Communication
As A Discipline

Another Plea for the University Tradition:
The Institutional Roots of Intellectual Compromise[1]

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In a pair of lectures two decades apart, the late James W. Carey twice issued an eloquent defense of what he, following Harold Innis, called "the university tradition." This article attempts to revive Carey's plea for the university tradition, but argues that Carey's account of the threat and its roots does not go deep enough. The problem is not the entanglements of funding, but instead the U.S. field's institutional history. The sin is original—built, that is, into its many-stranded professional school origins. The university tradition is worth defending, but the fight should be over the field's organization.

Twenty-five years ago, Jeremy Tunstall (1983) wrote, "The fact that a single individual can teach courses in, say, magazine editing and research techniques in social psychology is a tribute to human adaptability, not to a well-conceived academic discipline" (p. 93). Tunstall, the British media scholar, made the comment in his contribution to the *Journal of Communication*'s 1983 "Ferment in the Field" special issue. His title was unsubtle: "The Problem with U.S. Communication Research." That one-sentence indictment has never been answered, mainly because there's no good response.

Tunstall was right: The problem with American communication research goes deep. It is true that the field is flush with resources that other disciplines covet, including an enormous supply of undergraduate would-be celebrities. But the same conditions that fill our lecture halls also guarantee the discipline's low-status obscurity. The students—in all their sea-of-white-baseball-caps, Miss America-contestant splendor—enroll because they want to write press release leads or prebroadcast rundowns. Most communication programs are in the business of vocational instruction first; academic analysis of the media is an often-resented, parasitic add-on. We all suffer because of the vocational taint, if only because the whole field got erected atop that rickety foundation.

So here we are. But how did we get here? The answer isn't exactly a mystery, but it's not something we talk about much, either. The organized discipline of communication studies is the successor

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to a motley band of ancestors, of which speech and journalism are only the most prominent. In the 1950s and early 1960s, legitimacy-starved journalism schools, with the help of entrepreneurs like Wilbur Schramm, claimed what had been a loosely organized, interdisciplinary field of political scientists, sociologists, and psychologists. At around the same time, speech departments in need of social scientific standing embraced the "communication" label too. Film studies, just a few years later, was established on the other side of campus, in English and other humanities departments. As a direct result of these polyglot origins, a single large university may have four or five distinct programs that carry the "media" or "communication" labels, and a similar number of scholarly associations claim to represent the whole field. We have, as John Durham Peters observed back in 1986, a discipline made up of "leftovers from earlier communication research married to dispossessed fields such as academic journalism, drama or speech" (p. 543).

The field we have inherited is the product of professional school opportunism and nomenclatural poaching. It is held together by a word—communication—and by duct tape and twine. Its greatest assets are profession-bound majors and budget-obsessed deans. But those riches—and the skills training that secures them—bring out the sneers from our colleagues in better-established disciplines. The issue here isn't hurt feelings, nor is it academic respect. The issue is that the field's tangled institutional history has had real intellectual consequences. Department faculty are divided along applied and analytic lines, or worse yet, expected to teach on both tracks. Prestigious universities and established disciplines discourage students from pursuing graduate work in the field. On average, weaker faculty and graduate students populate our departments as a result. This wouldn't matter so much except that our programs have long since wrested the academic study of the media from the other social sciences. The result is that media study is centered on a field with bricks but no mortar.

Why don't we talk about these matters more? My own explanation is rooted in the area that I specialize in, the history of the field. Most of our published historiography is Whiggish and bleached, but the more striking feature of these histories is their muted treatments of the field's institutional history. Stephen Brush (1974) famously asked if the history of science should be rated X. I think that we shy away from our vocational origins because they are as embarrassing as they are indispensable (see Pooley, 2008, pp. 59–60). The institutional history of our field, in short, is rated X. But this is no excuse not to talk about it. The problems are not going away.

