

## A “Crisscrossing” Historical Analysis of *Four Theories of the Press*

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Because 2016 was the 60th anniversary of the publication of *Four Theories of the Press*, it is time to reexplore how this book, labeled as “the bible of comparative media studies,” was born. This article applies a sociology-of-science approach, combined with *histoire croisée* (“crisscrossing history”), to analyze archival materials, published and unpublished (auto)biographies and previous academic research. It argues, after an analytical crisscrossing of individuals, research traditions, ideas, institutions, and their relationships that lie behind *Four Theories*, that the book was a compromise between the diverse interests of its authors, their backgrounds, ideas, and national and international politics, and thus an intersection of contradictory but also overlapping elements that also gave rise to new concepts of a press system and of a press theory in a transnational context.

*Keywords:* sociology-of-science approach (model), crisscrossing history, history of communication studies, comparative communication, press system, Wilbur Schramm, Theodore B. Peterson, Fredrick S. Siebert

The history of U.S. communication research has mainly been written by scholars in the United States. However, increasingly communication historians inside and outside the United States have emphasized how important it is to understand the field through the eyes not only of those who see it as part of their own national history but also of those in other countries whose research has been influenced by it (see, e.g., Simonson & Park, 2016).

But how does one study the production of transnational academic knowledge? Löblich and Scheu (2011) developed a sociology-of-science approach (they call it a conceptual model, or an approach) to refine the theoretical and methodological foundations of the historiography of communication studies. Later, Löblich and Averbek-Lietz (2016) also argued that it was important to understand academic

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institutions and ideas beyond the nation-state, and their transnational connections, using the concept of *histoire croisée* ("crisscrossing history"), which they borrowed from Werner and Zimmerman (2006). The latter define *histoire croisée* as a *relational* approach that examines the links between different formations, while also emphasizing the way these "place or fold crosswise one over the other" (pp. 31, 37). It thus invites us to reconsider the interactions between different societies, cultures, disciplines, or traditions (p. 30). My understanding of their approach is that it investigates links between entities that have so far been understood as separate and have been compared as wholes rather than as relationships between them.

In this article, I apply Löblich and Scheu's (2011) approach, with help from Werner and Zimmerman (2006), to the all-time best seller of media and communication studies, *Four Theories of the Press: The Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility, and Soviet Communist Concepts of What the Press Should Be and Do* (hereafter, FT). There are very few books in communication research that have received as much attention as one with only four chapters and 153 pages, published in 1956 by the University of Illinois Press: It has sold nearly 90,000 copies worldwide. Its three authors, Fredrick (Fred) S. Siebert (1901–82), Theodore (Ted) B. Peterson (1918–97), and Wilbur Schramm (1907–87) all worked before the book's publication in the Institute of Communications Research (ICR) and/or the Department of Journalism at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign (UIUC).

Since its publication, the book has become, as Curran (2011) puts it, "the bible of comparative media studies" (p. 28). It has been translated into several languages, including German, Japanese, Chinese, Russian, and Latvian. The book has also remained popular among academics in the post-Communist and Communist countries. Schramm visited China in 1982, and FT was translated into Chinese soon after his visit. His Soviet Communist theory did not encounter any criticism in China and became highly and widely recognized by its readers (Huang, 2003, p. 445). FT was translated into Russian in 1998 and soon became the founding text for media and journalism theory in Russia (Vartanova, 2009, pp. 121, 125). As Vartanova (2009, p. 126) writes, the book became very popular because it addressed the most up-to-date issues in Russian political life of that time (i.e., a freedom-of-speech concept based on ideals of the free market, a complete opposite of the previous Soviet theory that viewed the media as pure instruments of politics and ideology).

However, at the same time, there are very few books that have provoked as much criticism as FT. Many media and communication scholars (see, e.g., in order of publication, Merrill, 1974; Blumler & Gurevitch, 1975; Merrill & Lowenstein, 1979; Blumler, 1981; Martin & Chaudhary, 1983; Picard, 1985; McIntyre, 1987; Hardt, 1988; Lowenstein & Merrill, 1990; Mundt, 1991; Hachten & Hachten, 1992; McQuail, 1994; Altschull, 1984/1995; Nerone, 1995; Sparks with Reading, 1998; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Nerone, 2004; Gunaratne, 2005; McKenzie, 2006; Hanitzsch, 2008; Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White, 2009; Jones & Pusey, 2010; Curran, 2011; Hallin & Mancini, 2012) have been critical of FT. Sparks, for example, concludes that the book should be "relegated forthwith to the gloomiest recess of the Museum of the Cold War and visited only by sensible graduate students of a historical persuasion" (Sparks with Reading, 1998, p. 179). Hallin and Mancini (2004) write that FT has "stalked the landscape of media studies like a horror-movie zombie for decades beyond its natural lifetime" (p. 10). Even if all these authors criticized FT from their own diverse perspectives (although most of them were criticizing FT's U.S. centrism and anticommunism), the book still is used as a starting point for

