



EDITED BY

KATE

**KENSKI**

KATHLEEN HALL

**JAMIESON**

≡ The Oxford Handbook of  
**POLITICAL  
COMMUNICATION**

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

**POLITICAL**

**COMMUNICATION**



THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

---

POLITICAL

COMMUNICATION

---

*Edited by*  
KATE KENSKI  
*and*  
KATHLEEN HALL JAMIESON

OXFORD  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford. It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press in the UK and certain other countries.

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press  
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America.

© Oxford University Press 2017

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press, or as expressly permitted by law, by license, or under terms agreed with the appropriate reproduction rights organization. Inquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department, Oxford University Press, at the address above.

You must not circulate this work in any other form  
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer.

CIP data is on file at the Library of Congress  
ISBN 978-0-19-979347-1

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

Printed by Sheridan Books, Inc., United States of America

# CONTENTS

---

<i>Contributors</i>	xi
---------------------	----

## INTRODUCTION

1. Political Communication: Then, Now, and Beyond	3
KATHLEEN HALL JAMIESON AND KATE KENSKI	

## CONTEXTS FOR VIEWING THE FIELD OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

2. Creating the Hybrid Field of Political Communication: A Five-Decade-Long Evolution of the Concept of Effects	15
KATHLEEN HALL JAMIESON	
3. The Shape of Political Communication	47
JAY G. BLUMLER	
4. A Typology of Media Effects	59
SHANTO IYENGAR	
5. The Power of Political Communication	69
MICHAEL TESLER AND JOHN ZALLER	
6. Nowhere to Go: Some Dilemmas of Deliberative Democracy	85
ELIHU KATZ	
7. How to Think Normatively about News and Democracy	95
MICHAEL SCHUDSON	

## POLITICAL DISCOURSE: HISTORY, GENRES, AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF MEANING

8. Not a Fourth Estate but a Second Legislature	109
RODERICK P. HART AND REBECCA LA VALLY	

9. Presidential Address	121
KEVIN COE	
10. Political Messages and Partisanship	133
SHARON E. JARVIS	
11. Political Advertising	147
TIMOTHY W. FALLIS	
12. Political Campaign Debates	165
DAVID S. BIRDSELL	
13. Niche Communication in Political Campaigns	179
LAURA LAZARUS FRANKEL AND D. SUNSHINE HILLYGUS	
14. The Functional Theory of Political Campaign Communication	195
WILLIAM L. BENOIT	
15. The Political Uses and Abuses of Civility and Incivility	205
KATHLEEN HALL JAMIESON, ALLYSON VOLINSKY, ILANA WEITZ, AND KATE KENSKI	
16. The Politics of Memory	219
NICOLE MAURANTONIO	

## MEDIA AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

### *Political Systems, Institutions, and Media*

17. Freedom of the Press: Theories and Realities	237
DORIS A. GRABER	
18. Press–Government Relations in a Changing Media Environment	249
W. LANCE BENNETT	
19. News Media as Political Institutions	263
ROBERT W. MCCHESENEY AND VICTOR PICKARD	
20. Measuring Spillovers in Markets for Local Public Affairs Coverage	275
JAMES T. HAMILTON	
21. Comparative Political Communication Research	287
CLAES H. DE VREESE	

22. Media Responsiveness in Times of Crisis	301
CAROL WINKLER	
23. The US Media, Foreign Policy, and Public Support for War	315
SEAN ADAY	
24. Journalism and the Public-Service Model: In Search of an Ideal	333
STEPHEN COLEMAN	

*Construction and Effects*

25. The Gatekeeping of Political Messages	347
PAMELA J. SHOEMAKER, PHILIP R. JOHNSON, AND JAIME R. RICCIO	
26. The Media Agenda: Who (or What) Sets It?	359
DAVID H. WEAVER AND JIHYANG CHOI	
27. Game versus Substance in Political News	377
THOMAS E. PATTERSON	
28. Going Institutional: The Making of Political Communications	391
LAWRENCE R. JACOBS	
29. Theories of Media Bias	403
S. ROBERT LICHTER	
30. Digital Media and Perceptions of Source Credibility in Political Communication	417
ANDREW J. FLANAGIN AND MIRIAM J. METZGER	
31. Candidate Traits and Political Choice	437
BRUCE W. HARDY	
32. Political Communication, Information Processing, and Social Groups	451
NICHOLAS VALENTINO AND L. MATTHEW VANDENBROEK	
33. Civic Norms and Communication Competence: Pathways to Socialization and Citizenship	467
DHAVAN V. SHAH, KJERSTIN THORSON, CHRIS WELLS, NAM-JIN LEE, AND JACK MCLEOD	
34. Framing Inequality in Public Policy Discourse: The Nature of Constraint	483
OSCAR H. GANDY JR.	



35. Political Communication: Insights from Field Experiments 501  
DONALD P. GREEN, ALLISON CARNEGIE, AND JOEL MIDDLETON

*Political Communication and Cognition*

36. Communication Modalities and Political Knowledge 517  
WILLIAM P. EVELAND JR. AND R. KELLY GARRETT
37. Selective Exposure Theories 531  
NATALIE JOMINI STROUD
38. The Hostile Media Effect 549  
LAUREN FELDMAN
39. Public and Elite Perceptions of News Media in Politics 565  
YARIV TSFATI
40. The Media and the Fostering of Political (Dis)Trust 581  
MICHAEL BARTHEL AND PATRICIA MOY
41. Cultivation Theory and the Construction of Political Reality 595  
PATRICK E. JAMIESON AND DANIEL ROMER
42. Uses and Gratifications 605  
R. LANCE HOLBERT
43. The State of Framing Research: A Call for New Directions 619  
DIETRAM A. SCHEUFELE AND SHANTO IYENGAR
44. Agenda-Setting Theory: The Frontier Research Questions 633  
MAXWELL MCCOMBS AND SEBASTIÁN VALENZUELA
45. Implicit Political Attitudes: When, How, Why, With What Effects? 649  
DAN CASSINO, MILTON LODGE, AND CHARLES TABER
46. Affect and Political Choice 663  
ANN N. CRIGLER AND PARKER R. HEVRON

**INTERPERSONAL AND SMALL GROUP  
POLITICAL COMMUNICATION**

47. Two-Step Flow, Diffusion, and the Role of Social Networks  
in Political Communication 683  
BRIAN G. SOUTHWELL

48. Taking Interdependence Seriously: Platforms for Understanding Political Communication	695
ROBERT HUCKFELDT	
49. Disagreement in Political Discussion	713
LILACH NIR	
50. The Internal Dynamics and Political Power of Small Group Political Deliberation	731
JOHN GASTIL, KATHERINE R. KNOBLOCH, AND JASON GILMORE	
51. Ethnography of Politics and Political Communication: Studies in Sociology and Political Science	749
EEVA LUHTAKALLIO AND NINA ELIASOPH	
52. Self-censorship, the Spiral of Silence, and Contemporary Political Communication	763
ANDREW F. HAYES AND JÖRG MATTHES	
53. Collective Intelligence: The Wisdom and Foolishness of Deliberating Groups	777
JOSEPH N. CAPPELLA, JINGWEN ZHANG, AND VINCENT PRICE	

## THE ALTERED POLITICAL COMMUNICATION LANDSCAPE

54. Broadcasting versus Narrowcasting: Do Mass Media Exist in the Twenty-First Century?	795
MIRIAM J. METZGER	
55. Online News Consumption in the United States and Ideological Extremism	809
KENNETH M. WINNEG, DANIEL M. BUTLER, SAAR GOLDE, DARWIN W. MILLER III, AND NORMAN H. NIE	
56. New Media and Political Campaigns	823
DIANA OWEN	
57. Political Discussion and Deliberation Online	837
JENNIFER STROMER-GALLEY	
58. The Political Effects of Entertainment Media	851
MICHAEL X. DELLI CARPINI	

59. Theories and Effects of Political Humor: Discounting Cues,  
Gateways, and the Impact of Incongruities 871  
DANNAGAL G. YOUNG
60. Music as Political Communication 885  
JOHN STREET
61. Conditions for Political Accountability in a High-Choice  
Media Environment 897  
MARKUS PRIOR

## CONCLUSION

62. Political Communication: Looking Ahead 913  
KATE KENSKI AND KATHLEEN HALL JAMIESON
- Index* 919

## CONTRIBUTORS

---

Sean Aday, George Washington University  
Michael Barthel, Pew Research Center  
W. Lance Bennett, University of Washington  
William L. Benoit, Ohio University  
David S. Birdsell, Baruch College (CUNY)  
Jay G. Blumler, University of Maryland  
Daniel M. Butler, Washington University in St. Louis  
Joseph N. Cappella, University of Pennsylvania  
Allison Carnegie, Columbia University  
Dan Cassino, Fairleigh Dickinson University  
Jihyang Choi, Indiana University  
Kevin Coe, University of Utah  
Stephen Coleman, University of Leeds  
Ann N. Crigler, University of Southern California  
Claes H. de Vreese, University of Amsterdam  
Michael X. Delli Carpini, University of Pennsylvania  
Nina Eliasoph, University of Southern California  
William P. Eveland Jr., The Ohio State University  
Timothy W. Fallis, Hawai'i Pacific University  
Lauren Feldman, Rutgers University  
Andrew J. Flanagin, University of California, Santa Barbara  
Laura Lazarus Frankel, Duke University  
Oscar H. Gandy Jr., University of Pennsylvania

R. Kelly Garrett, The Ohio State University  
John Gastil, Pennsylvania State University  
Jason Gilmore, Utah State University  
Saar Golde, Revolution Analytics  
Doris A. Graber, University of Illinois at Chicago  
Donald P. Green, Columbia University  
James T. Hamilton, Stanford University  
Bruce W. Hardy, Temple University  
Roderick P. Hart, University of Texas at Austin  
Andrew F. Hayes, The Ohio State University  
Parker R. Hevron, Texas Woman's University  
Robert Huckfeldt, University of California, Davis  
Shanto Iyengar, Stanford University  
Lawrence R. Jacobs, University of Minnesota  
Patrick E. Jamieson, University of Pennsylvania  
Kathleen Hall Jamieson, University of Pennsylvania  
Sharon E. Jarvis, University of Texas at Austin  
Philip R. Johnson, Syracuse University  
Elihu Katz, University of Pennsylvania  
Kate Kenski, University of Arizona  
Katherine R. Knobloch, Colorado State University  
R. Lance Holbert, Temple University  
Rebecca LaVally, California State University, Sacramento  
Nam-jin Lee, College of Charleston  
Milton Lodge, Stony Brook University  
Eeva Luhtakallio, University of Tampere, Finland  
Jörg Matthes, University of Vienna  
Nicole Maurantonio, University of Richmond  
Robert W. McChesney, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Maxwell McCombs, University of Texas at Austin

Jack McLeod, University of Wisconsin

Miriam J. Metzger, University of California, Santa Barbara

Joel Middleton, University of California, Berkeley

Darwin W. Miller III, RAND Corporation

Patricia Moy, University of Washington

Norman H. Nie, Stanford University and the University of Chicago

Lilach Nir, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Diana Owen, Georgetown University

Thomas E. Patterson, Harvard University

Victor Pickard, University of Pennsylvania

Vincent Price, University of Pennsylvania

Markus Prior, Princeton University

Jaime R. Riccio, CUNY LaGuardia Community College

S. Robert Lichter, George Mason University

Daniel Romer, Annenberg Public Policy Center, University of Pennsylvania

Dietram A. Scheufele, University of Wisconsin

Michael Schudson, Columbia University

Dhavan V. Shah, University of Wisconsin

Pamela J. Shoemaker, Syracuse University

Brian G. Southwell, RTI International and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

John Street, University of East Anglia

Jennifer Stromer-Galley, Syracuse University

Natalie Jomini Stroud, University of Texas at Austin

D. Sunshine Hillygus, Duke University

Charles Taber, Stony Brook University

Michael Tesler, University of California, Irvine

Kjerstin Thorson, Michigan State University

Yariv Tsfati, University of Haifa

Nicholas Valentino, University of Michigan

Sebastián Valenzuela, Catholic University of Chile

Allyson Volinsky, University of Pennsylvania

L. Matthew Vandenbroek, NeighborWorks America

David H. Weaver, Indiana University

Ilana Weitz, University of Pennsylvania

Chris Wells, University of Wisconsin

Carol Winkler, Georgia State University

Kenneth M. Winneg, University of Pennsylvania

Dannagal G. Young, University of Delaware

John Zaller, University of California, Los Angeles

Jingwen Zhang, University of California, Davis

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

**POLITICAL**

**COMMUNICATION**





---

# INTRODUCTION

---



## CHAPTER 1

---

# POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

### *Then, Now, and Beyond*

---

KATHLEEN HALL JAMIESON AND KATE KENSKI

As a discipline, communication was shaped by real-world concerns such as those “over the effects of World War I and Nazi propaganda” (Schramm, 1983, 7) and by hopes, fears, and forecasts about the effects of new media—film and radio. This meant, of course, that the findings of early researchers such as Berelson and Lazarsfeld “were peculiar to the political conditions and media systems of the 1940s and that many of their generalizations don’t hold up today” (Rogers and Chaffee, 1983, 22). As we hurtle into an increasingly individualized and fragmented media landscape filled with campaigns operating in a post-*Citizens United* world, what we know about political communication and how we know it is changing yet again and, in the process, raising questions about the applicability of the findings generated in the all-but-bygone mass-media era.

Just as media structures have changed, so, too, have the resources available to study them. Among the innovations that have invigorated research in political communication are computers able to digest and manipulate large data sets; new ways of making sense of data such as meta-analyses; the availability of readily searchable news, advertising archives, and presidential speech archives; computerized means of content analysis; access to ad buy data; and the availability of Internet panels and rolling cross-sectional designs. Our primary focus, however, is not on our methods of knowing, but rather on the answers they generate. (For a valuable treatment of the methods employed in political communication research, we recommend turning to the essays in Bucy and Holbert’s *Sourcebook for Political Communication Research* [2011].)

Transformations in media structure, content, and delivery matter to scholars and voters alike, because, as Chaffee argued, “the structure of communication shapes the structure of politics, both because so much of political activity consists of communication and because constraints on communication limit the exercise of power” (2001, 237–238). Believing that this is, as a result, an opportune time to reprise political communication’s

past and forecast its future, as editors of the *Oxford Handbook of Political Communication*, we commissioned the essays by political communication scholars found in this volume.

To anchor it with a working notion of what we mean by political communication, we begin by exploring three sets of definitions: those inherited from earlier periods and work; the self-definitions offered by the political communication divisions of the major communication and political science associations; and those that emerged from an Annenberg Public Policy Center conference attended by those who contributed to this handbook. We then turn to noting some of the institutional forces that contributed to the emergence and sustenance of the burgeoning hybrid field of political communication. We close with a cursory overview of this handbook and a caution that many of its essays could easily have been placed in any of a number of the sections into which we somewhat arbitrarily have divided this volume.

## DEFINING POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

---

A quick look at defining statements made more than two-thirds of a century ago by Harold Lasswell—one of the founders appropriated by both political science and communication—reveals how much the study of each has changed since he probed propaganda techniques, language, and the content analytic means of unpacking both in the thirties and forties. Whereas in the study of politics his concern was “who gets what, when, how” (Lasswell, 1936), in communication it was “who/says what/ in which channel/to whom/ with what effect” (Lasswell, 1948). Welding this classic distributional definition of politics and a unidirectional, linear model of communication together might lead one to define political communication as the study of who gets what, when, (and) how by saying what, in which channel, to whom, with what effect.

Not so today. Instead, in *A New Handbook of Political Science*, politics is cast as “the constrained use of social power” (Goodin and Klingemann, 1996, 7).<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in communication scholarship the transmission model has been supplanted by or supplemented with one that “conceptualizes communication as a constitutive process that produces and reproduces shared meaning”(cf. Craig, 1999, 125 crediting Carey, 1989; Pearce, 1989).

Because communication is the noun grounding the definition and field of political communication, it is unsurprising that there is more of “symbolic exchange” and less, indeed nothing at all, about “shared power” in the first sentences of the self-descriptions memorialized on the web pages of the political communication divisions of the American Political Science Association (APSA), the International Communication Association (ICA), and the National Communication Association (NCA):

- The creation, shaping, dissemination, processing and effects of information within the political system—both domestic and international—whether by governments, other institutions, groups or individuals (American Political Science Association).