The University Tradition

One figure in the field who did address the vocational question was the late James W. Carey. In a pair of lectures two decades apart, Carey (1978, 2000) issued an eloquent defense of what he, following Harold Innis, called "the university tradition." Carey had in mind independent scholarly inquiry, which he took to be a threatened and fragile ideal. In his 1977 presidential address for the Association for Education in Journalism (AEJ), and again in his 2000 Carroll C. Arnold lecture, Carey scolded his colleagues in communication studies for permitting partnerships with industry and government to get in the way of truth seeking and real scholarship. Both essays are marked enough by Carey's other intellectual commitments that their message of academic autonomy gets partly obscured. Still, they deserve to be rescued from neglect.

Carey delivered his 1977 AEJ presidential remarks to an audience he expected to be skeptical, perhaps even hostile. The AEJ, an association of journalism instructors, was split along the very same academic and professional fault line that Carey would address in his talk. Wilbur Schramm and his allies had, back in the mid-1950s, launched their guerilla campaign for social scientific communication studies from within the AEJ. Their beachhead, the Division on Communication Theory and Methodology, had by the mid-1960s grown to represent nearly 40% of the association's membership, setting off a debate between so-called "green-eyeshades" and "chi-squares" that was still roiling the group when Carey delivered his talk (MacLean, Danbury, & McNelly, 1965, p. 101; Rogers, 1994, pp. 463–464).[2] Carey was at the time George H. Gallup Chair at the University of Iowa, the site where Schramm had proposed the first doctoral program in communication in 1943 (Rogers, 1994, p. 1). Even the act of giving an AEJ presidential address was freighted with academic symbolism: No president had delivered remarks since 1972, leading Carey (1978) to admit that it is "therefore with some temerity that I reestablish this interrupted tradition" (p. 846).

Carey borrowed the title of his talk, "A Plea for the University Tradition," from a commencement address that Harold Adam Innis, the Canadian economic historian, gave at the University of New Brunswick in 1944. Innis (1944) had warned against the corruption of scholarship by business and, especially, the wartime state. Carey (1978) framed his own address as a restatement of the eminent Canadian's warning: "Innis made a plea to his colleagues," said Carey. "Protect the university tradition, defend it against interests and specialisms that would overwhelm it, maintain the general intellectual and moral point of view, preserve a sense of history and the future. I want to make that same plea" (p. 847).

To some extent, Carey really does make the same plea. He alerts his audience that "many of you may find" his views "distasteful." He plainly states that his main interest in the AEJ has "always been in its contribution to scholarship." Without real scholarly gains, he adds, the group's achievements will be "so much afflatus in a hurricane." He also isolates the issue that, in my view, is decisive: the "inherent tension between the university tradition and the practice of journalism." He cites his own brief career in advertising to highlight the field's organized schizophrenia. "I composed hymns to hemorrhoids, symphonies to soporifics. And with that background I am a professor, engaged to profess the truth. How does one do that?" Is it possible to reconcile life as a scholar with professional practice? Carey doubts that it is possible. As if to anticipate Tunstall, he says that the European scholars he encounters are "bemused by what they take to be our arrogant and naive belief that we can pull off this miracle" (pp. 846–847).

Carey delivered his remarks in his trademark prose-style: graceful and rich with allusion. He writes:

> Well, I have worried a good deal about all these matters and about our spinal erectness, and today I'm going to follow the advice of George Bernard Shaw: "If you can't get the skeleton out of the closet, you might as well make it dance." (p. 847)

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[2] On the tensions between the two camps, see also Dickson, 2000, pp. 73–74; Highton, 1986; Lovell, 1987; and Stemple, 1988.

It's not just Shaw; he quotes Benjamin Disraeli, Harold Rosenberg, and "an old Irish adage" too—and that's just by the second page. I bring up his eloquence because, here as elsewhere, Carey as polished craftsman-essayist often envelops, and thereby obscures, Carey as thinker. He claims that his talk is merely an extension of Innis' 1944 remarks: "[M]y title and argument are not particularly original . . . I lifted them, as I have lifted much else, from the scholar in this field who has had the most singular influence upon me." If this is modesty, it is also false, just because Carey takes his address in a different direction and away from Innis. As ventriloquism, it is less than faithful (p. 846).[3]