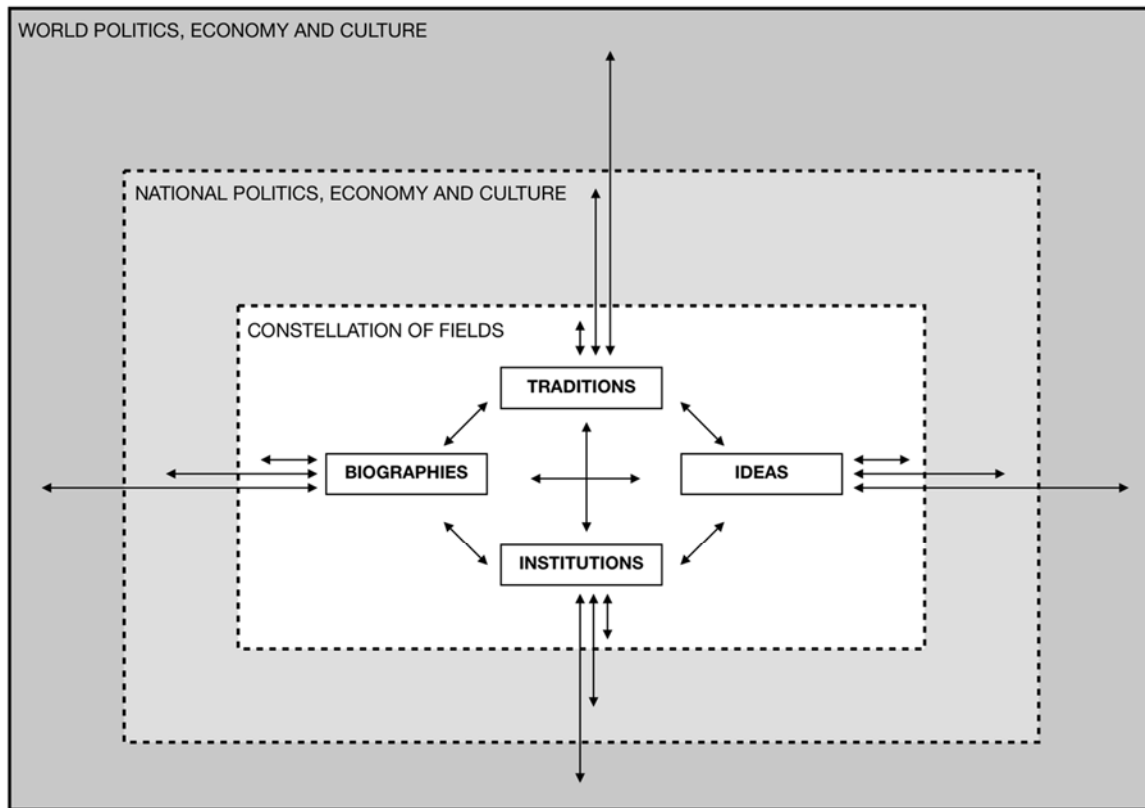
comparative communication research using the concept of a media system. This is why it is even more important that we continue to explore its origins to reevaluate its significance.

### A Conceptual Framework

Löblich and Scheu (2011, p. 3) write that three approaches have been applied to historical research on communication studies. These are (1) intellectual, (2) biographical, and (3) institutional. Löblich and Scheu (2011, pp. 3–5) call intellectual histories as focusing on the coherence of theories, paradigms, research problems, and methods. According to them, biographical histories use individual scholars and their lives as narrative threads and show the course of a scientist's life and his or her work. Institutional histories deal with the development of institutes of communication research inside and outside of university departments but also deal with scholarly associations or with resources of communication research. Noting that "each of these approaches not only offers certain advantages and specific approaches but also shows some deficits" (Löblich & Scheu, 2011, p. 7), they develop what they call a "model" that combines these three components to analyze the history of communication studies as a discipline. I find their approach very helpful, but since the object of my study is not the birth of a discipline, but to understand why and how FT as a book that aimed to compare the press not only in the U.S. but also outside it, was written, I need to adjust it. This is why I have also added a new component, that of (research) traditions in the "constellation of fields" frame (see Figure 1). In my thinking, research traditions (e.g., a field of international communication) are something different from ideas (e.g., a new concept of a system) that do not necessarily start a new field.

I have added another frame—world politics, economy, and culture—beyond the national (in their model "nonscientific field of society") to emphasize the transnational aspects of any academic work that, as Löblich and Averbeck-Lietz (2016) put it, "should be thought of more in terms of networks than in terms of causalities, searching for interrelations between intellectual and social formations, between countries and between the local, national and international level" (p. 41). This is especially important in relation to FT, which not only was written during a time of world crisis, but was influenced by and was itself to influence thinking beyond U.S. academia.

I draw here, inspired by Löblich and Averbeck-Lietz (2016), on the ideas emerging from the concept of *histoire croisée* ("crisscrossing history"; Werner & Zimmerman, 2006). Werner and Zimmerman (2006, p. 31) define *histoire croisée* as a relational approach that examines the links between various historically constituted formations. The links between biographical, traditional, intellectual, and institutional are thus acknowledged as being "historically situated and consisting of interpenetrated dimensions depending on their resistance, permeability or malleability and other environment" (Werner & Zimmerman, 2006, pp. 33, 37). Werner and Zimmerman do not define resistance, permeability, or malleability, but, in my understanding, they wish to emphasize the multiplicity of ideas (p. 39) and their hybridity, without trying to hide the tensions between the different parts of the process. The idea of not only acknowledging the different approaches but also highlighting their interrelations adds a new and important dimension to Löblich and Scheu's (2011) approach (Figure 1).