- The interplay of communication and politics, including the transactions that occur among citizens, between citizens and their governments, and among officials within governments (International Communication Association).
- The communicative activity of citizens, individual political figures, public and governmental institutions, the media, political campaigns, advocacy groups and social movements (National Communication Association).

Nonetheless each description reveals ancestral assumptions about what matters, with the ICA and NCA divisions embracing the word “citizens,” and the one housed in the APSA featuring “the political system.” Although in practice all three divisions are methodologically pluralistic, and their memberships overlap substantially, it is the one whose scholars admit to practicing rhetorical criticism that champions “a variety of methodologies” (NCA), and the one whose discipline pioneered the National Election Studies (ANES) that includes “effects.” And the NCA division reveals its parent’s more message-centric focus by situating as the subject of its sentence “The communication activity of citizens, individual political figures . . .”

Drawing on these traditions, those whose work is included in this handbook defined political communication as “making sense of symbolic exchanges about the shared exercise of power” and “the presentation and interpretation of information, messages or signals with potential consequences for the exercise of shared power.”

## CREATION OF A HYBRID FIELD

---

As we have implied, hybrid fields are conceived when scholars learn that others are contributing insightful answers to shared questions and decide to engage rather than disregard these potential colleagues. In the case of political communication, shared interests converged on such questions as, “Under what circumstances, if at all, and, if so, how, are voters, leaders, and the political system affected by media?” “How, if at all, and, if so, for whom or what does presidential rhetoric matter?” “How do exchanges among individuals and groups affect what they know and how they know and act about politics?” Additionally, a nascent field will expire unless a number of conditions are met. The impulse to engage must be fostered by individuals with standing in both disciplines who bring their colleagues to the table. There must be common spaces in which interested scholars can engage each other’s ideas thoughtfully. And resources must be available to fund needed research. Political communication would not have institutionalized as a hybrid field had there not been places to converse, common publishing venues, and, at opportune moments, funding.

*Places to converse:* Chapter 2’s narrative of origins chronicles the impact of boundary-defying intellectual omnivores. By publishing in a related discipline’s major journals, engaging the ideas of its leading lights, and coauthoring cross-disciplinary work, those interested in political communication purchased legitimacy for its

research questions and modes of inquiry. Early points of cross-disciplinary intersection in political communication included not only Kraus's *Great Debates* (1962), which brought together work by scholars in sociology, rhetoric and public address, mass communication, and political science, but also more targeted forays by a scholar in one discipline into a journal hosted by another. Examples of this include political scientist Tom Patterson's essay on "Television News and Political Advertising" in *Communication Research* in 1974, political scientist Lance Bennett's "The Ritualistic and Pragmatic Bases of Political Campaign Discourse," in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* three years later, and mass communication scholars Weaver, McCombs, and Spellman's (1975) "Watergate and the Media: A Case Study of Agenda-Setting" in *American Politics Quarterly* in 1975. Among the first cross-disciplinary book-length manuscripts was Weaver, Graber, McCombs, and Eyal's *Media Agenda-Setting in a Presidential Election* (1981). Boundary-breaking field-building occurred as well when Steven Chaffee "played a significant role" in the "development and eventual inclusion of a large media use battery in the quadrennial NES election surveys . . ." (Iyengar, 2001, 226) and political scientist John Zaller instigated the 1994 meeting of communication scholars and political scientists at the Annenberg School at Penn that examined ways to assess communication effects and forged the relationships that led to the creation of the National Annenberg Election Survey.

*Common publishing venues:* Before the advent of *Political Communication*, two influential journals—*Public Opinion Quarterly* and *Journal of Communication*—set scholars on a road toward institutionalization of the political communication field by welcoming high-quality work on the subject without regard to disciplinary origin. The former was home to Klapper's "What We Know About the Effects of Mass Communication: The Brink of Hope" (1957); Eulau and Schneider's "Dimensions of Political Involvement" in 1956; Katz's "The Two-Step Flow of Communication: An Up-to-Date Report on an Hypothesis" in 1957; Converse's "Information Flow and the Stability of Partisan Attitudes" in 1962; McLeod, Ward, and Tancill's "Alienation and Uses of the Mass Media" in 1965; McCombs and Shaw's "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media" in 1972; Chaffee and Choe's "Time of Decision and Media Use During the Ford-Carter Campaign" in 1980; and Behr and Iyengar's "Television News, Real World Cues, and Changes in the Public" in 1985.

In the decades before *Political Communication* became an APSA-ICA journal, *The Journal of Communication* was a second hospitable venue for those working at the intersections of politics and communication. As a result, Elisabeth Noelle-Neuman, director of communication, University of Mainz, published "The Spiral of Silence: A Theory of Public Opinion" there in 1974. The journal's 1983 "Ferment in the Field" issue featured work by Noelle-Neuman as well as that of mass communication scholars Wilbur Schramm and Jay Blumler, sociologists Elihu Katz, Kurt Lang, and Gladys Lang, and polymath Ithiel de Sola Pool, among others.

*Funding:* Because the laws of supply and demand affect the world of research as surely as they do markets, the availability of resources shaped the questions political communication scholars addressed, the answers they discovered, and, as a result, the contours

of political communication's parent disciplines as well as of the field itself. The focus of communication research on the individual and on the social psychology of short-term persuasion was, for example, an "outgrowth . . . of media- and advertiser-sponsored research, Rockefeller Foundation intervention, and the federal government's war-time propaganda mobilization" (Pooley and Katz, 2008). Indeed, some argue that "the mainstream effects tradition was crucially shaped, in the mid-1930s, by the Rockefeller Foundation's interest, first, in educational broadcasting and, after 1939, in anti-Nazi propaganda" (Pooley, 2008, 48).

If the presence of a willing donor matters, so, too, does the absence of one. Had the Ford Foundation not responded to pressure from "Congressional McCarthyites in 1952 and, notably, 1954's Reece Commission" (Morrison, 2008) by backing out of its "major commitment to fund a series of television studies at Lazarsfeld's Bureau . . . a whole body of television research might have found its ways onto sociologists' bookshelves to complement Lazarsfeld's pioneering radio research" (Pooley and Katz, 2008, 773). Where a decision by the Ford Foundation closed off an opportunity in 1955, decisions by the Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundations opened ones in 1952 and 1956. The political science classic *The American Voter* was made possible by support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York in 1952 and the Rockefeller Foundation in 1956 (Campbell, et al., 1960, viii).

Money mattered in more recent times as well. Patterson and McClure's (1976) *The Unseeing Eye* was supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation (7). Iyengar's *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues* (1991) was underwritten by grants from the Political Science Program of the National Science Foundation and the John and Mary R. Markle Foundation. The fieldwork in Cappella and Jamieson's *Spiral of Cynicism: The Press and the Public Good* (1997) was made possible by the Markle and Robert Wood Johnson Foundations. Funding from the National Science Foundation ensured the survival of the NES, and the largesse of the Annenberg Foundation underwrote the rolling cross-sectional and panel studies of the NAES.

## HOW THIS VOLUME WILL ADDRESS "THEN, NOW, AND BEYOND"

---

We have asked the authors in this handbook to reflect upon their areas of expertise and address four questions: What is the importance of your area of study? What are the major findings to date, including areas of scholarly disagreement, on the topic? What is your perspective on the topic? And, What are unanswered questions for future research to address?

Their answers reveal that, like political economy and political psychology, political communication is a hybrid with complex ancestry, permeable boundaries, and interests that overlap with those of related fields, such as political sociology, public opinion,



rhetoric, neuroscience, and the new hybrid on the quad, media psychology. What Blumler and Gurevitch observed of mass communication in 1987 is also true of its offspring, political communication, which is “a notoriously eclectic enterprise, drawing on and borrowing from a wide range of social science and humanistic disciplines” (17). Accordingly, it is unsurprising that many of our authors claim visiting rights, if not primary residence, in another of those fields. Indeed, like the founders, they appropriate from sociology, psychology, political science, and communication. Most of those who identify with political communication are intellectual omnivores whose work in such areas as agenda setting, priming, framing, and inoculation is indebted to the work of individuals and groups unlikely to describe themselves as political communication theorists.

To assess the “then, now, and beyond” of this eclectic, interdisciplinary field, we have invited chapters from scholars with homes or pedigrees in economics (e.g., James Hamilton), psychology (e.g., Milton Lodge and Charles Taber), and sociology (e.g., Nina Eliasoph and Michael Schudson), as well as a majority who consider their home base to be political science, mass communication, or the rhetoric tradition within departments of speech communication, communication arts, or communication studies. Though most are housed in US institutions, we draw as well from work conducted at the University of Amsterdam (Claes de Vreese), the University of East Anglia (John Street), the University of Haifa (Yariv Tsfati), the University of Helsinki (Eeva Luhkakallio), Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Lilach Nir), University of Leeds (Stephen Coleman), and the University of Zurich (Jorg Matthes). In addition, we include two peripatetic scholars occasionally based in the United States who have created significant research both inside and outside its boundaries (Elihu Katz and Jay Blumler).

To identify the nucleus that enables us to gather the work of this wide array of scholars under the label “political communication,” we start by asking, What do mainstream scholars in political science and communication mean by each, and how do those who identify as political communication scholars define what they do (Chapters 2–7)? We proceed to offer our take on the origins of the field of political communication—a story involving strands of research in sociology, psychology, and political science that found their way into and were, in the process, poked and prodded by those focused on politics and communication in areas identified as mass communication, radio TV-film, and various divisions within speech departments, including one known as rhetoric and public address. In the process, we identify work that foreshadows that of the scholars in this handbook.

Consistent with the notions of political communication as “making sense of symbolic exchanges about the shared exercise of power” and “the presentation and interpretation of information, messages or signals with potential consequences for the exercise of shared power,” this volume includes essays clustered under the titles *Political Discourse: History, Genres, and the Construction of Meaning* (Chapters 8–16), *Media and Political Communication focusing on Political Systems, Institutions, and Media* (Chapters 17–24), *Construction and Effects* (Chapters 25–35), *Political Communication and Cognition* (Chapters 36–46), and *Interpersonal and Small Group Political Communication*

(Chapters 47–53). Because, as we noted a moment ago, changes in media and media systems alter the nature, function, and effects of political communication, we include as well a cluster of essays on The Altered Political Communication Landscape (see Chapters 54–61). Given the interdisciplinary nature and complexity of political communication research, we acknowledge that this scheme for organizing the volume contains some unavoidable choices of categorizing chapters that could be placed in one or more other sections.

Since “Then and Now” is one of our themes, it is important to remember that much of the work in our handbook is consistent with the focus of Steven Chafee’s 1975 edited volume (*Political Communication: Issues and Strategies for Research*) on “behavior and cognition rather than on attitudes, the need for experimentation with different methods of measurement, an understanding of a campaign as unfolding in distinct phases over time, a homogenization of mass media and interpersonal communication as sources of information and influence, and the need for comparative cross-national scholarship” (Chafee, 2001, 239). Those foci foreshadow this handbook’s sections on Political Communication and Cognition, Construction and Effects, and Interpersonal and Small Group Communication, as well as its chapter on comparative political communication research (chapter by Claes de Vreese), anticipate the experimentation with different methods that in subsequent decades produced sophisticated field experiments (chapters by Tesler and Zaller and Green, Carnie, and Middleton) and laboratory experiments (chapter by Cassino, Lodge, and Taber), refined use of the rolling cross-sectional method, and innovative ways of tracking citizen deliberation (chapter by Cappella, Zhang, and Price).

Less likely to be foreseen by those writing in 1975 was a field of political communication encompassing scholarship on elites’ use of polls (chapter by Jacobs), media systems (chapter by McChesney and Pickard), niche communication (chapter by Frankel and Hillygus), narrowcasting (chapter by Metzger), the social media (chapters by Winneg et al., Owen, and Stromer-Galley), the politics of entertainment media (chapters by Delli Carpini and Young), and scholarship theorizing about the effects produced by implicit attitudes (chapter by Cassino, Lodge, and Taber) and moderated by affect (chapter by Crigler and Hevron). If the sophistication and scope of political communication research continues apace, we expect our successors forty and fifty years hence to be as bemused by our work as we are by the notion that, in 1960, the state-of-the-art move in research on the Kennedy-Nixon debates consisted of interviewing 200 respondents whose names had been drawn from the Indianapolis city telephone directory (Kraus and Smith, 1962, 290).

## NOTE

1. Lurking in the meaning of “social,” of course, is symbol-using between and among individuals and groups for, as Dewey notes, society exists “*by* transmission, *by* communication, but it may fairly be said to exist *in* transmission, *in* communication” (Dewey, 1921, 184). In Dewey’s view, “Democracy is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” (Dewey, 1915, 87).

## REFERENCES

- Behr, R., and Iyengar, S. 1985. Television news, real world cues, and changes in the public agenda. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 49: 38–57.
- Bennett, L. 1977. The ritualistic and pragmatic bases of political campaign discourse. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 63: 219–238.
- Blumler, J., and Gurevitch, M. 1987. The personal and the public: Observations on agendas in mass communication research. In Michael Gurevitch and Mark R. Levy (Eds.), *Mass Communication Review Yearbook Volume 6* (pp. 16–21). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Bucy, E., and Holbert, R. L. (Eds.). 2011. *Sourcebook for political communication research: Methods, measures, and analytical techniques*. New York: Routledge.
- Campbell, A., Converse, P., Miller, W., and Stokes, D. 1960. *The American voter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cappella, J., and Jamieson, K. H. 1997. *Spiral of cynicism: The press and the public good*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Chaffee, S. (Ed.). 1975. *Political communication: Issues and strategies for research*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Chaffee, S. 2001. Studying the new communication of politics. *Political Communication* 18: 237–244.
- Chaffee, S. and Choe, S. 1980. Time of decision and media use during the Ford-Carter campaign. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 44: 53–69.
- Converse, P. 1962. Information flow and the stability of partisan attitudes. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 26: 578–599.
- Craig, R. 1999. Communication theory as a field. *Communication Theory* 9: 119–161.
- Eulau, H., and Schneider, P. 1956. Dimensions of political involvement. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 20: 128–142.
- Goodin, R., and Klingemann, H. (Eds.). 1996. *A new handbook of political science*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Iyengar, S. 1991. *Is anyone responsible? How television frames political issues*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Iyengar, S. 2001. The method is the message: The current state of political communication research. *Political Communication* 18(2): 225–229.
- Katz, E. 1957. The two-step flow of communication: An up-to-date report on a hypothesis. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 21: 61–78.
- Klapper, J. 1957. What we know about the effects of mass communication: The brink of hope. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 21(4): 453–474.
- Kraus, S. (Ed.) 1962. *The great debates: Background, perspective, effects*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Kraus, S., and Smith, R. 1962. Issues and images. In Sidney Kraus (Ed.), *The great debates: Background, perspective, effects* (pp. 289–312). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Lasswell, H. 1936. *Politics: Who gets what, when, how?* New York: Whittlesey House.
- Lasswell, H. 1948. *Power and personality*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- McCombs, M., and Shaw, D. 1972. The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36(2): 176–187.
- McLeod, J., Ward, S., and Tancill, K. 1965. Alienation and uses of the mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 29: 584–594.

- Morrison, D. 2008. Opportunity structures and the creation of knowledge: Paul Lazarsfeld and the politics of research. In D. Park and J. Pooley (Eds.), *The history of media and communication research: Contested memories* (pp. 179–204). New York: Peter Lang.
- Noelle-Neumann, E. 1974. The spiral of silence: A theory of public opinion. *Journal of Communication* 24(2): 43–51.
- Noelle-Neumann, E. 1983. The effect of media on media effects research. *Journal of Communication* 33(3): 157–165.
- Patterson, T. 1974. Television news and political advertising. *Communication Research* 1: 3–31.
- Patterson, T., and McClure, R. 1976. *Unseeing eye: The myth of television power in national elections*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.
- Pearce, B. 1989. *Communication and the human condition*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Pooley, J., and Katz, E. 2008. Further notes on why American sociology abandoned mass communication research. *Journal of Communication* 58(4): 767–786.
- Rogers, E., and Chaffee, S. 1983. Communication as an academic discipline: A dialogue. *Journal of Communication* 33(3): 18–30.
- Schramm, W. 1983. The unique perspective of communication: A retrospective view. *Journal of Communication* 33(3): 6–17.
- Weaver, D., McCombs, M., and Spellman, C. 1975. Watergate and the media: A case study of agenda-setting. *American Politics Quarterly* 3: 458–472.
- Weaver, D., Graber, D., McCombs, M., and Eyal, C. 1981. *Media agenda setting in a presidential election: Issues, images and interest*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.