More than anything else, his AEJ presidential remarks are an attack on professionalism—in journalism, journalism education, and the academy writ large. He tells a version of the triumphalist story of 20th-century journalistic professionalism, but recasts that story in declinist terms. In Carey's view, the rise of the professions, both inside and outside the academy, represents nothing so much as the class privilege of status-anxious, middle-class strivers. Professionals' ethical codes and their claims to autonomy and meritocratic principle are really in the service of an individualist and amoral control system of control—"knowledgeable elites" over "ignorant masses" (pp. 848–853). In narrating his account, Carey leans very heavily on the historian Burton Bledstein's (1976) *The Culture of Professionalism.* Bledstein had argued that middle-class professionalism emerged in tandem with the American university in the late 19th century. Universities articulated, partly through self-exemplification in the faculty ranks, a new professional ethos centered on the individual's private career trajectory. Institutions of higher learning, wrote Bledstein, incubated a new "vertical vision of life" that promised wealth and status through education, at the expense of a "horizontal" social unity (pp. 105–107).

Carey (1978) adapted Bledstein's account to the rise of journalism education in the early 20th century. "The history of journalism education," he wrote, "is part of the story of the creation of a new social class invested with enormous power and authority." Joseph Pulitzer's long, successful struggle to establish a journalism school at Columbia University was an attempt, Carey says, to "professionalize journalism and upgrade the status of journalists." Journalists had been "an unlikely assortment of upwardly mobile uneducated ethnics, prodigal sons of wealthy parents, failed novelists, itinerant teachers and marginal men." Before Pulitzer and Columbia, reporters were "like factory workers"; to Carey, the spread of journalism education is the story of how journalists joined the middle class. The conditions were slightly different in the Midwest, where journalism education took deepest root. But the result was the same: self-segregated elitism, secrecy, and a paternalistic attitude toward the broader public (pp. 848–849).

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[3] Patrick Baert (2002), in an essay on Richard Rorty, distinguishes between two modes of scholarly presentation: the "enfant terrible" and the "synthesizer." The enfant terrible presents his thought as a major rupture with the past. The synthesizer, by contrast, presents his work as continuous with, and indeed through the voice of, past thinkers. As Baert writes, "Synthesizers have sometimes remarkably little in common with their alleged inspirational sources, and they are often far more innovative than the label may lead us to think" (p. 140). Like Rorty, Carey was a synthesizer.

Carey, in fact, goes further than did Bledsoe. Drawing on Christopher Lasch's (1977) *Haven in a Heartless World*, Carey (1978) asserts that professionals of all kinds have deployed expert knowledge to exert control over workers' private lives (p. 850). In journalism the problem is worse, because—and here Innis reappears—modern mass media are space-biased and encourage "monopolies of knowledge" by an educated few: "Professional classes appropriate the right to provide official versions of human thought, to pronounce on the meanings present in the heads and lives of anonymous people" (p. 849). It's significant that Carey widens his critique to include scientific knowledge itself. "[T]he authority of the professions," he writes, "was finally derived from their presumed capacity to speak with the voice of positive science: to ground both their methods of selection and their understanding of human problems in the special methods and insights of science." His target—"scientifically grounded positive knowledge"—is plainly the field's then-dominant effects tradition, and the broader "behavioral sciences" orientation from which it emerged (pp. 852–853).

The villains in this account are professional journalists, their university instructors, and quantitative social scientists. Their crime is nothing less than the exclusion of the public from public life itself. "The professional imagination," he says, "stills the voice of the moral community, the primary community of citizenship." Civil society depends on a "widespread, decentralized body of human impulses, skills and knowledge," which the professional "expropriates" for himself. The "simple fact," he concludes, "is that the public has disappeared. There is no public out there" (pp. 853–854)