*Figure 1. A Revised approach for the history of communication studies.  
Source: Löblich & Scheu, 2011, p. 7.*

Based on archival research, previous academic research, and published and unpublished (auto)biographies, this article argues that we need, to understand FT's national and transnational configurations to take into account the relations among individuals, traditions, ideas, and institutions of the time the book was written. Using each of these approaches, I here crisscross archival materials primarily located at the University of Illinois with previously published work to explore the intersection(s) of the relations in and between all of these.

### **A Biographical Approach: The Authors**

A biographical approach has traditionally concentrated on individual achievements and given insights into the role of individual researchers (Löblich & Scheu, 2011, p. 4). The UIUC archive consists of materials such as unpublished biographies and interviews together with published work that have been analyzed for this section (see Archival Sources). However, if we want, as here in the case of FT, to explore joint authorship, we also need to explore the relationships between the authors. By so doing, we can

achieve insights not only into their personal histories but also into how they related to one another and how they worked together.

### ***Wilbur Schramm***

Schramm has often been seen as the prime mover behind FT. Peterson describes FT as a spin-off from Schramm's work on the responsibility of the media. The U.S. National Council of Churches had asked Schramm (1957a) to undertake a project on the responsibilities of mass communicators and he used money left over from that project to produce FT. Schramm had received his PhD in English at the University of Iowa and was appointed as director of the School of Journalism there in 1943. He had been George D. Stoddard's (1897–1981)—president of UIUC from 1946 to 1953—colleague at Iowa (Glander, 2000, p. 161), and when Stoddard joined the Office of War Information during World War II, he brought in Schramm (Nerone, 2004, p. 23). Schramm worked during the war as director of educational service in the Office of War Information, as an educational consultant to the Navy Department and as an educational adviser to the War Department. Stoddard also invited Schramm to establish the Institute of Communications Research at UIUC. In 1947, Schramm moved to UIUC as director of the University of Illinois Press, director of the ICR, research professor of journalism and assistant to the UIUC newly elected President Stoddard.

During his time at UIUC, Schramm served as a U.S. delegate to the international communication meetings organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris in 1949, conducted research in Europe in the following year and participated in a UNESCO study of international news agencies and in an International Press Institute study of news flows (UNESCO, 1953; The International Press Institute, 1953). He also worked as a consultant to the Department of Defense, the Air Force, the Operations Coordinating Board, the Human Relations Research Office, the Operations Research Office, the U.S. Information Agency (USIA), and other branches of government. In 1950, the Air Force sent him to Korea on a wartime research assignment, and the following year the army sent him to Japan to study psychological warfare practices. During 1954, he was on leave for five months to direct a worldwide research project at the request of the National Security Council, and half of Schramm's salary came from the U.S. Information Agency.

Schramm became the self-nominated expert on Soviet theory for FT. His work on psychological warfare and his empirical research in Korea (Schramm & Riley, 1951a, 1951b) gave him the most expertise on Communist countries among his colleagues at UIUC. His teaching and his research reports show how the concept of a system had started to influence his thinking. In Schramm's outline for the theory of communications course he taught at UIUC, he lists three systems: (1) totalitarian, (2) socialist-paternal, and (3) democratic-free-enterprise system. His *Four Working Papers on Propaganda Theory* (1955), written for USIA with Kumata, includes four case studies either coauthored or written separately: (1) the Japanese concept of propaganda (Kumata); (2) the propaganda theory of the German Nazis (Kumata & Schramm,); (3) the British concept of propaganda (Schramm); and (4) the Soviet concept of psychological warfare (Schramm). In this way, Schramm had already outlined the structure of what was to become FT, which would be written without a conclusion—as was his *Four Working Papers*.

### ***Fred Siebert***

If Schramm was seen as the initiator of FT, two of the books four chapters were written by Fred Siebert, professor in journalism and director of the School of Journalism and Communications at UIUC since 1941. Siebert was first educated in journalism and then in law. He defined himself as a "legal historian in journalism" (Hudson, 1970, p. 16). Siebert's (1952) magnum opus was *Freedom of the Press in England, 1476-1776*, on which he had worked for 20 years, including library research in the UK (Hudson, 1970, p. 2; Schwarzlose, 1978, pp. 106-107). The book introduced three theories seen as likely to influence the press in any society: (1) the Tudor-Stuart, (2) the Blackstone-Mansfield, and (3) the Camden-Erskine-Jefferson theories. According to Marler (1990), Siebert used the Tudor-Stuart theory to develop his authoritarian theory and the Camden-Erskine-Jefferson theory to develop the libertarian theory in FT; the first theory suggested that the state was responsible for the protection of safety, stability, and freedom, whereas the second was based on the acceptance of sovereignty's limitations on freedom through its understood power, and the third theory suggested that the freedom of the sovereign was limited by natural law (Marler, 1990, p. 193).

The use of the word *theory* in FT clearly came from Siebert's book, in which Siebert used the term to separate historical periods one from another, carrying out comparative research over time. The idea of using theories to separate periods from one another for comparison purposes also came from Siebert's work, although he used them primarily for purposes of comparison over space in FT. According to Siebert, "philosophical principles played a secondary, but important, role in the development of the freedom of expression" (Marler, 1990, p. 193), indicating that another concept was needed—that of a press system.