---

CONTEXTS FOR  
VIEWING THE FIELD  
OF POLITICAL  
COMMUNICATION

---



## CHAPTER 2

---

# CREATING THE HYBRID FIELD OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

*A Five-Decade-Long Evolution of  
the Concept of Effects*

---

KATHLEEN HALL JAMIESON

## INTRODUCTION

---

IN 1993, Bill Clinton was sworn in as the forty-second president of the United States, the World Wide Web came online for public use, *Political Communication* published its inaugural issue under the auspices of divisions of the American Political Science Association and the International Communication Association, and three essays signaled an emerging view in political science that under certain circumstances, communication's role in producing the outcome in presidential elections might be worth studying after all. Explaining why presidential election polls are so variable when votes are so predictable, Gelman and King (1993) argued that "the news media have an important effect on the outcome of presidential elections—not through misleading advertisements, sound bites, or spin doctors, but rather by conveying candidates' positions on important issues" (409). Reexamining the minimal effects model, Finkel (1993) contended that presidential campaigns do not ordinarily affect presidential election outcomes because the communicative efforts of the competent professionals on one side cancel out those on the other, and in a one-two punch at conventional wisdom, Bartels (1993, 268) attributed "the pervasive pattern" of past "negative [media effects] findings and non-findings in part to limitations of research design and in part to carelessness regarding measurement," and specified "a model of opinion formation that can help to 'pinpoint the exact contribution which mass media make to the individual's cognitions, feelings, and actions . . .'"



My goal in this chapter is sketching some of the byways that led to the emergence of a cross-disciplinary cadre of scholars whose representatives in this volume detail the insights and unanswered questions native to the hybrid field of political communication. Since many of the chapters begin their story in the 1990s, in its efforts to identify work that shaped the kinds of questions asked by political communication researchers, this retrospective will concentrate on the decades before then. Concentrating on the period between the 1940s and 1993, I will telegraph the influence of the disciplines of sociology, political science, psychology and communication on the emerging field, outline the factors that created the convergence needed to ground it, and in the process reveal why the three articles cited a moment ago foreshadow political communication research indebted to both the political science and communication disciplines.

## HOW DID WE GET HERE?

---

My chronicle is in some ways similar and in others different from that offered in 1987 by Elihu Katz who is both a contributor and heir to the tradition of research created in the late 1930s and early 1940s by polymath Paul Lazarsfeld and his Columbia colleagues at the Bureau of Applied Social Research (see Katz and Lazarsfeld's *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications* [1955]). With Lazarsfeld, Katz centered interpersonal and group communication at the heart of political influence (1955), sidelining a focus on mass media along the way.

In the fiftieth anniversary issue of *Public Opinion Quarterly* (1987), Katz recalled that after Klapper (1960) codified the conclusion that mass communication produced only limited effects, sociology “abandoned” communication research (1987, S26). What saved the otherwise orphaned research area was being “institutionalized in schools, colleges, and departments of communications, building on mergers of traditions of rhetoric and speech, journalism and publizistik, critical traditions in film and literature and socio-psychologically oriented media research” (S40). Later, in the 1980s, some political scientists and sociologists gave communication research a second look. “There is a flocking back to the field of communication research by humanists, film theorists, political scientists who had gone off in their different directions 30 years ago,” recalled Katz in 1987, “even the sociologists are coming back” (S40).

In a moment, I will suggest that political communication did not emerge as a field until the notion that mass media don't much matter had been dispatched. Making the case that media effects are worthy of study even if they do not often affect presidential election outcomes were sociologists, political scientists, psychologists and communication scholars from speech, radio-TV-film, and mass communication departments whose interest in the nascent field persisted after sociology, in Katz's narrative, abandoned it. Taken together, their research not only challenged the received wisdom expressed in the narrowly focused minimal effects model but, as this handbook attests, also drew into the political communication tent the study of political discourse, its history, underlying regularities, genres, and capacities to construct meaning; the roles of interpersonal, group,

and mass communication in and about politics; the ways in which political media and messages interact with, affect and are affected by feelings, cognition, and behaviors; and the relationships among media systems and political systems, content, and behavior. Across the decades of interest here, those toiling in this emerging field expanded their scope of inquiry beyond the earlier studies' focus on the short-term influence of communication on opinions, attitudes and actions. In the process, they embraced methods capable of detecting the impact of a wider range of communicative behavior and created the cross-disciplinary collaborations required to establish political communication as a hybrid field existing at the intersection of political science and communication.

## Origins of the Minimal Effects Model

As humans we tend to exaggerate the significance of our own new work by, in Kurt and Gladys Lang's words, manufacturing "false dichotomies that [make] the break with the past appear sharper than it actually was" (Lang and Lang, 1993). Both the presumption of powerful media and the view "of media power as severely limited, a view often characterized as the 'minimal effects model'" are "parodies that functioned as straw men in a non-existing controversy that distracted . . . scholars from investigating issues that deserve our full attention" (Lang and Lang, 1993, 93). This distraction occurred because the dichotomous "minimal vs. massive effects" frame foreclosed the possibility that, if broadly defined, media effects usually fall someplace in between, and, at the same time, suppressed such important questions as "effects on whom and on what?" Additionally the digressive notion of minimal effects obscured the fact that such phenomena as learning, cultivation of worldview, creating a spiral of silence, agenda setting, and reinforcement of predispositions are important outcomes in their own right.

Where the presumption of powerful media effects—cast in the poorly conceived metaphors of the "magic bullet" and "hypodermic needle"—fueled mass communication research in the 1930s and 1940s, the minimal effects model threatened to mothball that embryonic research area with such relics as the elocution machine even as it contributed to our understanding of factors such as selective perception and partisan predispositions that blunt the "direct" effects of mass media. Although scholars in three well-established disciplines—sociology, political science, and psychology—legitimized the minimal effects model, in succeeding years, others bearing the same disciplinary crests joined those in communication departments to reconsider the evidence supporting it and, in the process, recast it.

## Minimal Effects in the Columbia Tradition

With Roosevelt and Wilke on the ballot in 1940, the Columbia team led by Lazarsfeld focused its attention on voters in Erie County, Ohio. Eight years later the Columbia scholars turned their lens on voters in Elmira, New York, who were trying to decide between Truman and Dewey. In each campaign, flyers, newspapers, and radio were the

media of the day. If a voter wanted to see an actual candidate in action, she had to travel to an event or watch the newsreels played after the cartoons and before the main feature in movie theatres.

From their inception in Erie in 1940 (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, 1944), the classic Columbia multiwave panel studies (cf. Lazarsfeld et al., 1944; Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee, 1954; Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955) seemed to confirm that the impact of mass communication was both minimal and largely indirect, a notion encapsulated in two-step flow. Although the campaign stimulated interest and information seeking (1944, 76–79), these sociologists found (1944, 102–104) that it reinforced existing predispositions more often than it changed them. For half of those who were tracked throughout the election cycle, political communication did not initiate “new decisions” but instead “had the effect of reinforcing the original vote decision” (1944, 87). Of course with 8 percent of those studied in Erie leaving “the Democratic fold” (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944, 102), one could as well have interpreted that study to say that communication could affect the outcome of a close election.

Their bottom line: When media influence occurs, it is likely to be indirect. Specifically, “ideas often flow *from* radio and print *to* opinion leaders and *from* them to the less active sections of the population” (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944, 151). In short, word-of-mouth from trusted individuals (i.e., opinion leaders) was more likely to change the views of late deciders than was mass communication. Where the media reinforced existing predispositions, the trustworthy personal communication of “opinion leaders” could change at least some votes. So influential was two-step flow that one scholar reported in 1968 that “few formulations in the behavioral sciences have had more impact” (Arndt, 1968). However, by the mid-1980s, its basic insight had been challenged. In 1987, Katz, whose work with Lazarsfeld (1955) had canonized the concept, observed that “the hypothesis is still about and still controversial” (1987, S26).

Rather than sounding a death knell for US mass communication research about elections, two-step flow could have invited scrutiny of the relationship among interpersonal, group, and mass communication, a line of inquiry hospitable to German public opinion scholar Noelle-Neumann’s (1974) spiral of silence theory, which was introduced to English-speaking scholars in an essay titled “Return to the Concept of Powerful Mass Media” (1973) that credited the 1940 Erie County study with bringing “into view the interaction between the opinions of an individual member of society and the distribution of opinions in the environment” (92). Writing in the *Journal of Communication* (1974, 1983), she argued that silencing spirals occur when media and the mutterings of others prompt those holding what they perceive as minority views to fall silent rather than championing them. But in the main, successive studies of two-step flow focused on topics other than politics.

Still, lingering in the Columbia data are many of the phenomena that interest political communication scholars today. The Elmira study, for example, correlated media use both with higher turnout (Berelson et al., 1954, 248) and an increase in accurate reports of candidate issue positions (248). Priming effects lurked there as well (273), with the media’s focus on issues favorable to the Democratic nominee affecting both the salience of those matters and the preferences of some voters near the end of the

campaign. Presuppositions of Downs' *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957, 222, 229, 243, 298–299) that would figure in later understandings of the ways in which cognitive shortcuts operate when individuals process political content (see Popkin, 1991) are rooted in the Columbia studies as well.

## Minimal Effects in the Michigan Tradition in Political Science

Like the 1940 and 1948 contests, the general election campaigns of 1952 and 1956 did not really start until the candidates were officially nominated at their respective conventions. Only on Labor Day, did the national efforts begin in earnest. However, by the 1950s, what was meant by mass communication was changing. Political party conventions were now being televised. Moreover, in 1952, both Ike and Adlai insinuated television ads into the media mix.

The interests underlying the Columbia and Michigan studies differed dramatically. “The early Columbia studies focused on demographics such as religion and rural/urban residence, although they also considered the media and the interpersonal influence exerted within families and friendships,” notes Katz. “In contrast the more psychologically minded Michigan studies focused on party identity, attitudes, and issue positions as more proximate predictors of the vote” (Katz and Warshel, 2001, 2). Where the community-based Columbia studies were vulnerable to the charge that the settings were idiosyncratic and the voters atypical, the Michigan ones constituted panels designed to represent the nation as a whole. Sacrificed in this methodological shift was the ready ability to examine the influence of interpersonal networks and local media content, including targeted advertising. Had media content been comparable across the country, and the Michigan researchers asked the questions needed to capture advertising's influence, the shift to a national model would not have mattered. But in both 1952 and 1956 paid advertising was reaching some markets and not others, and in 1960, the Kennedy campaign sought to mobilize the Catholic vote in part by reairing an edited version of JFK's speech to the Houston ministers in predominantly Catholic markets (see Jamieson, 1984).

Neither the earlier Columbia studies nor the Michigan Survey Research Center (SRC) ones of the 1952 and 1956 presidential elections (Campbell et al., 1960) denied that campaign communication affects some voters. Rather the Michigan political scientists surmised that the primary influence on voting decisions was party identification (1960, 121). As a result, from 1948 through 1972, their instruments asked single questions about exposure to radio, TV, newspapers, and magazines and treated the answers “as instances of political participation” (Chaffee and Hochheimer, 1985, 284). Unsurprisingly then, *The American Voter* (1960, 92) devotes a single paragraph to the use of mass media. This relegation of “media-related activity to the status of a minor mode of political participation” meant that “the Michigan studies through the 1960s inadvertently ensured perpetuation of the limited-effects model of mass communication. No new data relevant to the question of media effects would be gathered, so no new interpretations could be

reached” (Chaffee and Hochheimer, 1985, 284). The same can be said of Nie, Verba, and Petrocik’s *The Changing American Voter* (1979), which, as Patterson notes (1980, vii), makes “almost no mention of the mass media or their impact.”

In the 1950s and 1960s, conventional wisdom in political science (Campbell, 1954; Campbell et al., 1960; Converse, 1962) held that voting decisions were largely in place by the end of the party conventions and hence before “the campaign” began (1960) and were driven primarily by partisan loyalties. Past performance of the incumbent party was thought to trump communication as well. “Campaigning does change votes and it does bestir people to vote. Yet other influences doubtless outweigh the campaign in the determination of the vote. As voters mark their ballots they may have in their minds impressions of the last TV political spectacular of the campaign,” noted V.O. Key and Cummings in 1966, “but, more important, they have in their minds recollections of their experiences of the last four years” (9). Also diverting attention from the roles communication might be playing was the ability of forecasters to predict the winner from variables such as economic conditions and presidential approval (Fair, 1978; Rosenstone, 1983).

Whether, and, if so, how political party conventions and other forms of campaign communication affect party identification, and what role, if any, forms of personal and mass communication play in a person’s identification as a Democrat or Republican, were not of interest in these studies. But if one honors the assumptions of the Michigan model, as party identification levels drop, as they did from the early 1950s to the late 1980s (Wattenberg, 1990), the influence of other factors such as candidate-centered politics (Wattenberg, 1991) would presumably rise. Moreover nothing in the model denies the possibility that media play a role in political socialization (cf. Chaffee, Ward, and Tipton, 1970) or set the criteria on which candidates are assessed.

Although they did not call it a communication effect, as early as the 1920s political scientists had confirmed that, as Key would later put it, campaigns can “bestir people to vote.” Field experiments conducted in local elections demonstrated, for example, that letters (Gosnell, 1927, 85) and leaflets (Hartmann, 1936–1937, 86) produced upticks in turnout. Personal contact affected turnout as well (Eldersveld and Dodge, 1954; Eldersveld, 1956; Wolfinger, 1963). SRC evidence entered the picture when Kramer (1970) drew on four election’s worth of it (1952–1964) to estimate that “door-to-door canvassing during a presidential campaign” increased turnout but had “little effect on voter preferences for national or local offices” (572). In later years, scholars using more sophisticated methods would confirm the existence of campaign-driven turnout effects (cf. Popkin, 1991, 227; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993).

An early sign that election scholars in political science might find common ground with their colleagues in other departments interested in communication occurred in 1976 when, in *The Changing American Voter*, Nie, Verba, and Petrocik (1976) isolated a campaign-driven learning effect arguing that “[a] simple but important theme runs through much of this book: the public responds to the political stimuli offered it. The political behavior of the electorate is not determined solely by psychological and sociological forces, but also by the issues of the day and by the way in which candidates present those issues” (319). In evidence that the streams flowing toward a political

communication field were not yet in active conversation, they fail to note the learning effects found by Katz and Feldman (1962), Trenaman and McQuail (1961), Blumler and McQuail (1969), or McClure and Patterson (1974).

## The Minimal Effects Tradition in Psychology

Political communication's focus on psychological theories and processing models and its increasing embrace of controlled experiments have roots in the investigations into persuasion and attitude change pioneered by Yale psychologist Carol Hovland and his colleagues.<sup>1</sup> So, too, do concepts that anchored the minimal effects model. In *Experiments on Mass Communication* (1949), for example, Hovland's team isolated the role of attitude anchoring in blunting communication effects. Specifically, "film communications had a significant effect on opinions related to straight-forward interpretations of policies and events, but had little or no effect on more deeply entrenched attitudes and motivations" (Hovland, 1959, 16, commenting on Hovland et al., 1949). A similar notion appeared a decade later when the Michigan studies of voting (Campbell et al., 1960, 269–270) were able to predict a vote from "the partisan direction and intensity of his [the voter's] attitude toward six discernible elements of the world of politics. . . ." "To say whether any given person will vote Republican or Democratic," they conclude, "we need to know where he falls on those dimensions of partisan feeling, that is, whether his attitude toward each political object is pro-Republican or pro-Democratic and with what strength."

Of course it is possible that communication could work its wiles on those whose attitudes were less firmly set. Moreover, the Hovland studies confirmed that films and hence presumably political campaigns can affect learning, a finding that should be more pronounced when a massed audience is exposed to sustained communication as it is in debates (cf. Katz and Feldman, 1962; Chaffee, 1978). Still, in a 1986 review article, Hovland's co-author William McGuire (1986) dismissed as myth the notion that "television and other mass media have sizeable impacts on the public's thoughts, feelings, and actions" and reported that "most empirical studies indicate small to negligible effects" (1986, 174).