Needless to say, Carey's is a powerful critique, but one that fails to address Innis' worry about encroachments on academic life. Instead, we find an account of the decline of public life brought on by experts and quantifiers—a familiar theme of Carey's work in the 1980s and 1990s. It is worth recalling that he delivered these AEJ remarks at a transitional moment in his career. He had established his reputation in the mid-1970s, after all, by calling for a qualitative and humanistic alternative to the field's effects tradition. Drawing on European currents of thought like British cultural studies, hermeneutics, and phenomenology, he acted then as the field's interpretevist standard bearer in the decade's social science *methodensreit* (Carey, 1975a; Carey, 1975b; Carey & Kreiling, 1974). Already by 1978, however, we see signs of a new orientation that would soon dominate Carey's writings. He came to identify with American thought—American pragmatism and John Dewey, in particular. Carey joined in the great Dewey revival of the period, led by the philosopher Richard Rorty. Carey's Dewey was heavily indebted to Rorty, and indeed, Carey by the early 1980s had embraced Rorty's redefinition of scholarship as public edification. In line with his 1978 critique of professionalism, Carey came to focus on the restoration of civic life through a more public form of journalism. He also renarrated the history of the field in sweeping terms: his side— Dewey, pragmatism, and the Chicago School—set against the effects tradition, Walter Lippmann, expert knowledge, and correspondence theories of truth (Pooley, 2009). In the process, he succeeded in establishing the Dewey-Lippmann debate as an historical trope and morality set piece with purchase well beyond communication research—even though no such debate ever took place, as Sue Curry Jansen (2009) has recently shown (see also Jansen, 2008; Schudson, 2008).

The reason this all matters is because Carey's 1977 address was not a plea for the university tradition. It was in fact a plea for the revival of public life. Like Marx with Hegel, Carey turned Innis on his head. For Carey, the "great single task" of scholarship is to "conceptually restore the idea of the public

and public life." At a fundamental level, he is calling for engagement with the world outside the university gates; Innis wanted to post more guards. For Carey, value-free social science is part of the problem, and by "professional" he means knowledge that sets itself off from the rest of society. It is true that Carey bemoans the anti-intellectualism of professional life, and like Innis, is concerned with the fate of the humanities in the modern university. But Carey's antonym for "professional" isn't "academic"; it is "common sense," working-class communalism, and even—in the context of journalism—"practical" studies. If the "inherent tension" is really between skills training and scholarship—as I think it is—then the skeleton still hasn't yet danced. We have instead a thoughtful critique of professional elitism (pp. 851, 854).

Twenty-two years later, Carey revisited the "university tradition" theme in his Carroll C. Arnold lecture at the 2000 National Communication Association meeting. It is fitting that this second talk was delivered not to journalism educators but to the body representing the field's other progenitor, speech. Just as he had in 1978, Carey (2000) knowingly unsettled his audience's self-certain values, this time by taking issue with the conference theme, "The Engaged Discipline." He opened his remarks by quoting the convention announcement, which called for communication scholars to join "a national movement characterized by colleges and universities turning their attention from an *internal* to an *external* focus with faculty taking on the role of *public scholars*—teachers *more engaged with external communities*" (p. 4). Engagement, Carey counters, is far from an unalloyed good. What the field needs instead are new borders "to draw the circle tighter around the university in order to strengthen its internal life" (p. 13).

In urging disengagement on his colleagues, Carey revives again Innis' 1944 plea for the university tradition. The 20th century university has been far too attentive to its would-be patrons in industry and government, with mostly "baleful" consequences (p. 5). Carey paraphrases Innis approvingly: the intellectual is "fixed in inevitable conflict" with the state, which "at one and the same time opposes truth and seeks to control knowledge" (p. 8). Prostration before the agenda of government was Innis' main fear, and rightly so in Carey's view. But times have changed, and Carey sees the rush to link campus and corporation as the greater threat now.

As in 1978, Carey endorses a form of intellectual engagement with public life, though the country's shift rightward has him sounding a bit like the leftists he always disavowed. In the name of the university tradition, he calls for intellectual "acts of resistance" to the "tyranny of the dominant discourse," which is at present a "form of neo-liberalism" (p. 11). The "incontestable" responsibility of the university, he says, is to oppose "whatever *at the moment* is the dominant force and fashion and to align itself with the public and a public interest that is oriented to the conditions of long-run stability" (p. 14) The walls between campus and the world beyond need to be rebuilt just so this kind of countervailing force might be nurtured within

Carey's NCA address is lucid and cleverly written, though the "university tradition," invoked for a second time in Innis' name, doesn't closely resemble the ideal that Innis meant to promote. Carey's university would be an island of learned resistance to what he calls a "grim situation." For Innis (1944) the high walls should service instead the "search for truth"—the "conditions which make it possible for scholarship to survive and flourish" (pp. 299–304). At one level this hardly matters, the question of

Carey's fidelity to Innis. Carey's 1978 critique of professionalism doesn't require Innis, nor even the concept of the "university tradition," to carry its argument. His more recent call for intellectual resistance stands on its own too. Besides, we really should join Carey in fretting about the American university's zeal for corporate deal-making; certain corners of campus have become (he's right) collegiate-gothic patent farms.