### ***Ted Peterson***

The third author was Ted Peterson. Siebert had invited him to join the faculty at UIUC in 1948 as an instructor, and Peterson also became a PhD student there. In 1955, after Peterson defended his dissertation on magazines (published as a book in 1964; see Peterson, 1964), he also became a full professor at UIUC. Peterson recalls that, as the most junior author, he was allocated social responsibility theory, although he would have preferred the libertarian theory. Since Schramm, Siebert, and Peterson had only one meeting where the division of labor was divided between them and Peterson was left alone with his chapter without further guidance, the report of the Hutchins Commission, *A Free and Responsible Press* (Leigh, 1947) became his primary source. Siebert, as director of the School of Journalism, had organized a series of seminars within the faculty to consider their implications (Hudson, 1977, p. 313). Peterson formulated the main results of the Hutchins report into the social responsibility theory of the press (McIntyre, 1987, p. 136).

### ***Relationships Between the Authors***

Siebert and Peterson appeared to be close—Peterson described them as having a "father-son relationship," but there was no great affection shown between these two and Schramm. Both Siebert and Schramm were on Peterson's doctoral committee. Schramm was seen as a "brilliant guy" by Peterson, but was not as close to him as Siebert was. However, all three authors shared similar backgrounds of migrant

families, coming from small midwestern towns and universities. Siebert had worked for eight months in British archives in 1936, and Peterson had carried out archival research during his 30 months in the UK while serving in the U.S. Army Air Force during World War II (Peterson, 1945, 1948). Schramm had been to Korea and Japan and possibly to other places on U.S. army missions. They had all worked as journalists, and none of them was a social scientist by education.

Whenever Peterson was asked how FT came to be written, his answer was always, "Casually. Very casually." Siebert said that the book grew out of a graduate course he had been teaching at UIUC, and that after Schramm had visited his class he suggested to Siebert that he should write out "that part with the four theories" (Schwarzlose, 1978, p. 109). Peterson confirms that the book was Schramm's idea, and that it was based on a seminar that Siebert had been teaching on government and the press. Siebert did not want to write all the chapters himself, although he later wondered if he should have done so (Schwarzlose, 1978, p. 109). Instead, he said, "I'll do two parts of it and get Peterson to do one part, and you do the other, Schramm" (Schwarzlose, 1978, p. 109). Peterson was then stopped one day "while using the drinking fountain outside Siebert's office by Schramm, who asked him whether he was interested in helping to write a book." He agreed and was given Chapter 3 to write. Siebert later suggested to Schramm that Peterson's name should go after his and before Schramm's.

The title of the book was briefly discussed at their only meeting, which lasted no more than an hour. Three authors decided to call it just *Theories* without *The*, thus accepting the possibility that other theories existed. After the meeting, Schramm produced a single sheet, entitled, "These questions (and probably others) should be answerable from each of our chapters." FT was then written in five weeks in the summer of 1956, after that one meeting. Peterson does not even remember whether, after finishing independently their individual chapters, they commented on one another's.

FT could probably have been written without Peterson, who described his chapter as a "term paper," but not without Siebert. However, Schramm was the academic entrepreneur, editing several books at the same time and bringing in big research grants. He was also the one at that time who was internationally oriented, even if with the interests of the U.S. government primarily in mind. Without Schramm's initiative, FT might easily not have been put together, but it could certainly not have been written without Siebert.

None of the authors could have foreseen the book's future success, which started happening after it was reprinted in paperback in 1963. The University of Illinois Press, directed by Schramm, published the book in hardback only in 1956. According to Peterson, the book received some favorable reviews and the Kappa Tau Alpha award for research on journalism from UIUC. Both Peterson and Siebert felt that, compared with their other works, which took up anything from six to 20 years of their lives, the success of FT was unfair (Schwarzlose, 1978). Around the time the book was published, Schramm had already left for Stanford, and Siebert was to leave for Michigan State University in 1957.

### **A Tradition Approach: The Old and the New**

In this section, I concentrate on established research traditions rather than on ideas understood as more individual. The authors of FT emerged from the existing traditions of humanistic journalism research and emerging social-science-influenced comparative research. This section relies on already published work and its reanalysis.

We have at least two relevant possible traditions that existed before FT was written: (1) journalism research and (2) comparative communication-related research within and outside the academic tradition. Journalism research, according to Schramm (1957b, p. 94), consisted mainly of biographies and institutional histories and was domestically oriented. His evaluation, based on articles published in *Public Opinion Quarterly* from 1937 through 1957, identified previous research as being "almost wholly non-quantitative," with "almost exclusive occupation with the methods and viewpoints of the humanities," "from a view of the printed media as the shadows of the great personalities" and with a "local or national focus" (Schramm, 1957b, p. 91). This was the tradition both Siebert and Peterson came from and was still the dominant tradition in U.S. journalism schools.

Despite his own strong links with journalism, Schramm contributed to international communication research that had emerged during and after World War II, when academics in many disciplines, but especially in political science, became interested in comparative research, and large comparative research projects were established. The new interest in comparative research can be placed within three different general traditions: (1) wartime propaganda studies, (2) studies in international communication, and (3) Cold War propaganda studies.