## DOCUMENTING THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION AND MASS COMMUNICATION

---

In my telling, after some leading lights in sociology abandoned mass communication research, others from that discipline as well as those in political science, communication (i.e., mass communication, speech and radio-TV-film) documented effects lurking in the minimal effects studies, uncovered them in the television age as well and in the process intellectually grounded the hybrid field of political communication, while also



ensuring that it would be open to a wide range of methods and inquiry. The prime protagonists in my narrative are Katz, Lang and Lang, Edelman, and Graber, with supporting roles played by others.

## Sociology: Katz

With works ranging from his dissertation-based *Personal Influence* (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955) to *Media Events*, with Daniel Dayan (1992), Elihu Katz's scholarship demonstrated the value of systematically studying communication through a variety of methods. In the decades after sociology's exit, he co-authored a synthesis of findings from studies of the Kennedy-Nixon debates (Katz and Feldman 1962), reopened the question of selectivity in exposure to mass media (1968), argued that political parties were better served by political campaigns than were voters (1971), examined the ways in which media function in wartime (Peled and Katz, 1974), explored whether authentic cultures can survive new media (1977), and with Liebes documented cross-cultural differences in viewers interpretations of the soap opera "Dallas" (1990). Along the way he co-authored a book on diffusion (Coleman, Katz, and Menzel, 1966), with Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch, incorporated uses of mass communication through a gratifications approach into the communication research agenda (Blumler and Katz, 1974; Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch, 1974), and in 1988 forecast an argument that he and Dayan would body in *Media Events* (1992), namely: "Effects, of course, need not be limited to . . . cognitive effects. . . . Indeed, a badly neglected effect in research on mass communication is that the media may tell us how to *feel*. And they may situate us in certain *roles*—family members, consumers, students, farmers, or citizens. . . . If television can make hundreds of millions of people feel something, that's a powerful effect—and one that's very neglected in our research. An example is the integrative effect of mass communication—the way in which the mass media can sometimes make the society feel as one" (Katz, 1988, 367).

Consistent with my assumption that this story's protagonists reveal the state of the art at given points in time, in 1968 Katz noted a shift in the assumption underlying mass communication research. "Whereas the media had been thought capable of impressing their message on the defenseless masses," he noted, "it now appears as if the audience has quite a lot of power of its own. Indeed, the fashion in research nowadays is not to ask 'what the media do *to* people' but 'what people do *with* the media,' or at least to be sure to ask the second question before the first" (1968, 788). Performing the same function two decades later, Katz observed that the two-step flow of communication had been "[a]mended in a dozen ways to prefer influence over information, talk between equals over opinion leaders, multiple steps over two steps, etc." (1987, S26).

## Sociology: Lang and Lang

The notion that media construct or co-create meaning was inherent in Kurt and Gladys Lang's 1953 conclusion that television viewers experienced both the MacArthur Day

parade and their relationship with the general differently than did observers on the parade route (Lang and Lang, 1953, 1968). This germinal essay earned them a place in the canon of communication research (Katz and Dayan, 2003), foreshadowed Dayan and Katz's *Media Events* (1992), and established that television constructs our view of those political events that we have not directly experienced. Embrace of this view opens the possibility that variables in the forecasting models such as the well-being of the economy, its past performance, the popularity of the incumbent, and perhaps even party identification (Johnston, Hagen, and Jamieson, 2004; Kenski, 2004; Winneg and Jamieson, 2005, 2010) are themselves influenced by or their effects activated by campaign communication and media coverage through such phenomena as agenda setting, framing, and priming.

Educated in the Chicago School of Sociology by symbolic interactionist Herbert Blumer, who had authored two of the twelve Payne studies of the filmic effects on children, and Tamotsu (Tom) Shibutani, best known in communication circles for *Improvised News: A Sociological Study of Rumor* (1966), the Langs not only retained an interest in political communication through the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, but like Katz, published their results in venues that would nurture the emerging political communication field including Kraus's *Great Debates* (1962), the *Journal of Communication* (Lang and Lang, 1993), and *Public Opinion Quarterly* (Lang and Lang, 1978).

Like Katz, this pair of sociologists employed the qualitative or quantitative method best suited to the question they were probing and explored both the flow of influence and the ways in which audiences, messages, and contexts contribute to the construction of meaning. Between 1960 and 1981, Gladys and Kurt Lang analyzed the effects of the Kennedy-Nixon (in Kraus 1962) and Ford Carter debates (1978), television and politics (1968a), the implications of broadcasting returns before the polls close (1968b), and the battle for public opinion over Watergate (1981). Because their 1968 book *Television and Politics* "pays attention to what the *communicators* said, what the *audience* heard, and how they were *affected*," Ithiel de sola Pool hoped that it would set a trend. "Many studies report only one or two links in the chain from what was said to its consequences," he argued. "There are numerous studies of attitude change in an audience that do not try to identify the way in which the particular content of messages caused the change (most of the best voting studies would be examples)" (1969, 287).

## Political Science: Edelman, Graber, and the Constructionist Tradition

Considered a founder of both the fields of political psychology and mass communication, Lasswell was an "original and productive political scientist" (Almond, 1996, 249) who considered making sense of the meaning of events (1948) one of the key functions of mass communication. His focus on the use of symbols in the exercise of power links him to the constructionist tradition in political science, rhetoric and public address, and sociology now found in the field of political communication (cf. *Propaganda Technique in the World War* [1927], *The Comparative Study of Symbols* [1952], written with Daniel



Lerner and Ithiel de Sola Pool,<sup>2</sup> *The Language of Politics* [Lasswell et al., 1965], *Political Communication: The Public Language of Political Elites in India and the United States* [Arora and Lasswell, 1969],<sup>3</sup> and the three-volume *Propaganda and Communication in World History* [1980]).<sup>4</sup>

Like Lasswell, University of Wisconsin political scientist Murray Edelman explored the ways in which uses of political symbols enable people to displace “their inner tensions and needs onto public objects” (see Hershey 1993, 122; and Edelman’s “Symbols and Political Quiescence” [1960], *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* [1964], *Politics as Symbolic Action* [1971], and *Political Language: Words that Succeed and Policies that Fail* [1977]). In Edelman’s view, campaigns matter not so much because they elect, but because they create a political spectacle that makes it difficult for citizens to realize that their interests are not being well served by those who govern. Specifically, “not only does systematic research suggest that the most cherished forms of popular participation in government are largely symbolic, but also that many of the public programs universally taught and believed to benefit a mass public in fact benefit relatively small groups” (Edelman, 1964, 4). Like literary theorist Kenneth Burke (1950), Edelman conceived his object of inquiry as the “interplay in politics among acts, actors, settings, language, and masses” (1964, 21).

There is a discernible difference between the questions framed and methods employed by positivist social science and those arising from Edelman’s constructionist epistemology. For the latter, as Bennett notes (1993), “traditional scientific claims about properties of public opinion are not hypotheses that describe some independently existing world but are political statements that are actively part of the political construction of opinion itself” (109).

Like Katz and Lang and Lang, political scientist Doris Graber focused both on the construction of meaning and on its effects. In *Verbal Behavior and Politics* (1976), she draws on Edelman to contend, “People no longer need to see and experience to believe. They need merely to hear, or to hear and see a little and then project from the little they see, in order to create a new ‘reality’ which furnishes symbolic gratifications for needs for which material gratifications would otherwise be expected” (65). Consistent with Lang and Lang and Edelman, that book’s chapter on mass media emphasizes “the type of verbal environment which is created by the mass media and which is likely to influence politically significant reality perceptions which, in turn, may influence actual politics” (140). In a similar vein, *Processing the News: How People Tame the Information Tide* (1984) uncovered what people make of televised content by exploring “thinking patterns through intensive interviews of small panels of registered voters” (viii) and linking them “to each person’s social and cultural contexts” (viii). Among the first US political scientists to co-author with those formally identified with mass communication departments, Graber contributed to a book that helped ground agenda setting—one of the more important theories in political communication (Weaver et al.’s *Media Agenda Setting in a Presidential Election* [1981]).

A focus on construction of meaning emerged as well in the rhetoric and public address tradition in speech communication departments when scholars there shifted

from a focus on assessing the fidelity of individual speeches to an Aristotelian ideal to the study of rhetoric as symbolic action (Sillars, 1964; Campbell, 1982) and in the process entertained the notion that rhetoric is constitutive (cf. McGee, "The 'Ideograph': A Link between Rhetoric and Ideology" [1980]; Charland's "Constitutive Rhetoric: The case of the Peuple Quebecois" [1987] and Jamieson's [1992] *Dirty Politics: Deception: Distraction and Democracy* which is dedicated to Edelman). This new direction broadened the scope of inquiry to include the rhetoric of social movements (cf. Scott and Brockriede's *The Rhetoric of Black Power* [1969]) and underlying rhetorical regularities in discourse that construct meaning (cf. Rosenfield's "A Case Study in Speech Criticism: The Truman–Nixon Analog" [1968]; Ivi's "Images of Savagery in American Justifications for War" [1980]; Denton's *The Symbolic Dimensions of the American Presidency* [1982]; Hart's *Political Pulpit* [1977], *Verbal Style and the Presidency* [1984]; and *The Sound of Leadership* [1987]). Driving this change were the writings of Kenneth Burke, whose work was introduced into the Speech tradition by the co-editor of *History and Criticism of Public Address*, Marie Hochmuth [Nichols] in 1952, as well as Black's *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method* (1965), and Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's *The New Rhetoric* (1969).

Other important early constructionist political communication works by scholars in political science, communication, and sociology include Altheide's *Creating Reality: How TV News Distorts Events* (1974); Nimmo's *Popular Images of Politics* (1974) and his coauthored *Mediated Political Realities* (1990)<sup>5</sup>; Elder and Cobb's *The Political Uses of Symbols* (1983); Hinkley's *The Symbolic Presidency: How Presidents Portray Themselves* (1990); and Bennett's *News: The Politics of Illusion* (1988).

Among these, Neuman, Crigler, and Just's *Common Knowledge: News and the Construction of Political Meaning* (1992) stands out for displacing the notion of a one-way flow of communicative influence with a multi-methodological constructionist "research perspective which focuses on the subtle interaction between what the mass media convey and how people come to understand the world beyond their immediate life space" (xv). Drawing on survey data, content analysis, interviews, and experiments, Neuman and his colleagues demonstrated that by actively reinterpreting and integrating mass media images into their existing beliefs and knowledge, audiences "construct" candidates and political knowledge into composites that may differ voter to voter.

## RESPECT FOR OR HOSTILITY TOWARD ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF KNOWING?

---

At this point in my narrative, we have some scholars focused on the flow of influence using quantitative methods, others concentrating on explicating the making of meaning, usually but not exclusively, employing qualitative ones, and still others doing both.

Importantly those whose inquiry is centered on understanding the making of meaning and its implications are not expressing disdain for the work of their colleagues using quantitative social scientific methods to track influence. Indeed in 1979 Kurt Lang argued that “there is no *inherent* incompatibility between the ‘positivism’ of administrative communication research and the critical approach associated with the Frankfurt School” (1979, 83) and concluded, “In the interest of gaining valid and meaningful knowledge—which is not the monopoly of any single tradition or school—we are all critical, with or without a capital ‘C’” (95). Nor are those whose sleuthing methods include panels, surveys, and experiments belittling the work of Edelman and his epistemic kin.

By contrast, in the 60s and 70s, some in part of the communication discipline were engaged in a contretemps involving hallway asides such as “If you can’t quantify it, it’s not worth knowing” or “Anything you can quantify is trivial.” While such skirmishes can serve as entertainment in a mature discipline, they are suicidal in a fledgling one. Rapprochement occurred, and disciplinary self-interest prevailed when each granted that the other employed a valuable, different but complementary and legitimate way of knowing, a resolution signaled by the publication of *The Handbook of Rhetorical and Communication Theory* (Arnold and Bowers, 1984), co-edited by a leading social scientist and rhetorical critic. Interestingly, a decade later speech communication departments did not splinter into warring factions when constructionists argued that the “variables” that preoccupy the positivist tradition are socially or rhetorically constructed and the privileged intellectual status claimed for the methods of science and social science simply a particularly appealing body of symbols whose use obscures the powerful role that definition and framing play in constructing knowledge and knowledge paradigms (cf. Nelson, McCloskey, and Megill, 1986; Simons, 1989, 1990). Nonetheless, some who had weathered that earlier storm, experienced déjà vu when political scientist George Edwards advanced the notion that public address scholars cannot warrant conclusions about the power of a speech from textual analysis in the absence of public opinion data (Edwards, 1996, 208).

However, had the constructionists in my narrative such as Edelman canonized sociologist Todd Gitlin’s 1978 assault on the Columbia and Yale traditions of inquiry, the hybrid field of political communication as we know it probably would not have emerged. “Whether in Lazarsfeld’s surveys or the laboratory experiments of Carl Hovland and associates,” wrote Gitlin, “the purpose was to generate *predictive* theories of audience response, which are necessarily—intentionally or not—consonant with an administrative point of view, with which centrally located administrators who possess adequate information can make decisions that affect their entire domain with a good idea of the consequences of their choices” (211). “In this historical situation,” he argued, “to take a constancy of attitude for granted amounts to a choice, and a fundamental one, to ignore the question of the sources of the very opinions which remain constant throughout shifting circumstances. Limiting their investigation thus, Katz and Lazarsfeld could not possibly explore the institutional power of mass media: the degree of their power to shape public agendas, to mobilize networks of support for the policies of state and party,

to condition public support for these institutional arrangements themselves. Nor could they even crack open the questions of the sources of these powers" (1978, 215–216).

In 1987 Elihu Katz responded with a reframing that addressed "three challenges to the paradigm of limited effects" which Katz called "institutional, critical [i.e. Gitlin], and technological" and "their three alternative theories of powerful effects—information, ideology [i.e. Gitlin], and organization . . ." (1987, S39) by casting them as complementary parts of "a continuing search for an adequate conceptualization of effect" (S39). Especially important is his claim that the "empirical research" resulting from these three "is certainly convergent with work stemming from the Bureau paradigm" (S40), which, in a fashion similar to Lang (1979), Katz argued had been wronged by narrow constructions of what and how it studied communication. Note that in a Big E-tented "search for an adequate conceptualization of effects," there is space for the constructionists, including Edelman and within that tradition for those such as Gitlin who embrace critical theoretical assumptions, and also space for such key players in the hybrid field of political communication as Iyengar and Kinder who, in Gitlin's construction of the world would be cast as "generat[ing] predictive theories through use of controlled experiments."

The hybrid field of political communication is built from Lang and Katz's encompassing view that values both positivist and constructionist communication research. Among other things this means that scholars who identify with the political communication field recognize the complementarity of Gitlin's argument in *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making & Unmaking of the New Left* (1980) that "media frames" are "largely unspoken and unacknowledged" ways in which journalists organize the world (7) and Iyengar's in *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues* (1991) that "exposure to episodic news makes viewers less likely to hold public officials accountable for the existence of some problem and also less likely to hold them responsible for alleviating it" (2–3). What Iyengar's work demonstrates is that use of surveys and experiments to generate predictive theories does not sideline questions about institutionalized media power. "By discouraging viewers from attributing responsibility for national issues to political actors," argues the scholar who would become *Political Communication's* fourth editor, "television decreases the public's control over their elected representatives" (3). Indeed, I would suggest that Iyengar confirmed with other methodological means the 1985 conclusion of Bennett and Edelman that different meanings are constructed when we attribute "any social problem to official policies, the machinations of those who benefit from it, or the pathology of those who suffer from it. . . . In choosing any such ultimate cause we are also depicting a setting, an appropriate course of action, and sets of virtuous and evil characters . . ." (159–160).

The ability of the constructionists and positivists to co-habit a space such as *Political Communication* is made possible by the fact that unlike some in the constructionist tradition, Edelman granted the "central importance" of actual "situations and conditions" even as he explicated the meanings that human minds constructed and were led to construct (1971, 85). Meanwhile, even when working within or drawing from the positivist

heritage, Katz, Lang and Lang, and Graber found value in educing nonobvious insight about constructed meaning from their and their audiences' interpretation of texts.

By devoting a 1993 issue of *Political Communication* to a symposium on Edelman's work and installing Graber as the founding editor of *Political Communication* in 1993, political communication scholars signaled their hybrid field's openness to a range of methodologies and viewpoints. Fittingly, Graber, Katz and the Langs were the first three winners of the APSA political communication division's lifetime achievement award, an honor named for Murray Edelman.