But it is my view that the pair of Carey addresses did not, in the end, make a muscular enough case for the university tradition—at least not in Innis' sense of the phrase, which located truth-seeking and scholarship at its core. When we train our attention on these things—truth seeking and scholarship—our field's defining tension is placed in relief. Communication studies' problem isn't mainly the entanglements of funding, nor is it other kinds of externally sponsored research. We should be worried about compromises like this, of course, but we need to turn our gaze inward first. The real problem is the field's institutional history, its applied and analytic double mission. From an academic standpoint, we aren't exactly sleeping with the enemy, but we do have incompatible differences with our spouse. This is why we need another plea for the university tradition.

The Handoff to the Journalism Schools

The history of the institutionalization of our field is a story that hasn't yet been told. There have been a few narratives that touch on the development of an organized "communication" discipline, including a few under-appreciated doctoral dissertations (Cartier, 1988; Chaffee & Rogers, 1997b; Delia, 1987, pp. 73–84; Dickson, 2000, pp. 60–96; Fish, 1984; King, 1990; Peters, 1986; Sproule, 2008; Weaver & Gray, 1980).[4]

But most of the historiography covers the field's intellectual development in Whiggish terms, and leaves out most everything else—perhaps, as I have suggested, because the field has little else, save the nebulous term itself, to hold it together (Pooley, 2008, pp. 59–60). Ernst Renan, the 19th century French thinker, famously observed that nations need to forget as much as they remember (Renan, 1990). Something like that is at work in our own field's institutional amnesia.

I won't attempt to tell the story of the field's establishment here, but will instead linger for a moment on the 1950s and 1960s, when the interdisciplinary social scientific field of communication passed the baton to established programs in professional schools of journalism and speech departments (see Pooley & Katz, 2008). There is an irony I will mention up front: Journalism and speech both emerged out of English departments in the early 20th century. Their convergence on the "communication" label reflected, in both cases, the felt need to import social scientific legitimacy in the rapidly changing, post-World War II research university.

The self-identified U.S. field of "communication" was born in the late 1930s, though, of course, a good deal of media scholarship was produced earlier—very little of it, incidentally, gripped by a "hypodermic needle" conception of media effect. Communication had already been the main topical focus

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[4] Carey's (1979) own treatment is idiosyncratic, but sweeping and even brilliant.

of a new interdisciplinary field, public opinion research, which coalesced in the mid-1930s around sampling-based polling methods (Converse, 2009; Danziger, 1997, pp. 134–157; Igo, 2008; Pooley, 2006, pp. 179–299). The sociologists, political scientists, and psychologists who populated the public opinion field were not—most of them anyway—attracted to media questions per se. But the Rockefeller Foundation's interest in educational broadcasting, along with media firms' willingness to commission research on their audiences, meant that communication topics were prominent (Buxton, 1994). When German tanks rolled into Poland in 1939, a Rockefeller-sponsored "Communications Seminar" just underway, comprised of leading public opinion researchers, recast its mission to address the international emergency (Gary, 1996). As J. Michael Sproule (1987) has shown, the "communication" label itself was settled on as a fresh alternative to "propaganda analysis," which was identified with a blanket condemnation of propaganda at the moment when America needed to distinguish between the good and bad sort.

The Rockefeller Foundation soon established a network of communication research initiatives that, after Pearl Harbor, were incorporated into the federal government's sprawling propaganda bureaucracy, which mobilized hundreds of social scientists across dozens of civilian and military agencies (Gary, 1996). Public opinion researchers formed the nucleus of a wartime propaganda and morale research effort that drew dozens of other prominent scholars into its orbit. Communication topics and survey methods emerged from the war at the center of quantitative social science, especially within sociology, but also in important strands of political science and psychology. There was palpable excitement about wartime methodological innovations, as well as about substantive findings, among the networks of newly connected scholars who returned to campus in 1945. Crucially, those methods and findings were identified with survey methods and what was increasingly referred to as "communication research" (Converse, 2009, pp. 162–229; Glander, 2000, pp. 41–60; Simpson, 1994, pp. 15–31).