#### ***Wartime Propaganda Studies***

Wartime propaganda studies fundamentally changed research that had previously focused mainly on the United States into more comparative research. It was funded by foundations and by the government with the very practical aim of winning the psychological war (Simpson, 1994). As a result, it also became more normative, since the difference between good (the U.S.) and evil (the enemy) was unquestionable. But it also brought together academics from different fields with different theoretical and methodological backgrounds. As Schramm notes, "by bringing together anthropologists, psychologists, political scientists, economists and media men, this approach has attempted to combine diversity of approach with unity of target" (Delia, 1987, p. 72).

The major international political factor influencing wartime propaganda studies in the United States was the rise of Nazism in Europe, which not only led to the reorientation of research funded by the U.S. government but also contributed to the cosmopolitanization of research teams. By 1936, in Germany alone, about 1,300 university teachers had been dismissed for reasons of their racial origin or of suspected political sympathies (Dale, 1936, p. 1), and by 1940 between 1,100 and 1,500 university professors, including more than 200 sociologists, had emigrated from Germany and Austria, primarily to the U.S. or the UK (Fleck, 2011, p. 18).



Many social scientists had collaborated during the war within international research teams when working for the U.S. Ministry of Defense on collecting information about enemy countries (see, e.g., Simpson, 1994). As a result, new networks of academics were born. Prominent European social academics (see, e.g., Almond, 1988; Lang, 1979) played an important role in such propaganda studies as the Research Project on Totalitarian Communication at the New School for Social Research, the Foreign Intelligence Service at the U.S. Office of War Information, and the War Communication Research Project at the Library of Congress (Lang, 1979). The interdisciplinary and cosmopolitan character of the research was also essential to these research teams (Delia, 1987, p. 72) and to the new emerging field of communication studies.

### ***International Communication Studies***

Between 1945 and 1955, the major sponsors of studies in international communication, in the United States and other countries, were national governments. According to Smith (1956, p. 184), "one of the striking trends of the decade was the willingness of policy makers to commission important research on international communication and opinion, and to pay attention to the results." International communication became a primary concern for UNESCO, founded on November 16, 1945. Its constitution followed the spirit of the UN, but referred explicitly to the role of mass communication in maintaining peace by

collaborating in the work of advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples, through *all means of mass communication* and to that end recommend such *international agreements* as may be necessary to promote the *free flow of ideas by word and image*. (UNESCO, 1945, emphasis added)

After World War II, many U.S. academics participated in international research projects of the newly founded UNESCO. There were strong feelings among academics and policy makers about the role of mass communication in preventing another war (Smith, 1956, p. 183), and UNESCO played an active role in promoting international communication research. These projects included studies of public opinion, stereotypes, and especially of news (Rantanen, 2010). In the U.S., George D. Stoddard, president of UIUC, was a member of the founding committee of UNESCO, a deputy chairperson of the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO, and a public spokesman for UNESCO.

Academics in different fields embraced the idea of comparative research in international communication. Lazarsfeld (1952) predicted as early as 1952 that "international communications research will have most of the talent, funds and interest which domestic communication research commanded earlier" (p. 486), but in practice most of this research was carried out in other disciplines. In 1953, the U.S. Social Science Research Council asked political scientist Gabriel Almond to organize a new committee to work on the behavioral approach to the study of comparative politics. One of the early outcomes of the comparative committees work was Almond's (1956) own article, the same year that FT was published. Comparative politics soon established itself as a strong subdiscipline in political science with such pioneering work as that of Almond and Verba (1963) and Almond and Powell (1966).

### ***Cold War Propaganda Studies***

The beginning of the Cold War again made the U.S. government interested in funding projects to collect data on new enemy countries, as well as on countries with which it wanted an alliance. Oren (2003, pp. 126, 130) argues that in the 1950s, American political science swung strongly toward ideological nationalism but also simultaneously toward ideological internationalization. His argument can be extended to communication research: Between 1945 and 1955 the major funding sponsor for comparative communication studies continued to be the U.S. government. The U.S. Congress began to "reauthorize worldwide propaganda, and significant funding was given both to propaganda work and to research, which would pretest and postevaluate its effectiveness" (Smith, 1956, p. 184). The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), like other agencies of national state security, funded several communications and social science programs at U.S. universities throughout the Cold War period (Glander, 2000, p. 63).

#### **An Idea Approach: Where Did FT's Inspirations Come From?**

By separating traditions from ideas, it is possible to see how new ideas emerge from the combination of research work carried out previously and in other fields. An idea approach makes it also possible to explore the relational dimensions that lead to a multiplicity of possible intercrossings and to how these ideas can be contextualized within the field of ideas of that time and how they have been understood later. In this section, I focus mainly on reanalyzing FT but also use the insights emerging from other scholar's published work and archival materials.

#### ***The Concept of a System***

Ironically, there is not much theory in FT, apart from the title. The introduction is six pages long, and the four chapters are followed by no conclusion. The subtitle, after all, was *What the Press Should Be and Do*. Partly this has to do with the field of communication studies itself, which was just being established and emerging from the shadows of previous comparative traditions with a strong emphasis on "should" rather than "do." If theories and concepts were used, they were borrowed from other disciplines. However, what FT did, even if this was not made explicit, was to introduce the concept of a press system and combine this with theories (philosophies) of the press to produce a systematic comparative study. In the book, these two very different traditions were brought together.