## Locating Communication Effects, Broadly Construed, and Specifying the Constraints Within Which They Operate

Because of his role in creating the classic Columbia studies (cf. Lazarfeld et al., 1944; Berelson et al., 1954), when Bernard Berelson mourned the fact that those who had stimulated the mass communication tradition had abandoned it and opined that communication research was "withering away" (1959, 3), those holding stock in mass communication research futures took note. In response, Wilbur Schramm, the founder of the first Ph.D. program in mass communication (at the University of Iowa) and the first communication research institute (at the University of Illinois), observed that the corpse "seemed extraordinarily lively" (1983, 6 reporting on 1959, 6–9). Nodding in agreement were those sharing custody of the body in schools and departments originally founded to teach public speaking, group discussion, journalism, and the production of radio, TV, and film. The reason? As a result of the mass exodus of talent to which Berelson's emigration contributed, mass communication research had lost "its place as a major concern within the conventionally recognized academic disciplines, such as sociology and political science. . . ." but survived in "departments of journalism and other vocationally oriented faculties [that had] moved in to fill the vacuum" (Lang and Lang, 1993, 130). Taken together these departments and schools educated the researchers now identifying themselves with the communication discipline in the political communication field and contributed to the common culture required to sustain a new joint cross-disciplinary enterprise. They did so by joining some in sociology and political science to challenge the minimal effects model and in the process broaden the notion of effects in the way Katz had imagined.

Among those leading the charge in Great Britain were Blumler and McQuail (1968, 1970) and in US communication departments, Swanson (1972, 1978) in speech communication, Kraus (1973) and Kraus and Davis (1976) in radio-TV-film, and Chaffee (1975) and McCombs and Shaw (1972) and Gerbner (1959) in mass communication. Each defined the state of play of political communication research in the 1970s. Each contributed significant work advancing the field. After reviewing over 800 studies Kraus and Davis spoke for communication scholars when they concluded in *The Effects of Mass Communication on Political Behavior* (1976) that "what we know is not what we thought

we knew and what we thought we knew is more persistent in the literature than what we know” (283).

In a demonstration of the power of rhetorical constructions of reality, Joseph Klapper’s (1960) *The Effects of Mass Communication* is remembered for inscribing on marble the conventional wisdom that media tend to produce “minimal effects.” Forgotten is his caution that “under conditions and in situations other than those described in this volume, the media of mass communication may well have effects which are quite different and possibly more dramatic or extensive than those which have here been documented” (1960, 252). Identifying those conditions and situations became a *raison d’être* of the emerging communication discipline. In a quest driven by an instinct for disciplinary self-preservation, these researchers featured underplayed facets of the Columbia studies and excavated unnoticed media effects from Columbia data while arguing that the Michigan scholars were sauntering past communication effects because they weren’t looking for them. They also adopted methods able to capture effects that had proven elusive and broadened the concept of influence in ways that translated previous nonfindings into significant ones and centered new topics on the research agenda. In the process, some research confirmed and some confounded Columbia results. So for example, where the 1948 Elmira study (Berelson et al., 1954) had found a relationship between media exposure and both interest in the campaign and higher turnout, Blumler and McLeod’s (1974) panel study in the 1970 British general election suggested a link between TV use and reduced turnout among better educated and informed potential voters. In the United States in the 1980s, however, exposure to news in print media was linked positively with turnout (McLeod and McDonald, 1985).

## Challenging the Minimal Effects Model in the Columbia Studies

Attacking the minimal effects inference drawn from the Columbia studies, Becker, McCombs, and McLeod (in Chaffee, 1975) located mass media effects in the Columbia data (28–33), noting, for example, that in the Erie study, “Among persons with Republican predispositions *and* predominantly Republican media exposure, only 15% voted for the Democratic candidate; but the Democratic vote among Republicans with predominantly Democratic exposure is 47%” (29). A decade later, Chaffee and Hochheimer dismissed most of the generalizations from the Elmira study as time bound at best, disproved at worst (278). “Had not the focus been exclusively on the vote,” they argued, “and specifically on within-campaign changes in voting intentions, and had not each case been weighted equally and relative frequencies been taken as the indicator of theoretical importance, a very different interpretation of the role of mass media could have been derived from the findings of the 1940 study—and of every election study since” (279). Where the Columbia studies counterposed interpersonal influence and that of the mass media, later work that explored the influence of one on the other found not only that attention to media and public affairs stimulated interpersonal discussion



(McLeod, Bybee, and Durall, 1979) but interpersonal canvassing increased attention to campaign news as well (Popkin, 1991).

Meanwhile, in a challenge to the concept of two-step flow, Deutschmann and Danielson (1960) demonstrated that major news stories diffused directly to individuals through radio and television and not, as Katz and Lazarsfeld had surmised (see Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955, 82) through personal channels. After a decade of this sort of work, the theory of two-step flow had been “weakened by increasingly deviant findings” (Lin, 1971, 33) or in Katz’s construction “amended.”

Those in departments devoted to studying communication were not the only ones throwing caution flags at the minimal effects model. In 1959, for example, Lang and Lang reminded readers that the information transmitted by opinion leaders came from the media to start with and also posited that by influencing the political climate or the images of the parties and candidates, mass media may sway votes. In 1978, Gitlin weighed in with the claim that the two-step flow theory “does not hold up in its own terms.” Specifically, “Respondents were being asked to name as influentials those individuals who they thought were most tuned in to the mass media.” Katz and Lazarsfeld were taking for granted the power of mass media to define news; and they were therefore discovering not “the part played by people in the flow of mass communications,” but the nature of the *channels* of that flow (1978, 218).

In the process of reexamining the Columbia model, mass communication scholars recast findings of media’s impotence as confirmation of significance. “Theoretical refinements,” noted Comstock (1983), “such as ‘two-step flow’ . . . the notion that the media often reinforce predispositions or present behavior . . . and the cataloguing of conditions under which the media are ineffective . . . had appeared only as confirmations of media ineffectiveness; today, they are more likely to appear as conditions qualifying media effects or as effects in themselves . . .” (44).

To this evolving conversation, Katz added that critics erred “in assuming that the ‘dominant’ paradigm is standing still while only theirs are moving ahead” (1987, S40). Not so, he argued. Instead “the somewhat distorted paradigm of limited effects” and “the twin emphases on selectivity and interpersonal influence. . . in turn, led to the revival of gratifications research and to work on the diffusion of innovation which, in their next incarnation, have become occupied, respectively, with ‘decoding’ and ‘networks.’ These recurrent themes—that of *meaning* (selectivity, gratifications, uses, text, reading, decoding) and of *flow* (networks, information, influence, technology)—appear to be the major dimensions underlying the field” (S39). By integrating psychological processes into “meaning,” one could easily parse the essays in the handbook into those two themes as Katz defines them.

## Challenges to Hovland and McGuire’s Minimal Effects Conclusion in Psychology

Recall that McGuire dismissed the notion that “television and other mass media have sizeable impacts on the public’s thoughts, feelings, and actions,” a conclusion that did

not rule out the possibility of modest but nonetheless important effects. While political scientists were tracking factors that directly affected voting behavior and psychologists were pursuing evidence of attitude and behavior change, mass communication scholars were asking whether, and, if so, how, media affected cognition, specifically the pictures in our heads (Lippmann, 1922). Their answer: through agenda setting and cultivation, some types and genres of media do in fact produce statistically significant albeit modest effects on our “thoughts” with larger effects occurring in some populations, for example those with a high need for cognition or little direct experience with the issue or image being trafficked by media. Unsurprisingly, a study of major communication journals covering 1956–2000 found that agenda setting and cultivation were two of the top three most heavily cited communication theories (Bryant and Miron, 2004, 673). The third, uses and gratifications, is bodied in the work of Blumler and McQuail that I will address in a moment.

Captured in Bernard Cohen’s (1963) memorable axiom, the press “may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about” (13), the theory of agenda setting played a central role in the emergence of the field of political communication by demonstrating the relationship between the most often covered issues in media and what the audience considers important. After correlating undecided Chapel Hill, North Carolinians’ perceptions of which issues were important in 1968 with those featured in the media, McCombs and Shaw (1972) posited that media set the agenda by telling susceptible voters what to think about. Since candidates offer competing issue agendas, this phenomenon had the potential to advantage one aspirant over another. By the early 1990s, agenda-setting scholarship had refined Cohen’s formulation by showing that “that the media not only tell us what to think about, but also how to think about it, and, consequently, what to think” (McCombs and Shaw, 1993, 65).<sup>6</sup> Agenda setting also elicited an early cross-disciplinary exchange when Erbring, Goldenberg, and Miller (1980) broke from what they saw as McCombs and Shaw’s “reliance on a ‘mirror-image’ model of media effects” to introduce an “‘audience-effects’ model which treats issue-specific audience sensitivities as modulators, and news coverage as a trigger stimulus, of media impact on issue salience, issue by issue” (Erbring et al., 1980, 16).

Developed by Annenberg School scholars George Gerbner and Larry Gross, cultivation presupposed that over time, heavy viewers of prime time television would adopt television’s distorted view of reality. Their research confirmed that at least some heavy viewers of violence-saturated, prime-time programming were indeed more likely to believe that the world is a meaner and scarier place than it actually is. At its core, the theory contended that television “is an agency of the established order and as such serves primarily to extend and maintain rather than to alter, threaten, or weaken conventional conceptions, beliefs and behaviors” (Gerbner and Gross, 1976, 175; for a contrary view see Hirsch, 1980, 1981; for meta-analyses see Morgan and Shanahan, 1997, 2010). Of particular interest here is the derivative explanation that over-time high exposure to crime-saturated local news elicited the public belief that crime remained a significant national problem even after clear drops in the crime rate occurred (Romer, Jamieson, and Aday, 2003, 88). Gerbner and Gross’s focus on the effects of exposure to



prime-time television both challenged the minimal effects assumption and presaged later work on the political effects of non-news media.

Where McCombs and Shaw and Gerbner and Gross relied on content analysis and survey data, the next major assault on the minimal effects model would come from controlled experiments. In political communication's ledger sheet, the Yale tradition deserves credit for integrating that method into political communication research. Just as Hovland (1959) urged Lazarsfeld (15) to replace the panel method with the controlled experiment so as to better capture the complexity of communication and justify causal inferences, so, too, his colleagues and co-authors, William McGuire and Robert Abelson (see Hovland, McGuire, Abelson, and Brehm's *Attitude Organization and Change: An Analysis of Consistency Among Attitude Component* [1966]), offered encouragement when Iyengar and Kinder were "not yet fully persuaded that the political effects of television could be studied usefully by experimental means" (vii).<sup>7</sup> In an instance of historical symmetry, the work reported in *News That Matters* was begun at Yale.

Ignoring Patterson's later work (1980), Iyengar and Kinder—two of the political scientists Katz espied flocking to communication research in the 1980s—used the power of the experimental method to argue that "Patterson and McClure's [1976] conclusion—that 'network newscasts are neither very educational nor very powerful'—is quite thoroughly mistaken" (1). In the process of making that case, in *News That Matters*, they (1987) centered a mechanism capable of producing media effects in the political communication scholar's repertoire by showing that "by priming certain aspects of national life while ignoring others, television news sets the terms by which political judgments are rendered and political choices made" (4).

The behavioral impulse in the speech field was fed by insights drawn from Hovland, Janis, and Kelley's 1953 *Communication and Persuasion*, among other works,<sup>8</sup> and championed by psychologists such as Charles Woolbert at the University of Illinois, who served as president of the speech field's professional association in 1920, and Franklin Knower at Ohio State (see Delia, 1987, 43). The laboratory experiments of speech scholars explored the impact of classical rhetorical elements such as ethos—later called source credibility—(cf. Haiman, 1949) and argument (cf. Knower 1936) and studied the effects of medium on messages and audiences response to them (cf. Ewbank's exploration of radio techniques, 1932), a line of work that prefigured findings of medium-related learning differences (cf. Neuman, Crigler, and Just, 1992). I cite these essays in particular because each earned recognition in Hovland's 1954 "Effect of Mass Media of Communication."

McGuire's work influenced not only Iyengar and Kinder's (1987, 73) but also that of the cross-disciplinary team of Pfau and Kenski (1990) and that of political scientist John Zaller (1992) who reported that McGuire's "masterly synthesis of research on attitude change has provided the starting point for all my work in this area" (xi). Originally conceptualized by psychologists Lumsdaine and Janis (1953) as part of propaganda studies and refined by psychologist McGuire (McGuire and Papageorgis, 1961; McGuire, 1961), inoculation was the subject of communication scholar Michael Pfau and political scientist Henry Kenski's *Attack Politics: Strategy and Defense* which built on work by

Pfau (Pfau and Burgoon, 1988; Pfau et al., 1990) to show that employing an inoculative strategy could create resistance to both character and issue attacks (Pfau and Kenski, 1990).<sup>9</sup>

Drawing on both Converse (1962) and McGuire (1968), Zaller's (1992) Receive Accept Sample (RAS) model explained the circumstances and mechanisms involved in determining who would be influenced by media. In the RAS, attitude change is most likely among individuals in the middle of the distribution of motivation whose exposure is high enough to encounter new information but whose disposition to counterargue is sufficiently low to permit attitudinal impact. Although it appeared after 1993, I include as well Zaller's argument that evidence of minimal ultimate effects does not preclude massive media influence (1996, 17) because it explicitly responds to McGuire's minimal effects synthesis. In "The Myth of Massive Media Impact Revisited: New Support for a Discredited Idea" Zaller argued that "models that assume that more exposure leads in additive fashion to more media influence are of little use in disentangling the effects of crosscutting communication" (20). Instead, he showed that because "members of the public who are heavily exposed to one message tend to be heavily exposed to its opposites as well" each message "has its effects, but the effects tend to be mutually canceling in ways that produce the illusion of modest impact" (20).

By situating political communication within the cognitive revolution (see Beniger and Gusek, 1995), these bodies of scholarship broadened its concept of effects to include sustaining the status quo as well as such outcomes as learning, agenda setting, cultivation, and creating spirals of silence. At the same time, they tied such message structures as inoculation and framing to audience response and specified the circumstances and individual characteristics most susceptible to communicative influence. In the process, the idea that audiences are uniform and passive gave way to one in which individuals counter-argue (Pfau and Kenski, 1990), agenda-setting effects are likely when issues are unobtrusive (cf. Weaver et al., 1981) but unlikely when they are not, and the cultivation power of media is minimized when television's images contradict lived experience and magnified when one is consistent with the other (Morgan, 1983).

The importance of the robust finding that campaigns can increase political knowledge was on display at a 1999 seminar convening by Katz to guide the Annenberg Public Policy Center's National Annenberg Election Survey. There McGuire argued that the "knowledge (information) variable should be a high priority for inclusion in future election studies because it has a good track record for entering into a variety of confirmed hypotheses as an effect in its own right, as well as a theorized mediator or interaction variable that helps explain hypothesized relations" (2001, 49).

## Challenging the Political Science Minimal Effects Model

Where Deutschmann and Danielson questioned the Columbia tradition's notion of two-step flow, and McCombs and Shaw and Gerbner and Gross showed that media affect the pictures in our heads, election studies by Blumler and McQuail and their colleagues

in Britain and one by Mendelsohn and O'Keefe in the United States recast the study of effects by replacing the transmission model of influence with a transactional one. Because they are often excluded from histories of the field, let me note that pioneering studies of British elections include Trenaman and McQuail's *Television and the Political Image* (1961), Blumler and McQuail's analysis of the 1964 general election *Television in Politics: Its Uses and Influences* (1968), Blumler and McQuail's (1970) *The Audience for Election Television*, and Blumler and McLeod's (1974) *Communication and Voter Turnout in Britain*. Consistent with earlier work, Trenaman and McQuail (1961) correlated increased television exposure with heightened levels of information about proposed policies. Unlike the study by Trenaman and McQuail, Blumler and McQuail's study of the 1964 parliamentary election isolated the effects of television on attitudes.

Designed "to explore the paradox of high exposure to campaign communication coupled with low propensity to change," the Blumler and McQuail study (1969), focused "on the perception of the campaign by voters and on their motivations for viewing political television. A guiding idea was that the influence of campaign communication might turn not so much on its volume but on how and why it is received by its intended or unintended audience" (Blumler and McQuail, 2001, 226).