This was true even though there were few if any dedicated "communication researchers." Instead, communication was an important topic of interdisciplinary study at Paul Lazarsfeld's Bureau of Applied Social Research, at Michigan's Survey Research Center, and at many other similar institutes that surfaced around the country. Indeed, to a remarkable extent, "communication research" was coextensive with—the same thing as—elite social science writ large. The point could easily be exaggerated, but a significant number of the scholars who stood at the center of what soon became known as the "behavioral sciences" were identified with, and worked on, communication topics. Recall that the behavioral sciences label was the self-anointed name for the social sciences' quantitative vanguard. Communication research was arguably the main focus of the well-heeled, though short-lived Ford Foundation initiative that gave quantitative social science its postwar name—the Behavioral Sciences Program (1951–1957), directed by the Lazarsfeld collaborator Bernard Berelson.

The behavioral sciences movement, such as it was, emerged in tandem with the Cold War national security state. With the fall of Czechoslovakia in 1948, the "loss" of China the next year, and the eruption of Korean hostilities soon after, the federal government—through the State Department, the Pentagon, and the recently chartered Central Intelligence Agency, and with the help of the major foundations—invested heavily in psychological warfare research. From 1948 until the early 1950s, the government in effect remobilized the World War II propaganda and morale network. Another wave of

sometimes clandestine federal sponsorship swept through the behavioral sciences in the mid-1950s onward as part of the new, postcolonial Cold War campaign for Third World hearts and minds. Daniel Lerner's (1958) *The Passing of Traditional Society* was only one among many covertly funded Cold War studies that were repackaged as international communication research and modernization theory (Samarajiva, 1987; Shah, 2011). One strand of critical historiography, identified especially with Todd Gitlin, has it that 1950s communication research was in the business of delivering "limited effects" findings to receptive media firm sponsors. This isn't entirely wrong, but the more important underwriter by far was the federal government (Pooley, 2008). Needless to say, the 1950s were a period in our field's history when external entanglements really were worse than troubling.

Changes in the patronage system for social science in the early to mid-1960s, among other factors, broke up this interdisciplinary nexus of Cold War communication research. As Hunter Crowther-Heyck (2006) has shown, the response to Sputnik in 1958 set in motion a new funding regime that, for a few years, overlapped with the mix of foundation, State Department, and military dollars that had been dominant. Starting in the late 1950s, a new, far more prominent role was given to civilian federal agencies, including the National Science Foundation, and notably for psychologically inflected communication research, the National Institutes of Mental Health. In practice, these agencies emphasized disciplines and peer review; the old system had relied more on the informal advice of highly connected "brokers" like Lazarsfeld and Berelson. There's much more to say about this, but for our purposes the crucial point is that interdisciplinary communication research gradually withered. The field, as a result, was delivered into the eager hands of Wilbur Schramm.

Schramm, a consummate academic entrepreneur originally trained in English, had conceived the idea of a journalism-based communication discipline while serving in the Office of War Information (Cartier, 1988, p. 174). In 1943, he left Washington to return to the University of Iowa after securing the deanship of its journalism school. Existing journalism programs already housed a narrow scholarly tradition that focused on the history of journalism, First Amendment analysis, and readership studies. Schramm's vision was far more ambitious, and he succeeded in establishing a Communication PhD program at Iowa organized around quantitative social science. He left for the University of Illinois in 1947 at the invitation of the University's president, a mentor who installed Schramm at the helm of a new and expansive Division of Communication.[5] Schramm quickly established Illinois' Institute of Communications Research, which was directly modeled on Lazarsfeld's Bureau. And he set out enthusiastically to erect the scaffolding that any new field needs, including conferences, readers, a usable past, and a network of tenure-track scholars. Though a zealous Cold Warrior who had been showered with contracts from the State Department, military, and CIA, Schramm had all the while been building up an institutional home for an interdisciplinary field that, by the mid-1960s, had lost its other support. He had successfully relocated the field to journalism schools.[6]

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[5] The formal "Division" nomenclature wouldn't arrive until 1950 (Rogers, 1994, p. 449).