The concept of a system was suddenly "found" by many academics in several fields after World War II. They were influenced by the works of Parsons (1951), who adopted the concept of a system from Max Weber, Émile Durkheim, Vilfredo Pareto, Sigmund Freud (Parsons, 1951, p. xiv) and from general system theorists. The introduction to Wiener's (1948) *Cybernetics* had come out in 1948, and Shannon and Weaver's (1949) *Mathematical Theory of Communication* was published a year later, in 1949, followed by Parsons's *The Social System* (1951) and Easton's (1953) *The Political System*. Many of the early system theorists attended the so-called Macy Conferences (1946-53) funded by the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation. However, none of the authors of FT attended them (American Society for Cybernetics, n.d.). Schramm seemed to be more influenced by Shannon and Weaver than by Parsons. According to Chaffee (1974, p. 3), it was Schramm who persuaded Shannon to publish collaboratively with Weaver.

When Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm introduced the concept of a press system in FT, they clearly knew Parsons's work and used his concept in their book. One can see the influence of Parsons's system theories in FT when the authors write, at the beginning of the book, "To see the differences between press systems in full perspective, then, one must look at the *social systems* in which the press functions" (Siebert et al., 1956, p. 2). The great achievement of FT is that it uses the idea of a system, introduces the concept of a press system, and suggests using the same criteria in comparing different press systems with each other.

When it comes to the definition of a press system, it is hard to find one in FT. According to McQuail (1994), "the theories were also formulated in very general terms and did not describe or underlie any factual media system, except, perhaps, in the case of the Soviet model" (p. 133). FT clearly focuses on philosophies that lie behind "different kinds of press." As its authors write, "in the last analysis the difference between press systems is one of *philosophy*, and this book is about the *philosophical and political* rationales or theories which lie behind the different kinds of press we have in the world today" (Siebert et al., 1956, p. 2, emphasis added).

In a way, and indirectly, this looks as if they were suggesting that Parsons's social system be replaced by philosophical theories, thus acknowledging that there was something other than the system. This is also problematic since, as Nerone (1995) points out with regard to FT, "its theory is that in its structure, policy, and behavior the communications system reflects the society in which it operates and that society can be categorically defined by a coherent philosophy" (p. 18). This is, of course, a valid point, but at the same time what made FT unique was precisely the fact that it compared philosophies and not only material circumstances, as many of the later media system theorists did.

Although FT introduces the concept of a press system, it uses this sparsely. It is also remarkable that the book uses the word *system* only 58 times, and only twice with reference to the concept of a press system (Siebert et al., pp. 2, 5). Most of the references are generic, such as those to a system of social control or of principles. The first reference to a mass-media system can be found on page 18, where it is used under the subtitle of "authoritarian control systems," referring to the "operation of the system of mass media control." Like Almond (1956), whose article came out in the same year, FT combined systems with countries. As Hallin and Mancini (2004) write:

Every theory was related to a particular country: the United States to which they trace the Libertarian and Social responsibility theories; Britain, to which they trace both the Authoritarian and along, with United States, Libertarian theories, and the Soviet Union, the Soviet theory. (p. 10)

The authors combined systems with four press theories in FT, although they themselves were unsure as to whether there should have been only three theories. The social responsibility theory did not exist anywhere—it was a "should-be" rather than a "how it is" theory. Nerone (1995, pp. 18–19, 21) correctly argues that the four theories are not all theories in the same sense, that only two of the theories are grounded in historical realities, and that the book defines FT from within one of the FT of classical

liberalism. According to Sparks (Sparks with Reading, 1998, p. 50), FT turns out in practice to be only two—the "libertarian" and the "Soviet Communist."

### ***The Authoritarian and Libertarian Theories of the Press***

The idea behind Siebert's (1952) *Freedom of the Press in England* originated with his interest in the American Constitution and the First Amendment. When Siebert worked on the Colonial period, he discovered that "all the concepts originated in England" and this led him to carry out archival and library research in London (Schwarzlose, 1978, p. 106). Siebert's authoritarian and libertarian theories were the only ones among those introduced in the book that were based on research into primary sources, unlike Peterson's and Schramm's chapters, which were based on secondary sources.

Personally, Siebert clearly saw the government as the greatest threat to press freedom. This was partly because of the historical period he was interested in, which preceded the rise of modern media, and partly because of what was happening in the United States at that time. In his address at New York University, Siebert listed four changes the U.S. media had recently faced: (1) the growth of the role of the federal government, (2) the leading role the U.S. had in world politics, (3) the aggressiveness of Soviet Communism and its implications for "our way of life," and (4) the "amazing growth of productivity in the USA" (Siebert, 1956, pp. 5–6). However, Siebert was primarily a legal historian and most comfortable when writing about history.

### ***The Social Responsibility Theory of the Press***

According to his own unpublished memoirs, Peterson considered himself lucky when he was invited to coauthor the book, especially when Siebert insisted that his name should come before Schramm's. The young Peterson tried to seek help from his senior authors, but was left very much alone to write his chapter. He had, like other members of the faculty, attended the seminars organized by Siebert and Schramm on the Hutchins report. Peterson, in his dual role as instructor and PhD student, had less freedom and experience than his coauthors.