This uses and gratifications approach assaulted the minimal effects model with "new measures of political communication effects that do not involve a reversion to outdated mass persuasion models of media influence" (Blumler and McLeod, 1974, 309). Responding to the "modest role that the Columbia findings attributed to the media," they proposed instead "a more interactional approach to the reception of mediated information by different kinds of citizen-voters" (Katz and Warshel, 2001, 2). In conclusions consistent with those that Zaller would reach decades later, they (for an explanation, see Blumler and McQuail, 2001, 230) concluded that "a number of effects go in quite different directions and are obscured if one only looks at net changes." They also determined: "The less habitually politically inclined were 'brought into line' in informational and even attitude terms with trends affecting the majority" (230).

Following Blumler and McQuail's lead were US mass communication scholars Mendelsohn and O'Keefe (1976) whose 1972 election study *The People Choose a President: Influences on Voter Decision* showed that "simplistic models of vote prediction based upon demographic and/or political indicators alone" tell an incomplete story. "It is," they concluded, "the interactions between those and more subtle variables, such as image and issue perception, that seem to lead to more important differences in electoral decision-making" (123). Like Patterson and McClure's *The Unseeing Eye*, also published in 1976, Mendelsohn and O'Keefe's book was based on detailed work conducted in a single community. But where Mendelsohn and O'Keefe found important media effects in their 1972 data, political scientists Patterson and McClure did not. In the process, they did however isolate a learning effect from ads. Specifically, "presidential ads were ineffective at manipulating voters but better at increasing their understanding of candidate issue positions . . ." However, "among the voters they studied, network news was neither very powerful nor very educational" (1976, 22–23, 90).

Shortly thereafter a second study by Patterson concluded that although newspapers were “the superior transmitter of information” (1980, 146), television news had power of its own. In particular “when only the voters’ impressions about the candidates’ personalities and leadership capacities are considered, television’s impact is more apparent” (143) and not “insignificant” (146). “It appears,” noted Patterson, “that continued exposure to a candidate, whether on television or the newspaper, encourages the voter to make judgments about a candidate’s character” (146). Importantly “[e]arly impressions, many of which have no obvious political significance, affect later ones, and provide resistance to partisan leanings” (152).

By replacing the community-based panel designs and cross-sectional model dominating US elections research with the kind of rolling cross-sectional method briefly tried out by ANES in 1984, Richard Johnston and a team of Canadian political scientists were able to confirm that “rhetoric” produced election effects in its own right. Campaign rhetoric, they concluded, not only persuades people in campaigns but also “possibly” plays “its biggest role—by directing voters towards a specific agenda and considerations surrounding that agenda” (Johnston et al., 1992, 249). Because Johnston incorporated the rolling cross-sectional method into the inaugural 100,000 interview, year 2000 run of the National Annenberg Election Study, the two political scientists and one communication researcher who superintended the project (Johnston, Hagen, and Jamieson, 2004) were able to explain why the forecasters’ predictions of a decisive 2000 Gore win against George W. Bush were off base. Specifically, and here our story comes full circle—analysis of the 2000 NAES rolling cross-sectional data confirmed that Gelman and King (1993) were prescient when they surmised that communication plays a key role in activating the effects of fundamental factors in voters (i.e., Gore violated an assumption of the political science forecasters by failing to prime the economy), Finkel (1993) was correct in anticipating communication effects when the efforts of the two sides are out of balance (i.e., Bush won the battleground by outspending Gore on ads in the final weeks), and Bartels (1993) was on target in arguing that with a good research design and measurements, one should be able to isolate media effects (i.e., early in the general election, Republican ads primed negative trait perceptions about Gore; in the week before the election, a Republican ad advantage in the battleground protected Bush from attacks on his Social Security plans made by Gore in unrebutted appearances in network news).<sup>10</sup>

Because a number of its findings echo those in the Columbia data, the Johnston, Hagen, and Jamieson study (2004) brings us full circle in a second sense as well. There are after all important parallels between their explanation of the 2000 outcome and those advanced by the Columbia scholars. “Political campaigns are important,” noted Lazarsfeld and his colleagues (1944, 74) in *The People’s Choice*, “primarily because they *activate* latent predispositions.” Communication mattered in both elections. Where in that earlier one, Democratic campaign communication activated latent dispositions, in 2000 the relative Democratic silence on the economic successes of the Clinton-Gore years undercut the potency of a fundamental factor that should have propelled the vice president to victory in the electoral college as well as the popular vote.

## CONCLUSION

---

This chapter has tracked the byways that led to the emergence of a cross-disciplinary cadre of scholars identified with the hybrid field of political communication. Concentrating on the period between the mid 1940s and mid 1990s, it has telegraphed the influence of the disciplines of sociology, political science, psychology, and communication on the emerging field; recounted how scholars such as Elihu Katz, Kurt and Gladys Lang, Murray Edelman, and Doris Graber seeded the intellectual ground from which the field would grow; catalogued the emergence of a concept of effects that includes such phenomena as learning, the construction of political meaning, and agenda setting; and featured a study that isolated the role of communication in activating the variables from which forecasting models predict presidential election outcomes.

The chapters in this handbook reveal the questions currently vexing scholars identified with political communication, the answers they have uncovered and the extent to which they have been able to replace the “minimal effects” model with compelling alternatives that yield nonobvious insight about symbolic exchanges about the shared exercise of power.

## NOTES

---

1. Books by Hovland and his Yale colleagues included *Communication and Persuasion* (1953), *The Order of Presentation in Persuasion* (1957), *Personality and Persuasibility* (1959), *Attitude Organization and Change* (1960) and *Social Judgment: Assimilation and Contrast Effects in Communication and Attitude Change* (1961).
2. Unsurprisingly, the Ithiel de Sola Pool lecture presented every third year at the APSA Annual Meeting is the one tradition at APSA outside the political communication division that has featured those identified with the political communication division (i.e., Lance Bennett [1988], Kathleen Hall Jamieson [2001] and Manuel Castells [2004]) among the invited lecturers.
3. Another tributary of Lasswell's flowed from his books *Psychopathology and Politics* (1930) and *Power and Personality* (1948) to the theorizing of James David Barber whose typology reported in the *Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House* (1972) led him to predict accurately in 1969 at a meeting of the American Political Science Association, “The danger is that Nixon will commit himself irrevocably to some disastrous course of action” (Fox, 2004). Barber's psycho-biographies of presidents fitted them into one of four categories based on childhood background and cues embedded in the interstices of their discourse.
4. But where the concerns about the power of Nazi propaganda that drove the Lasswell tradition assumed that its effects were massive, the later work by the sociologists found them

to be small. One explanation is the difference in rigor and method. Another is the difference in the object of inquiry. Where those focused on propaganda studied single, long-lived streams of intense communication in media (film and radio) that drew large audiences united by a common threat, all conditions conducive to media influence, the Columbia studies focused on elections which by their nature included multiple, conflicting flows of information and potential influence that were likely to evoke selective perception.

5. Nimmo is important as well for co-editing the first *Handbook of Political Communication* (Nimmo and Sanders, 1981).
6. In *News That Matters*, Iyengar and Kinder dismiss McCombs and Shaw's empirical case for agenda setting without offering justificatory evidence. "Although research on agenda—setting has proliferated over the last decade" they write, "so far, unfortunately, the results add up to little" (3).
7. A Ph.D. in social psychology, Kinder had earlier co-authored with Abelson (Kinder et al., 1980; Abelson et al., 1982).
8. Among them Pearce includes George Miller's *Language and Communication*; Shannon and Weaver's *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*; Ruesch and Bateson's *Communication: The Social Matrix of Psychiatry*; Cherry's *On Human Communication*; and, somewhat later, Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson's *Pragmatics of Human Communication* (Pearce, 1985, 270).
9. Lin and Pfau (2007) rely on Pfau, Tuding, Koerner, et al.'s model involving threat, counter-argument, refutational preemption, and involvement to address the question "Can inoculation work against the spiral of silence?" (155).
10. Communication's effects were not limited to activating variables in the traditional political science model. After integrating a comprehensive data set of radio-TV and cable buys into the rolling cross-sectional NAES 2008 survey data, Kenski, Hardy, and Jamieson (2010) concluded that "the fundamentals—specifically, an unpopular incumbent, a faltering economy, and a party-identification advantage for the Democrats—had impressive predictive power in 2008" explaining three-fourths of the variance in vote disposition. "But with almost 15% of the variance in the satchels, messages shifted vote intention as well, & the effects of the advertised messages were in part a function of Obama's capacity to significantly outspend McCain on advertising" (301–2). In particular, "[a] 100 GRP advantage for Obama in local TV advertising increases by 1.5% the probability that a person with a baseline probability of 50% will say that if the election were held of the day on the interview she would cast an Obama vote, cable produces a 4.1% impact, and radio, a 5.5% one" (274). Whether these are effects at all and, if so, whether they are minimal or not so, is a function of how one frames the finding.

## REFERENCES

- Abelson, R., Kinder, D., Peters, M., and Fiske, S. 1982. Affective and semantic components in political person perception. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 42: 619–630.
- Almond, G. 1996. Political science: The history of the discipline. In Robert Goodin and Hans-Dieter Klingemann (Eds.), *A new handbook of political science* (pp. 50–96). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Altheide, D. 1974. *Creating reality: How TV news distorts events*. Beverley Hills: Sage.



- Arndt, J. 1968. A test of the two-step flow in diffusion of a new product. *Journalism Quarterly* 45: 457–465.
- Arnold, C., and Bowers, J. W. 1984. *Handbook of rhetorical and communication theory*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Arora, S. K., and Lasswell, H. D. 1969. *Political communication: The public language of political elites in India and the United States*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Barber, J. 1972. *The presidential character: Predicting performance in the White House*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Bartels, L. 1993. Messages received: The political impact of media exposure. *The American Political Science Review* 87: 267–285.
- Becker, L., McCombs, M., and McLeod, J. M. 1975. The development of political cognitions. In S. Chaffee (Ed.), *Political communication: Issues and strategies for research*, (pp. 21–63). Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Beniger, J. R., and Gusek, J. A. 1995. The cognitive revolution in public opinion and communication research. In T. L. Glasser and C. T. Salmon (Eds.), *Public opinion and the communication of consent* (pp. 217–248). New York: Guilford.
- Bennett, L., and M. Edelman, M. 1985. Toward a new political narrative. *Journal of Communication* 35: 156–171.
- Bennett, L. 1988. *News: The politics of illusion*. New York: Longman.
- Bennett, L. 1993. Constructing publics and their opinions, *Political Communication*, 101–118.
- Berelson, B., Lazarsfeld, P., and McPhee, W. 1954. *Voting: A study of opinion formation in a presidential campaign*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Berelson, B. 1959. The state of communication research. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 23: 1–6.
- Black, E. 1965. *Rhetorical criticism: A study in method*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Blumler, J., and McQuail, D. 2001. Political communication scholarship. In E. Katz and Y. Warshel (Eds.), *Election studies: What's their use?* (pp. 219–246). Boulder: Westview.
- Blumler, J., and McQuail, D. 1968. *Television in politics: Its uses and influence*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Blumler, J., and McQuail, D. 1969. *Television in politics: Its uses and influence*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Blumler, J., and McQuail, D. 1970. The audience of election television. In J. Tunstall (Ed.), *Media sociology: A reader*, (pp. 452–478). London: Constable.
- Blumler, J., and McQuail, D. 2001. Political communication scholarship: The uses of election research. In E. Katz and Y. Warshel (Eds.), *Election Studies. What's Their Use*, (pp. 219–245). Boulder: Westview.
- Blumler, J., and Katz, E. 1974. *The uses of mass communications: Current perspectives on gratifications research*. *Sage annual review of communication research*, Volume 3. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Blumler, J., and McLeod, J. 1974. Communication and voter turnout in Britain. In Timothy Leggatt (Ed.), *Sociological theory and survey research: International change and social policy in Great Britain*, (pp. 265–312). Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Bryant, J., and Miron, D. 2004. Theory and research in mass communication. *Journal of Communication* 54: 662–704.
- Burke, K. 1950. *A rhetoric of motives*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Campbell, A. 1954. *The voter decides*. Evanston: Row, Peterson.
- Campbell, A., Converse, P., Miller, W., and Stokes, D. 1960. *The American voter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Campbell, K. K. 1982. *The rhetorical act*. Belmont: Wadsworth.
- Chaffee, S., Ed. 1972. *Political communication: Issues and strategies for research*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Chaffee, S. 1978. Presidential debates—Are they helpful to voters? *Communication Monographs* 45: 330–346.
- Chaffee, S., and Hochheimer, J. 1985. The beginnings of political communication research in the United States: Origins of the “limited effects” model. In E. M. Rogers and F. Balle (Eds.), *The media revolution in America and Western Europe*, (pp. 267–296). Norwood: Ablex.
- Chaffee, S., Ward, S., and Tipton, L. 1970. Mass communication and political socialization. *Journalism Quarterly* 47: 647–659.
- Charland, M. 1987. Constitutive rhetoric: The case of the Peuple Quebecois. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73: 133–150.
- Coleman, J., Katz, E., and Menzel, H. 1966. *Medical innovation: A diffusion study*. New York: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Cohen, B. 1963. *The press and foreign policy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Comstock, G. 1983. The legacy of the past. *Journal of Communication*, 33, 42–50.
- Converse, P. 1962. Information flow and the stability of partisan attitudes. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 26: 578–599.
- Dayan, D., and Katz, E. 1992. *Media events: The live broadcasting of history*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- de Sola Pool, I. 1969. Review of the book *Television and Politics* by Kurt Lang; Gladys Lang. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 33: 287–289.
- Delia, J. 1987. Communication research: A history. In C. Berger and S. Chaffee (Eds.), *Handbook of communication science*, (pp. 20–98). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Denton, R. 1982. *The symbolic dimensions of the American presidency: Description and analysis*. Long Grove: Waveland Press.
- Deutschmann, P., and Danielson, W. 1960. Diffusion of knowledge of the major news story. *Journalism Quarterly* 37: 345–355.
- Downs, A. 1957. *An economic theory of democracy*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Edelman, M. 1960. Symbols and political quiescence. *American Political Science Review* 54: 695–704.
- Edelman, M. 1964. *The symbolic uses of politics*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Edelman, M. 1971. *Politics as symbolic action: Mass arousal and quiescence*. New York: Academic Press.
- Edelman, M. 1977. *Political language: Words that succeed and policies that fail*. New York: Academic Press.
- Edwards, G. 1996. Presidential rhetoric: What difference does it make? In, M. J. Medhurst (Eds.), *Beyond the rhetorical presidency*, (pp. 199–217). College Station: Texas A&M Press.
- Elder, C., and Cobb, R. 1983. *The political uses of symbols*. New York: Longman.
- Erbring, L., Goldenberg, E., and Miller, A. 1980. Front-page news and real-world cues: A new look at agenda setting by the media. *American Journal of Political Science* 24: 16–49.
- Ewbank, H. 1932. Exploratory studies in radio techniques. In, J. MacLachy (Ed.), *Education on the air, yearbook of the Institute for Education Radio, Volume 3*, (pp. 231–245). Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- Fair, R. 1978. The effect of economic events on votes for president. *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 60: 159–173.
- Finkel, S. E. 1993. Reexamining the “minimal effects” model in recent presidential campaigns. *Journal of Politics* 55: 1–21.



