade as universal developments.

The project to de-Westernize our narratives furnishes its own justification, given the absurdly lopsided historiographical attention to date. It is also possible that new, and newly engaged, storytelling outside the West will contribute to a related undertaking: scrutiny of the field's disciplinary aspirations. The vast majority of published histories assume—or, less often, proclaim—the field's disciplinary coherence. Indeed, our historical narratives have been serving up some of the field's rare helpings of shared identity.

But coherence is exactly what should *not* be assumed. Instead, the field's disciplinary claims, as they have evolved over time, ought to command more of our historical attention. Such a project requires, to be sure, that historians take their stories beyond national borders. Of particular importance are comparative and trans-national histories of the kind currently in such short supply. More work that employs a mix of institutional and contextual approaches will be required if we hope to outline a complex story that remains poorly understood: the spread of departments of communication and media studies across the world in the decades after World War II. In telling this story, we will need to engage with histories of the humanities, social sciences, and the postwar university, as well as the small but rich cross-disciplinary literature on the organizational diversity of academic life (e.g., Whitley 1984; Becher and Trowler 2001).

There is, thankfully, already a substantial body of work on individual departments, schools and professional associations—much of it in dissertations, limited-circulation reports and out-of-print commemorative volumes. A survey of this work, with attention paid to continuities and departures, would help to identify patterns and the remaining work to be done—the first step of a long slog. Why expend the energy? Supplying the field with a coherent identity would justify the effort, perhaps, but we have suggested that this kind of legitimacy work may clash with rigorous scholarship.

We can be of service to the wider field in other ways. One worthy and useful project is to help recover and clarify forgotten or neglected research traditions, especially those outside the United States and Western Europe. We could, moreover, use new institutional histories to help jumpstart an overdue conversation about the field's disciplinary self-understanding going forward.

We can also make contributions to the wider literature on the history and sociology of academic knowledge. We have an exceptional case to study, after all, with fascinating state, industry, interdisciplinary, and public entanglements, in addition to a madcap institutional story.

There is much left to do, despite the published plenitude. Right now the impression we have is of a half-finished pointillist painting: from afar a few shapes are discernible, surrounded by empty canvas.

NOTES

1. The bibliography is maintained online at the Project for the History of Communication Research's website, <http://www.historyofcommunicationresearch.org>. Because the bibliography is regularly updated, we have archived the version that this analysis was based on at <http://www.historyofcommunicationresearch.org/documents/bib-10-12.pdf>.
2. We forgo the more familiar labels—*internalist* and *externalist*—to avoid the philosophy of science baggage that the terms sometimes carry in the history of science tradition. See Shapin (1992) for a rich treatment of the terms' knotty backstory.

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