The Hutchins Commission, officially the Commission of the Freedom of the Press, was set up in 1942 to study whether the freedom of the press was in danger in the U.S.. The commission included such prominent academics as Robert Hutchins, Harold D. Lasswell, and Charles Merriam. It listed 13 recommendations, ranging from guaranteeing institutionalized freedom of the press (and of radio broadcasting and motion pictures) to maintaining competition through antitrust laws (Leigh, 1947). These recommendations were seen by many in the media industry as increasing government control (Blanchard, 1977). In its fifth recommendation, the commission recommended that "agencies of mass communication accept the responsibility of common carriers of information and discussion" (p. 94), which became the basis of the concept of social responsibility. In a way, the commission indirectly introduces here, in the form of social responsibility theory, the role of the press as a kind of a public sphere (McIntyre, 1987; Nerone, 1995).

As McIntyre (1987, p. 137) argues, the Hutchins Commissions concept of responsibility was intended as a guide to policy and was a practical proposal for dealing with specific social conditions in the U.S. Within the context of FT, the report achieved a status it was never intended to have and came to be seen as a yardstick for the media around the world. It included severe criticism of the state of the media in the U.S. that not everybody shared, and by choosing to make it the subject of one of the chapters in FT, the authors made a statement that could also be interpreted as progressive in the U.S. context (Blanchard, 1977; McIntyre, 1987).

### ***The Soviet Theory of the Press***

Perhaps the chapter that has received most criticism is Schramm's. Altschull (1984/1995), for example, argues that "the problem with Schramm's analysis was that it was hostile. Its approach was within the us-versus-them framework. There could be little doubt of the good guys and the bad guys in Schramm's analysis" (p. 108). Like Peterson, Schramm did not collect his own materials for this chapter. Siebert may have been unhappy about Schramm's contribution since, according to Siebert, he had given Schramm his own materials on the Soviet press. As Siebert said, "Schramm was a facile, agile writer and never did very much research himself" (Schwarzlose, 1978, p. 109).

Schramm did not speak Russian and was dependent on research published in English. He used many émigré scholars' published work on the Soviet Union, apart from Andrei Vyshinsky's (1948) *The Law of the Soviet State*, which had been translated into English in 1948. Schramm's footnotes (Siebert et al., 1956, pp. 152–153) refer to the works of Frederick Barghoorn, Raymond Bauer, Merle Fainsod, Alex Inkeles, Paul Kecskemeti, Nathan Leites, and Philip Selznick, each of whom was involved in the research project on the Soviet system (supported by the U.S. Air Force) at Harvard and whose work Schramm must have known during the time he worked in the Office of War Information.

The concept of a system is more frequently used in this chapter than in any other. More than 30% of the uses of the word *system* occur in the section where Schramm refers to the Soviet system in general, to the communication system (p. 122), or to the mass communication system (Siebert et al. 1956, p. 130) of the Soviet Union. There is also one reference to the Nazi system (Siebert et al., 1956, p. 143). In sum, it is fair to say that the system was not a key concept for Siebert and Peterson, but it was primarily Schramm who used it in his formulation of the Soviet Communist theory.

If any of those outlined in FT could be seen as a system par excellence, it was the Soviet system, although this was the system most heavily criticized. It was seen as a system within which a social system and political system collided, and thus the most powerful—the system of systems. Schramm famously ended this chapter and the book by writing the following:

To the Soviets, the multidirectional quality, the openness, the unchecked criticism and conflict in our media represent a weakness in our national armor. To us, they seem our greatest strength. The next few decades will tell which is the better estimate. (Siebert et al., 1956, p. 146)

### **An Institutional Approach**

When we look at the institutional factors behind FT, we can identify both internal and external institutions playing a role. They are (1) UIUC and other academic institutions, such as funding bodies; (2) U.S. government and governmental institutions; (3) intergovernmental institutions, such the UN and UNESCO. This section mainly uses materials from the UIUC archive.

The institutional approach shows not only the importance of financial issues but also how important institutions are for individual researchers. In the case of FT, the new ideas had the support of the director and president of UIUC, but both were soon to leave, either voluntarily or involuntarily. It also shows the importance when beginning something that exists nowhere else, and perhaps especially for universities like UIUC, of relationships beyond their own organization and even beyond academia. At the same time, these relationships are much more influenced by changes in national and world politics than are the institutions themselves.

#### ***The ICR and/or the Department of Journalism at UIUC***

After World War II, communication research in the U.S. began to be institutionalized as an independent discipline (see, e.g., Sproule, 2008). One distinctive feature of FT was that its authors were all working at the same time at UIUC, where the first ICR and one of the first PhD programs in communication in the U.S. were founded. The existing Department of Journalism, from which both Siebert and Peterson came, was more traditional and domestically oriented. Schramm obviously wanted to be at the forefront of the new international communication research, but this was not the approach of the university or of journalism schools in general; for example, in 1955, when FT was published, only 36% of journalism schools were teaching international journalism (Markham, 1956). In this light, FT was clearly notable at the time for representing a new approach to traditional journalism research and even having institutional backing.