- Fox, M. 2004. James D. Barber, expert on presidents, dies at 74. *New York Times*, September 15. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com>.
- Gelman, A., and King, G. 1993. Why are American presidential election campaign polls so variable when votes are so predictable? *British Journal of Political Science* 23: 409–451.
- Gerbner, G., and Gross, L. 1976. Living with television: The violence profile. *Journal of Communication* 26: 172–194.
- Gitlin, T. 1978. Media sociology: The dominant paradigm. *Theory and Society* 6: 205–253.
- Gitlin, T. 1980. *The whole world is watching: Mass media in the making & unmaking of the new left*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gosnell, H. 1927. *Getting-out-the-vote: An experiment in the stimulation of voting*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Graber, D. 1976. *Verbal behavior and politics*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Graber, D. 1984. *Processing the news: How people tame the information tide*. New York: Longman.
- Haiman, F. S. 1949. An experimental study of the effects of ethos in public speaking. *Speech Monographs* 16: 190–202.
- Hart, R. 1977. *The political pulpit*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press.
- Hart, R. 1984. *Verbal style and the presidency: A computer-based analysis*. Orlando: Academic Press.
- Hart, R. 1987. *The sound of leadership: Presidential communication in the modern age*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hershey, M. R. 1993. Election research as spectacle: The Edelman vision and the empirical study of elections. *Political Communication* 10: 121–139.
- Hinkley, B. 1990. *The symbolic presidency: How presidents portray themselves*. New York: Routledge.
- Hirsch, P. (1980). The “scary world” of the nonviewer and other anomalies: A reanalysis of Gerbner et al.’s findings on cultivation analysis, part I. *Communication Research* 7: 403–456.
- Hirsch, P. 1981. On not learning from one’s own mistakes: A reanalysis of Gerbner et al.’s findings on cultivation analysis, part II. *Communication Research* 8: 3–37.
- Hochmuth, M. 1952. Kenneth Burke and the “new rhetoric”. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 38: 133–144.
- Hovland, C. 1954. The effects of the mass media of communication. In G. Lindzey *Handbook of social psychology*, (pp. 1062–1103). Cambridge: Addison-Wesley.
- Hovland, C., Ed. 1957. *The order of presentation in persuasion*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Hovland, C. 1959. Reconciling conflicting results derived from experimental and survey studies of attitude change. *American Psychologist* 14: 8–17.
- Hovland, C., and Janis, I. Eds. 1959. *Personality and persuasibility*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Hovland, C., Janis, I., and Kelley, H. 1953. *Communication and persuasion: Psychological studies of opinion change*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Hovland, C., Lumsdaine, A., and Sheffield, F. D. 1949. *Experiments on mass communication*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hovland, C., and Rosenberg, M. Eds. 1960. *Attitude organization and change: An analysis of consistency among attitude components*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Hovland, C., McGuire, W., Abelson, R., and Brehm, J. W. 1966. *Attitude organization and change: An analysis of consistency among attitude component*. *Yale Studies in Attitudes and Communication, Volume 3*. In Milton Rosenberg (Ed). New Haven: Yale University Press.

- Ivie, R. 1980. Images of savagery in American justifications for war. *Communication Monographs* 47: 279–294.
- Iyengar, S. 1991. *Is anyone responsible? How television frames political issues*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Iyengar, S., and Kinder, D. 1987. *News that matters: Television and American opinion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Jamieson, K. H. 1984. *Packaging the presidency: A history and criticism of presidential campaign advertising*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Jamieson, K. H. 1992. *Dirty politics: Deception, distraction and democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Johnston, R., Blais, A., Brady, H., and Crête, J. 1992. *Letting the people decide: Dynamics of a Canadian election*. Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press.
- Johnston, R., Hagen, M., and Jamieson, K. H. 2004. *The 2000 presidential election and the foundations of party politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Katz, E., and Feldman, J. J. 1962. The debates in the light of research: A survey of surveys. In S. Kraus (Ed.), *The great debates: Background, perspective, effects*, (pp. 173–223). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Katz, E. 1968. On reopening the question of selectivity in exposure to mass communications. In R. Abelson (Ed.), *Theories of cognitive consistency: A sourcebook*, (pp. 788–796). Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Katz, E. 1971. Platforms & windows: Broadcasting's role in election campaigns. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 48: 304–314.
- Katz, E. 1977. Can authentic cultures survive new media? *Journal of Communication* 27: 113–121.
- Katz, E. 1987. Communications research since Lazarsfeld. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 51: S25–S45.
- Katz, E. 1988. On conceptualizing media effects: Another look. In S. Oskamp (Ed.), *Television as a social issue, Applied Social Psychology Annual*, (pp. 361–374). Newberry Park, CA: Sage.
- Katz, E., Blumler, J., and Gurevitch, M. 1974. Utilization of mass communication by the individual. In J. Blumler and E. Katz (Eds.), *The uses of mass communications: Current perspectives on gratifications. Sage Annual Reviews of Communication Research Volume 3*, (pp. 19–32). Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Katz, E., and Dayan, D. 2003. The audience is a crowd, the crowd is a public: Latter day thoughts on Lang and Lang's MacArthur Day in Chicago. In E. Katz, J. D. Peters, T. Liebes and A. Orloff (Eds.), *Canonic texts in media research*, (pp. 121–136). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Katz, E., and Liebes, T. 1990. Interacting with Dallas cross cultural readings of American TV. *Canadian Journal of Communication* 15: 45–66.
- Katz, E., and Lazarsfeld, P. 2006/1955. *Personal influence: The part played by people in the flow of mass communication*, 2nd edition. New Brunswick: Transaction.
- Katz, E., and Warshel, Y. 2001. Introduction. In E. Katz and Y. Warshel (Eds.) *Election studies: What's their use?* (pp. 1–14). Boulder: Westview.
- Kenski, K. 2004. The rolling cross-section design. In D. Romer, K. Kenski, P. Waldman, C. Adasiewicz, and K. H. Jamieson (Eds.), *Capturing campaign dynamics: The National Annenberg Election Survey* (pp. 56–65). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kenski, K., Hardy, B., and Jamieson, K. H. 2010. *The Obama victory: How media, money and message shaped the 2008 election*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Key, V. O., and Cummings, M. C. 1966. *The responsible electorate: Rationality in presidential voting, 1936–1960*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kinder, D., Peters, M., Abelson, R., and Fiske, S. 1980. Presidential prototypes. *Political Behavior* 2: 4315–337.
- Klapper, J. 1960. *The effects of mass communication*. Glencoe: Free Press.
- Knower, F. H. 1936. Experimental studies of changes in attitude II. A study of the effect of printed argument on changes in attitude. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 30: 522–532.
- Kraus, S., Ed. 1962. *The great debates: Background, perspective, effects*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Kraus, S. 1973. Mass communication and political socialization: A re-assessment of two decades of research. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59: 390–400.
- Kraus, S., and Davis, D. 1976. *The effects of mass communication on political behavior*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Kramer, G. H. 1970. The effects of precinct-level canvassing on voter behavior. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 34: 560–572.
- Lang, K., and Lang, G. E. 1953. The unique perspective of television and its effects: A pilot study. *American Sociological Review* 18: 3–12.
- Lang, K., and Lang, G. E. 1959. The mass media and voting. In E. J. Burdick and A. J. Brodbeck (Eds.), *American voting behavior*, (pp. 217–235). Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Lang, K., and Lang, G. E. 1968a. *Politics and television*. Chicago: Quadrangle Books.
- Lang, K., and Lang, G. E. 1968b. *Voting and nonvoting: Implications of broadcasting returns before polls are closed*. Waltham: Blaisdell.
- Lang, G. E., and Lang, K. 1978. Immediate and delayed responses to a Carter-Ford debate: Assessing public opinion. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 42: 322–341.
- Lang, G. E., and Lang, K. 1981. Watergate: An exploration of the agenda-building process. In G. Cleveland Wilhoit and Harold de Bock (Eds.), *Mass Communication Review Yearbook* 2, (pp. 447–468). Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Lang, K., and Lang, G. E. 1993. Perspectives on communication. *Journal of Communication* 43: 92–99.
- Lasswell, H. 1927. *Propaganda technique in the World War*. New York: Peter Smith.
- Lasswell, H. 1930. *Psychopathology and politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lasswell, H. 1948. *Power and personality*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Lasswell, H., Lerner, D., and de Sola Pool, I. 1952. *The comparative study of symbols*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Lasswell, H., Lerner, D., and Speier, H. 1979–1980. *Propaganda and communication in world history: Volume 1—The symbolic instrument in early times; Volume 2—Emergence of public opinion in the West; Volume 3—A pluralizing world in formation*. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii.
- Lasswell, H., Leites, N., Fadner, R., Goldsen, J., Grey, A., Janis, I., Kaplan, A., Mintz, A., De Sola Pool, I., Jakobson, S., and Kaplan, D. 1965. *The language of politics: Studies in quantitative semantics*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Lazarsfeld, P., Berelson, B., and Gaudet, H. 1944. *The people's choice: How the voter makes up his mind in a presidential campaign*. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce.
- Lin, W., and Pfau, M. 2007. Can inoculation work against the spiral of silence? A study of public opinion on the future of Taiwan. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 19: 155–172.

- Lin, N. 1971. Information flow, influence flow and the decision-making process. *Journalism Quarterly* 48: 33–61.
- Lippmann, W. 1922. *Public opinion*. New York: Harcourt.
- Lumsdaine, A., and Janis, I. 1953. Resistance to counterpropaganda produced by one-sided and two-sided propaganda presentations. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 17: 311–318.
- McClure, R. D., and Patterson, T. E. 1974. Television news and political advertising the impact of exposure on voter beliefs. *Communication Research* 1: 3–31.
- McCombs, M., and Shaw, D. 1993. The evolution of agenda-setting research: Twenty-five years in the marketplace of ideas. *Journal of Communication* 43: 58–67.
- McCombs, M., and Shaw, D. 1972. The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36: 176–187.
- McGee, M. C. 1980. The ideograph link between rhetoric and ideology: A link between rhetoric and ideology. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66: 1–16.
- McGuire, W. 1961. Resistance to persuasion conferred by active and passive prior refutation of the same and alternative counterarguments. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 63: 326–332.
- McGuire, W., and Papageorgis, D. 1961. The relative efficacy of various types of prior belief-defense in producing immunity against persuasion. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 62: 327–337.
- McGuire, W. 1968. The nature of attitudes and attitude change. In Gardner Lindzey and Elliot Aronson (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology, 2nd Edition, Volume 3*, (pp. 136–314). Reading: Addison Wesley.
- McGuire, W. J. 1986. The myth of massive media impact: Savagings and salvagings. In George A. Comstock (Ed.), *Public communication and behavior, Volume 1*, (pp. 173–257). Orlando: Academic Press.
- McLeod, J. M., C. R. Bybee, and Durall, J. A. 1979. Equivalence of informed political participation: The 1976 presidential debates as a source of influence. *Communication Research* 6: 463–487.
- McLeod, J. M., and McDonald, D. G. 1985. Beyond simple exposure media orientations and their impact on political processes. *Communication Research* 12: 3–33.
- Mendelsohn, H., and O'Keefe, G. J. 1976. *The people choose a president: Influences on voter decision making*. New York: Praeger.
- Morgan, M. 1983. Symbolic victimization and real world fear. *Human Communication Research* 9: 146–157.
- Morgan, M., and Shanahan, J. 1997. Two decades of cultivation research: An appraisal and meta-analysis. In B. R. Burleson (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook 20*, (pp. 1–45). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Morgan, M., and Shanahan, J. 2010. The state of cultivation. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 54: 337–355.
- Nelson, J., McCloskey, D., and Megill, A. 1986. *The rhetoric of the human sciences*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Neuman, W. R., Crigler, A., and Just, M. 1992. *Common knowledge: News and the construction of political meaning*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Nie, N. H., Verba, S., and Petrocik, J. R. 1979. *The changing American voter*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Nimmo, D. 1974. *Popular images of politics: A taxonomy*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

- Nimmo, D., and Sanders, K. Eds. 1981. *Handbook of political communication*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Nimmo, D. D., and Combs, J. E. 1990. *Mediated political realities, 2nd Edition*. New York: Longman.
- Noelle-Neumann, E. 1973. Return to the concept of powerful mass media. *Studies in Broadcasting* 9: 67–112.
- Noelle-Neumann, E. 1974. The spiral of silence: A theory of public opinion. *Journal of Communication* 24: 43–51.
- Noelle-Neumann, E. 1983. The effect of media on media effects research. *Journal of Communication* 33: 157–165.
- Patterson, T., and McClure, R. D. 1976. *Unseeing eye: The myth of television power in national elections*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.
- Patterson, T. E. 1980. *The mass media election: How Americans choose their president*. New York: Praeger.
- Pearce, W. B. 1985. scientific research methods in communication studies and their implications for theory and research. In Thomas Benson (Eds.), *Speech Communication in the 20th century*, (pp. 255–281). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Peled, T., and Katz, E. 1974. Media functions in wartime: The Israel home front in October 1973. In Jay Blumler and Elihu Katz (Eds.), *The uses of mass communications: Current perspectives on gratifications research, Sage Annual Reviews of Communication Research, Volume 3*, (pp. 49–69). Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Perelman, C., and Olbrechts-Tyteca, L. 1969. *The new rhetoric: A treatise on argumentation*, translated by J. Wilkinson and P. Weaver. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Pfau, M., and Burgoon, M. 1988. Inoculation in political campaign communication. *Human Communication Research* 15: 91–111.
- Pfau, M., and Kenski, H. 1990. *Attack politics: Strategy and defense*. New York: Praeger.
- Pfau, M., Kenski, H., Nitz, M., and Sorenson, J. 1990. Efficacy of inoculation strategies in promoting resistance to political attack messages: Application to direct mail. *Communication Monographs*, 57, 25–43.
- Popkin, S. 1991. *The reasoning voter: Communication and persuasion in presidential campaigns*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Romer, D., Jamieson, K. H., and Aday, S. 2003. Television news and the cultivation of fear of crime. *Journal of Communication* 53: 88–104.
- Rosenfield, L. A. 1968. Case study in speech criticism: The Nixon-Truman analog. *Speech Monographs* 35: 435–450.
- Rosenstone, S. J. 1983. *Forecasting presidential elections*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Rosenstone, S., and Hansen, J. M. 1993. *Mobilization, participation and democracy in America*. New York: MacMillan.
- Schramm, W. 1983. The unique perspective of communication: A retrospective view. *Journal of Communication* 33: 6–17.
- Schramm, W. 1959. Comments on The state of communication research. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 23: 6–9.
- Scott, R., and Brockriede, W. 1969. *The rhetoric of black power*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Sherif, M., and Hovland, C. 1961. *Social judgment: Assimilation and contrast effects in communication and attitude change*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Shibutani, T. 1966. *Improvised news: A sociological study of rumor*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Sillars, M. 1964. Rhetoric as act. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 50: 277–284.

- Simons, H., Ed. 1990. *The rhetorical turn: Invention and persuasion in the conduct of inquiry*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Simons, H., Ed. 1989. *Rhetoric in the human sciences*. London: Sage.
- Swanson, D. L. 1972. The new politics meets the old rhetoric: New directions in campaign communication research. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 58: 31–40.
- Swanson, D. L. 1978. Political communication: A revisionist view emerges. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 64: 211–222.
- Trenaman, J., and McQuail, D. 1961. *Television and the political image: A study of the impact of television on the 1959 general election*. London: Methuen and Co, Ltd.
- Wattenberg, M. P. 1990. *The decline of American political parties, 1952–1988*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wattenberg, M. P. 1991. *The rise of candidate-centered politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Weaver, D., Graber, D., McCombs, M., and Eyal, C. 1981. *Media agenda setting in a presidential election: Issues, images and interest*. Westport: Greenwood.
- Winneg, K., and Jamieson, K. H. 2005. Elections: Party identification in the 2004 election. *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35: 576–589.
- Winneg, K., and Jamieson, K. H. 2010. Party identification in the 2008 presidential election. *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 40: 247–263.
- Zaller, J. 1992. *The nature and origins of mass opinion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Zaller, J. 1996. The myth of massive media effects revived: Empirical support for a discredited idea. In Mutz, D. Sniderman, P., and Brody, R. (Eds.), *Political persuasion and attitude change*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.





## CHAPTER 3

---

# THE SHAPE OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

---

JAY G. BLUMLER

Does political communication have a shape? Does it matter? If so, how might we characterize it? The whole, it is sometimes said, is greater than its parts. Could this proposition be true of political communication, and if so, how and why? As other chapters in this volume show, lines of empirical political communication research are often specifically focused, aiming to generate cumulative knowledge from closely and carefully studied “parts.” This leaves open, however, questions about what they might add up to overall. Five reasons explain why these questions should also be explored.

One reason is the complexity of the political communication process, which is organized “within a Chinese-boxes-like set of levels” (Blumler, McLeod, and Rosengren, 1992, 14), linking a political, economic, and cultural environment; political advocates of all kinds; journalistic and other mediators of all kinds; the messages and other content that they produce; and bodies of heterogeneous and varying involved citizens. We need to be able to travel across these levels (as well as to home in on particular ones) with concepts that can help us to understand how these relationships work, how they feed on each other, how they evolve with regard to each other, and in what ways their interrelations may matter. As Blumler, McLeod, and Rosengren (1992, 10) put it, we need to bear in mind “the ever-continuing interplay between macro and micro. . . in the realm of communication.”