[6] There is a large, though much of it hagiographic, literature on Schramm. See, for example, Cartier, 1988; Chaffee & Rogers, 1997a; Glander, 1996; and McAnany, 1988.

Schramm was joined in his takeover effort by the so-called "Bleyer children," the name given to the students of the late journalism scholar Willard Bleyer, who in the interwar years had pushed to include social science in the journalism curriculum at the University of Wisconsin (Nelson, 1987; Rogers & Chaffee, 1994; Ross, 1957). In the 1950s, Bleyer children like Ralph Casey, Ralph Nafziger, Fred Siebert, and Chilton Bush established doctoral programs at Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan State, and Stanford, respectively. In the 1960s and after, an addendum—"and Mass Communication"—was affixed to the names of most journalism schools to recognize their scholarly makeovers. Schramm and the Bleyer children had, in short, successfully colonized journalism education in the name of "communication research." They succeeded, in part, because journalism schools were, to some extent at least, willing to be colonized; they faced their own legitimacy problems in the postwar American university. Still, the wholesale implanting of a scholarly field into a pre-existing model of professional education produced a great deal of pushback among the so-called "green eyeshades." These schools—which typically teach PR and advertising, too—continue to coexist awkwardly alongside the academic study of communication.

The field's other ancestor, speech programs housed in the humanities, adopted the communication moniker for remarkably similar reasons. Speech, before World War II, already had one foot in social science with its speech disorders subfield. Rapid advances made during and after the war by psychological social psychologists working on group dynamics and small-group interaction, however, raised the fear that the field's claim to interpersonal communication might be supplanted. The social psychological literature was joined to a small native tradition of social science-oriented speech inquiry beginning in the late 1940s. The idea was that public speaking courses and the great speeches curriculum weren't enough to secure the discipline's place in the postwar university. Communication was a natural fit, in part because speech programs benefitted from another link—to broadcasting education. Starting in the 1920s, some speech departments established coursework in radio announcing as an extension of drama. Radio was joined in the 1950s to TV coursework and then both to film instruction in the 1960s. The result was the establishment of RTF (short for Radio-Television-Film) tracks in many speech programs in the postwar years. The so-called "orality alliance" or "Midwestern model" of speech instruction thus comprised four distinct fields: speech disorders, speech communication, RTF or broadcasting, and theater. At many universities, moreover, the departments' speech component clung to the field's roots in classical rhetoric; the result was "two cultures," the humanistic and social scientific, engaged in prolonged "joint custody" of the field. In the 1960s, the Babel-like field began to embrace the same communication label that journalism schools were also claiming (Delia, 1987, pp. 76–84; Sproule, 2008, pp. 169–171). So complete was the substitution of communication for speech that speech-trained scholars were, by the early 1990s, complaining about a discipline left "speechless" (Macke, 1991).

All of this accounts for the head-scratching fact that multiple programs wear the communication label at big Midwestern universities. There are, of course, nomenclatural clues to ancestry: programs with "mass communication" in their titles come from journalism, while "communication studies" or "communication arts" signal a speech provenance. Another way to read this madcap story is through the history of the many academic associations that claim to represent the entire field. The American Association of Teachers of Journalism—later renamed the Association for Education in Journalism (AEJ)—was formed in 1912 long before Wilbur Schramm had ever heard of communication research; by 1984 it was the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. The Speech Association of

America was founded in 1914. By 1968, the organization's name had changed to the Speech Communication Association. In 1997 the term *speech* was dropped altogether, so that the SCA became the National Communication Association. Back in 1949, social scientific insurrectionists had broken off from what was then called the Speech Association of America to form the National Society for the Study of Communication (NSSC). The NSSC was renamed the International Communication Association in 1969.[7] Confused yet? Even the film scholars, who have long gone their separate humanistic ways, have recently asserted jurisdiction over the study of mass communication. The Society for Cinema Studies (SCS), which began life as the Society of Cinematologists in 1959, became in 2004 the Society for Cinema and Media Studies: "The goals of SCMS," proclaims the organization's website, "are to promote all areas of media studies within universities and two-and four-year colleges" (Society for Cinema and Media Studies, n.d.). It is only appropriate that the AoIR (Association of Internet Researchers) doesn't pretend to represent a single field. I won't even touch the Cultural Studies Association.