#### ***The U.S. Government and Governmental Institutions***

With the ICR as a newcomer, and many established academic institutions competing for the same domestic funding, the funding of its activities assumed particular importance. The institute was not as successful as for example Princeton or Harvard in receiving funding for communication-related research. Funding from the CIA or the U.S. Information Agency was probably easier to win especially because Schramm had worked with both of these earlier. Politically, the relationship with the U.S. government was seen as less problematic in the postwar atmosphere than it would be later. The ability of Schramm, with his wartime experience and his government connections, to attract much needed funding (U.S.\$225,000 annually) was seen as positive, especially combined with his directorship of the University of Illinois Press, which could then publish much of the work.

### ***Intergovernmental Institutions***

Schramm was hired as an outsider, as President Stoddard's protégé. He clearly benefited from this relationship and in particular from Stoddard's links with UNESCO. But all three authors became early members of the International Association for Mass Communication Research (IAMCR), an international organization for communication researchers founded in Paris in 1957.

While the new Cold War atmosphere led to an increased interest in comparative research, it was also increasingly unfavorable to U.S. scholars who had been active in international organizations. Stoddard, who had been a controversial figure since first appointed because of his supposedly critical views on religion, started to lose his support, partly because of his connection with UNESCO, being seen as "favorable and tends toward world government, atheistic and communist" by those who opposed allowing "Russia lovers" and "150 reds, pinks and socialists"<sup>2</sup> to remain on the university staff. The Board of Trustees did not renew Stoddard's contract, and he was forced to leave the university in 1953.

Schramm is said to have been Stoddard's friend and ally, but the archival materials at UIUC have no record of a special relationship and give the impression that many documents are missing. Siebert claims in his unpublished memoirs that Schramm's departure happened because "Schramm understandably felt handicapped without Stoddard's support" after Stoddard's departure from UIUC. Schramm took a leave of absence before moving to Stanford.

### **Discussion**

This article started by asking how a change of an analytical framework could change our understanding of FT. Through historical crisscross analysis using different approaches in not only a national but a transnational context, I argue that the book arose from a combination of the diverse interests of its authors, the institutions and organizations they worked for, and different ideas and traditions but also changes taking place at that time. The article shows that, although FT was born almost accidentally and written rather casually, it had the distinction of bringing together the two different academic traditions of humanistic journalism research and emerging social-science influenced comparative research. While mainly domestically oriented journalism research had been dominant, comparative communication research was about to be born from the traditions of wartime propaganda studies, studies in international communication, and Cold War propaganda studies.

FT also tells a story of winners and losers. Siebert, and perhaps Peterson, represented old journalism research, while Schramm brought in new, modern communication research with its international networks. At the same time, because of the changes in the international and political climates, these international networks and the academics who participated in them came under suspicion from the U.S. government. To rescue themselves from this, the academics may have felt that they needed more loyalty to their domestic government and funders.

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<sup>2</sup> Archival content.

Although FT did not completely break away from the old tradition and did not use quantitative methods, it presents a clear attempt to go beyond research on the media in the U.S. only and to begin comparative research. All its authors were educated in the humanities tradition, but it was Schramm who made use of his wartime experience and sometimes dubious government connection to fund the newly founded Institute of Communications Research. The publication of FT can be seen as a crossroads where journalism studies, with its emphasis on history and philosophies, met the social sciences with their new concepts of a system and their international orientation.

### ***Conclusion***

Crisscrossing history attempts to understand both transnational and national processes that were operating at the same time and often in conflict with one another. Furthermore, it highlights relations between individuals, new ideas and established traditions, international and national institutions. This also helps us to understand the links, in a wider context, between national and worldwide politics, economics, and cultures, as suggested by the revised approach.

Löblich and Averbeck-Lietz (2016), in their summary of the concept of *histoire croisée*, write (pp. 30–31) that something occurs within the crossing processes created. The four approaches used in this article reveal shared interests but also tensions both within and between these approaches that gave rise to the two new concepts of a press system and a press theory. As Löblich and Averbeck-Lietz, (2016, p. 40) point out, studying moments and phenomena preceding the intercrossings helps us to understand the changes produced before concepts started their journeys. This is why it is also important to do research on books like FT: Each new analysis using different lenses starts from what we know now and adds a new layer of academic knowledge.

Applying Löblich and Averbeck-Lietz's (2016) approach to a jointly written book, such as FT, also helps us to understand the production of academic knowledge, not only as in individual achievement but also as collective work that brings together different knowledge, traditions, and ideas. It also contributes to understanding academic knowledge not only in a national but also in a transnational context, where individual academics are drawn into international politics developments that then influence their careers in ways they could not have predicted and which they also influence by producing new knowledge.

How FT, like any piece of academic knowledge, is retrospectively interpreted depends on time and space. In the current political climate of the world, we may be able to see things the authors of FT and their critics could not. We may also soon face some new political realities that may make us rethink our choices if we find ourselves in similar circumstances to FT's authors. Who knows what may happen if we stop to drink water from a fountain next to a colleague's office and the director sees us there and asks us to help with a new book. By understanding how *Four Theories of the Press* was written may help us to make choices we and the future generations find equally politically and morally acceptable.



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