Public speaking, the finer points of ad placement, theories of media in society—this doesn't make any sense. Anyone who has ever been to a National Communication Association meeting knows exactly what I am talking about. It's true that the ideal pattern—ideas come first, followed by a discipline organized around those ideas—is a rare thing indeed in the history of academic life. But what other discipline can publish two major books on its history in the same year, with only five overlapping names among the hundreds cited by the pair of texts (Craig, 1995, p. 181)? Sense is simply not to be had here. And what's worse than incoherence is others noticing it.

The Institutional Sources of Intellectual Poverty

The most recent serious attempt to account for the field's "minor league status" is Robert McChesney's (2007) *Communication Revolution*. McChesney devotes about 10 pages to a diagnosis of the field's lowly place in the university, complete with anecdotal slights and ignorant deans (pp. 16–25). He points to a number of factors, but singles out the discipline's polyglot origins and skills training: "Communication appears as just a hepped-up form of vocational education, while the traditional social sciences sit atop Mount Olympus pondering the fate of the word" (p. 23). But he quickly slips into a lament about media industry influence, which really isn't the issue except to the extent that the industry is within us—written into our DNA. Removing the Gannet name from the endowed chair won't change the fact that we have been exiled—self-exiled—to the professional school periphery.

The single best treatment of these issues remains John Durham Peters' 1986 essay "The Institutional Sources of Intellectual Poverty in Communication Research." Writing 25 years ago, Peters lamented the "victory of institution over intellect in the formation of the field" (p. 538). Communication studies, he wrote, is an academic Taiwan, claiming to possess all of China while isolated on a small island (p. 543). Peters (2008) recently revisited that classic article and admits that his views since have "softened." Yes, communication research remains on the margins, but, he says, "[h]egemony is

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[7] The best guide to the field's associations and their histories is Sproule (2008), though his own interpretation is one of increasing disciplinary coherence.

epistemologically hazardous." Communication studies has the "comparative advantage of marginality," so perhaps, he concludes, being an island like Taiwan "isn't really so bad" (pp. 157–158).

I am less optimistic and side with the Peters of 1986. We all reside in the professional school ghetto; that is, we all suffer from the taint of our split vocational personality, even if our department is exclusively academic. What we have, Robert Craig (1995) has observed, is

> scarcely more than a single, culturally very potent symbol, "communication," a word still trendy enough to attract students, legitimate enough to keep skeptical colleagues at bay for a while, and ambiguous enough to serve as a lowest common denominator for our otherwise largely unrelated scholarly and professional pursuits. (p. 178)

To stretch Peters' island metaphor too far, we suffer from a kind of Galapagos problem. The prestige gap opened up by our murky origins is wide enough that very little of our scholarship is much read outside the field. I think of it as the tyranny of the undergraduate professional major: Resource-rich, but legitimacy-poor, we scholars of communication toil away in well-heeled obscurity. I have joked before that communication as the tragic, fallback field of disgraced English professors is a well-established trope in the campus novel. Another index of disrespect is that general interest commentary on media and journalism in magazines like *The Atlantic* or *The New York Review of Books* is almost never penned by communication scholars. Our own scattershot institutional history, mixed up as it is with the gravitational pull of better-established disciplines, means that we have a very weakly defined reputational system and no established hierarchy of journals. We are plagued, in short, by a kind of Matthew Effect, in which our low status tends to attract weaker faculty and graduate students, who proceed to confirm our colleagues' worst impressions.

What does it mean, then, to plead for the university tradition? I think we could do worse than follow James Carey's (2000) advice: "The imperative task," he said, "is to widen the bonds of sympathy within the university and renew emphasis on the education of our students not as consumers but as co-participants in a community of learning" (p. 13). I just don't see how we can do this while trying to pull off what Carey called "this miracle." If we succeed at all, it is a tribute to human adaptability, not to a well-conceived academic discipline.

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