The second reason is that if only dealt with in isolation, some of the organizations and actors involved in political communication could at times be incompletely understood, perhaps misunderstood. Key communicators can only rarely put across messages entirely as they would like without the involvement of others or their mediation by others or by taking advance account of the possible reactions of intended recipients. Mutual expectations, even mutual dependencies, consequently underlie much of the political communication process. This is particularly true of the sometimes collaborative, sometimes conflictual, sometimes even incestuous relationship of politicians and journalists—forming, according to David Swanson’s (1997) metaphor, a virtual “political-media complex.”



Third, it has been evident from time to time that broadly environmental changes can affect a range of phenomena, rippling down through the political communication system, as it were. Examples that come to mind are the onset of increased electoral volatility in Western democracies from the 1970s onward; the commercialization of formerly public service broadcasting systems in Western Europe; the switch from limited-channel television services to an ecology of media and communication abundance; and the current declining viability of network television news and the mainstream printed press. All these developments have affected political communication behaviors and responses.

Fourth, to assess political communication in a normative spirit, criticisms of specific bodies of content (e.g., of negative news for generating “media malaise”) or of particular message makers (e.g., deceitful politicians or sensationalizing reporters) can have only a limited value. That is because “system-based features of political communication give characteristic shape to a society’s public sphere, favouring certain sources and styles of political discourse over others and enabling or impeding a democratic engagement of leaders with citizens” (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995, 203). In other words, what troubles us on the visible surface of political communications may often have deeper roots.

Fifth, with the increasing internationalization of political communication scholarship comes a need for single-country studies to be supplemented by, sometimes enlarged into, cross-national, comparative research. Among other things, such research is “an essential antidote to naïve universalism, or the tendency to implicitly presume that political communication research findings from one society (normally one’s own!) are applicable everywhere” (Gurevitch and Blumler, 1990a, 308). Well-designed comparative research will therefore be based on a sense of how different systems may be different or similar as “wholes,” that is, try to take account of differing “macro-social, system-level characteristics and influences on significant political communication phenomena” (Gurevitch and Blumler, 1990a, 306).

In short, whether the whole is always greater than the parts in political communication may be debatable, but it is undoubtedly essential to a fuller understanding of those parts as well as to the provision of insights into the process overall.

How, then, might the political communication process be grasped in the round? Harold Lasswell (1948) once depicted political communication as a matter of who says what, in which channel, to whom, and with what effect. That characterization, however, (a) is unduly linear, (b) ignores the shaping significance of communicator inter-relationships, and (c) fails to mention a host of surrounding societal and organizational influences. In thinking about all this, it is important to bear in mind that political communication arrangements may be exposed to forces of both stability and change. Even in fast-moving news situations, political communicators often adopt and follow essentially similar routines over and over, making it easier for them to cope as well as to anticipate how other individuals significant for them will behave or react, given their involvement in equally entrenched routines. But neither are political communication systems frozen in cement. A major source of their unsettlement can be change in the technologies by which political messages are produced and disseminated. This may offer politicians new

opportunities for projecting their messages and may reconfigure relations among key communicators and receivers. Other changes in the political communication process include changes in news media markets and competition patterns, changes in voters' orientations to the major political parties, and changes in political culture (such as attitudes of political skepticism or trust).

An attempt to generate a more holistic perspective on these matters arose in the 1970s and centered on the concept of a "political communication system" (as in Blumler and Gurevitch, 1977; Gurevitch and Blumler, 1977). (A current treatment of this notion may be found in Pfetsch and Esser, 2013.) Its emergence reflected two features of the period.

First, it represented something of a reaction against the predominant disciplinary influence of social psychology on the mass communication research field at the time, with many US scholars in particular having focused on individual-level phenomena, such as those of media effects—whether limited or powerful, attitudinal or cognitive, likely to reinforce or to change prior views, direct or indirect, and so forth (Klapper, 1960; Becker, McCombs, and McLeod, 1975). In contrast, originators of the concept of a political communication system aimed to introduce perspectives from political science and sociology into the field, for example, analyzing relationships of media institutions to political and other societal institutions (Gurevitch and Blumler, 1977).

Second, these scholars had witnessed and were responding to a major technological source of change: the comprehensively transforming impact of television on democratic politics from the 1960s onward. This change had enlarged and restructured the political audience (Blumler, 1970); transmitted visual images alongside verbal ones; stood for norms of fairness, impartiality, and neutrality rather than staunch partisanship; and directly entered the home, feeding political conversations inside and beyond it. But eventually the most important feature of this transformation was probably the positioning of television news as a pivot of the political communication process, one that voters (particularly less politically minded ones) derived much of their information and impressions of politics from (increasingly so as their party allegiances weakened) and that parties and politicians were keen, even desperate, to get their messages into. Indeed, with few national channels for politicians to address and for viewers to use—only three in the United States and two in Britain at first, later three—television must have seemed a veritable system-cementing medium. And as anyone familiar with television in both the United States and Britain at the time could readily see, their political broadcasting arrangements, one run on commercial, the other on public service, lines, did differ considerably—and precisely *as* systems.

But what does the notion of a political communication system involve? More generally, it draws attention to two features that lay perspectives, even practitioner perspectives, have rarely taken into account. One is that no single source of influence or practice is usually responsible for what political communication at a given time or place is like; rather, it typically stems from a composite of interacting influences. The other is that change in one part of a political communication system will usually trigger responses or changes in other parts—a matter of continual action and reaction. Such is the nature of a system (McLeod and Blumler, 1987).

And how is a political communication system constituted? Structurally, it comprises two sets of institutions, political and media organizations, which are involved in the course of message preparation in much horizontal interaction with each other, while on a vertical axis they are separately and jointly engaged in processing and disseminating ideas to and from the mass citizenry. The bulk of message production arises from the interface of political and media organizations, whose personnel continually “read” and take account of each other, and although these prime communicators may also be influenced by certain images they hold of audience members’ interests and predilections and by opinions that they believe are widespread in the electorate at large, the audience consists predominantly of receivers (not makers) of communications, whose information and perceptions are more often products of what has come their way than reflective of ideas they have independently formed to pass on to others. And as indicated previously, the patterns and outcomes of these triangular relationships will be shaped in turn by prevailing communication technologies and will be embedded within surrounding political systems, media systems, and political cultures—all of which may change over time and differ across societal space (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995).

What does this conceptualization offer to political communication scholarship? It has been applied in analysis and research in four main ways:

- 1) To conduct detailed explorations of the roles, perceptions, and strategies involved in media-politics interactions. On the media side, a key distinction between “sacredotal” and “pragmatic” orientations to the reporting of political institutions, events, and messages has emerged, the former regarding such material as inherently deserving of news coverage due to its civic importance, the latter insisting that news values alone should determine the extent and manner of its coverage (Blumler, 1969). On the political side, depiction of a highly considered, elaborate, and power-oriented approach to daily news publicity has emerged. Termed “strategic communications” by Bennett and Manheim (2001) and the “modern publicity process” by Blumler (1990), this approach centers on a “competitive struggle to influence and control public perceptions of key issues and events through the major mass media” (1990, 103). More recently, Mazzoleni and Schulz (1999) have coined the notion of “mediatization” to convey how political actors are increasingly impelled to tailor their publicity efforts and messages to media logics, media requirements, and media perspectives on reality, with specifiable consequences for public communication and ultimately for the workings of democracy. Since then, other scholars have taken this idea further, dividing up the mediatization process into four distinct phases (each more media-oriented) and postulating how societies with different political and media systems might be positioned at different way stations along this mediatization route (Stromback, 2008).
- 2) To conduct longitudinal analyses of political communication arrangements and practices over time. This has centered especially on the increasing professionalization of political advocacy for news management purposes (as detailed internationally in Swanson and Mancini, 1996), on the one hand, and on a journalistic fight

back to keep ownership of the political message and defend professional autonomy, on the other (as portrayed in Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995 and in Zaller's "Theory of Media Politics," 2001). Also considered in this line of analysis are the kinds of materials that these approaches tend to produce, such as increased negativity and an increased reporting of politics as a tactical game rather than as a forum of policy debate (Jamieson, 1992; Patterson, 1993), as well as how they might affect public perceptions of politics, politicians, and political communication itself, including increased cynicism and an overall impoverishment of communication for citizenship (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995).

- 3) To design comparative, cross-national analyses of political communication systems (see also de Vreese in this volume). Barely out of infancy in the mid-1970s (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1975), this approach eventually matured into "something of a growth stock" (Swanson, 1992). Not all cross-national research stems from a macro-social point of departure, however, which is what concerns us here. Systemically oriented comparative research would identify in advance certain ways in which macro-social features may be similar and/or different in two or more societies; postulate how such features might be reflected in similarities and differences at other levels of political communication (e.g., media contents or audience awareness, knowledge, and perceptions); carry out empirical research to verify, disconfirm, or modify such expectations; and then revisit the hypothesized macro-level influences in light of the results. Studies that have adopted something like this approach have multiplied in recent years, have usually yielded illuminating results, and have created promising platforms for further research in turn. They include an analysis of influences on national levels of turnout in European parliamentary elections (Blumler, 1983); the framing of European Community news in different member countries' media reports (de Vreese, 2003); the formation of election campaign agendas in the United Kingdom and the United States (Semetko et al., 1991); journalists' political roles in five countries (Patterson and Donsbach, 2006); innovations in election campaigning across eleven democracies (Swanson and Mancini 1996); news coverage of immigration issues in France and the United States (Benson, 2010); the portrayal of politicians as "spin doctors" in Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Esser, Reinemann, and Fan, 2001); tests of Bennett's (1990) "indexing hypothesis" about the relationship of political reporting to the structure of inter-elite debate in the news systems of the United States, Italy, France, and Pakistan (Archetti, 2010); the personalization of mediated political output in twenty democracies (Downey and Stanyer, 2010); and the role of news management in British and Dutch politics (Brown, 2011). The conceptual armory of comparative communication analysis has also been substantially advanced by Hallin and Mancini (2004), who have comprehensively described and differentiated three models of political communication systems extant in the nations of North America and Western Europe, as well as specifying four dimensions of political and media structure on which these are based. They have latterly sought to extend this framework to a number of less mature

democracies in Eastern Europe, South America, Africa, and Asia as well (Hallin and Mancini, 2012).

- 4) To consider normative issues. This is a particularly complicated subject, since scholars—and others of course—differ over the values that political communication should serve (Christians et al., 2009). So far as the present author is concerned, political communication should help citizens understand the main choices their society faces at a given time; engender confidence that what they are being told and shown about them can be trusted (or tested for its trustworthiness); and encourage them to play some part in, rather than merely kibitz over, what is going on. From this point of view, the concept of a political communication system can be normatively sobering. It can highlight disparities between civic ideals and political realities—between what communication-for-democracy should be like and what political communicators actually produce. For example, in “Political Communication Systems and Democratic Values,” Gurevitch and Blumler (1990b) identified four different system-based constraints on the ability of the news media to serve democratic goals well. Indeed, after looking at political communication through systemic glasses, some scholars concluded that “our civic arteries” are “hardening,” diagnosed a “crisis of communication for citizenship” (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995), and maintained that in Britain at least (and perhaps elsewhere) political communication was in “freefall” (Blumler and Coleman, 2010). A systems outlook on political communication can thus heighten normative concern. Yet it also suggests that the main problems and deficiencies of political communication are deep-seated and are not due merely to the failings of certain blameworthy actors, but often stem from the constraints and pressures of an overall system. Of course this perspective makes the task of recommending feasible reform difficult. Reform-minded scholars have tried to overcome this problem in various ways: by addressing political communication practitioners through reviews and reports, sometimes commissioned by media organizations themselves or think tanks (e.g., Blumler, Gurevitch, and Ives, 1977; Downie and Schudson, 2009); by suggesting ways of building on the more constructive possibilities of already introduced political communication innovations (cf. chapter 15 of Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995; Coleman, 2011); by systematically exposing erroneous claims in political advertisements (Jamieson and Jackson, 2007); and latterly by examining and elaborating upon the democratic potential of the Internet (Coleman and Blumler, 2009). But none of this is straightforward or easy!

Although the concept of a political communication system has attracted little criticism in the literature, certain of its limitations should be mentioned. One is the normative impasse that may arise from it, as described above. Another is the confinement of most of its comparative research locales so far to North America and Western Europe, although a few scholars have recently endeavored to redress this geographical imbalance, including Hallin and Mancini (2012), Curran and Park (2000), Voltmer (2006), and Waisbord (2010). Third, authors in the political economy school of communication

research (see McChesney in this volume) might well feel that the analysts of political communication systems have not taken sufficient account of the impact of economic power and other market-based factors on media performance in the civic sphere.

But much has changed (again, technologically driven) since the concept of a political communication system was promulgated, elaborated in analyses, and drawn on to frame empirical research. Two fundamental trends have jointly transformed the conditions in which political communicators, producers, and receivers alike operate. One has been the onset, accelerating since the late 1980s, of communication abundance, greatly increasing the numbers and genres of outlets in which political materials may appear and which people may choose to patronize. The other has been the extensive dissemination and utilization of Internet facilities, heightening the salience of the communication roles of what used to be known as “audience members” and increasing the flows of communication (both direct and interactive) to and from political and media elites and among themselves.

The resulting political communication process is undoubtedly more complex than its network-television-dominated predecessor was, more riddled with cross-currents, and facing many of its actors with greater choice and uncertainty. Can it still be understood holistically? It is important to try to do so, especially for comparative, cross-national, and longitudinal political communication research to continue to prosper. But can the notion of a political communication system itself still effectively serve such holistic needs? Or should it be modified? Or are fresh conceptualizations required at this level? At this stage it is difficult to say. Perhaps the best we can do at present is keep an eye on certain developments that could eventually be significant beyond themselves for the nature of political communication overall. These include the following:

- 1) Communication abundance presumably intensifies the competition among most, if not all, message makers (politicians, journalists, bloggers, etc.) to gain and hold the attention of their intended auditors. What strategies are consequently pursued, how do they differ among different communicators, and with what consequences for political communication contents?
- 2) The professionalization of political advocacy will presumably continue apace, but may change in important ways. In addition to targeting mainstream news media, politicians must now address all sorts of electors differently through all sorts of channels with a medley of objectives in mind, and often more interactively than before. Are their publicity machines differently organized, staffed, and resourced as a result? Might the mediatization process itself become less all-consuming or be modified in some other way? How may politicians juggle their concern to stay in communication and policy control against the need to heed the upward-gathering views of ordinary people from below?
- 3) In its heyday, limited-channel television was a predominantly centripetal medium, offering little choice of agendas, policy frames, and accredited witnesses. Consequently, some of the most influential theories of political communication effects presupposed consonance rather than diversity in the media’s coverage of



public affairs—as with the agenda-setting function of the mass media, the spiral of silence, cultivation effects, and neo-Marxists’ perceptions of the media as ideological sources of support for the status quo. But with the explosion of communication channels, the creation of online journalistic enterprises, and the advent of blogging, has the tendency to consonance appreciably slackened, and if so, in what channels? Is it still dominant in mainstream journalism if less evident in other outlets—or do they sometimes interact in this respect?

- 4) Until recently, a commonsensical notion of citizenship tended to prevail. In essence, this maintained that democratic citizens should be able to exercise informed choices and hold their political leaders to account for their decisions at periodic intervals. (A more participatory view of citizenship was also in play, but was rarely voiced by practitioners.) This notion underpinned a great deal of research, showing what voters learned (or did not learn) from campaigns, for example, what media they derived most information from, how they differed from each other in this respect (as in Tichenor, Donohue, and Olien’s [1970] “knowledge gap” hypothesis). De Beus, however, has noted “the lack of a fixed technical term” for democracy “in postmodern Western societies” nowadays (2011, 19). It seems that the advance of the Internet has germinated an array of different notions of citizenship (some analytical, some normative), such as Dutton’s (2009) depiction of the Internet as a fifth estate; Manin’s (1997) concept of “audience democracy”; Blumler’s (2011, 11) concerns about a “hit and run democracy”; and a swelling army of advocates of “deliberative democracy” (see Stromer-Galley “Political Discussion and Deliberation Online” in this volume). The staying power and evolution of this last concept will demand (and garner) much attention in the future. It brings to the fore the idea of a citizen who can enter into serious discussion of political questions with others—rationally, fairly, and openly—aiming to arrive at a better and more inclusive understanding of what is at stake. A “growth stock,” undoubtedly this has become something of a movement, with its own dedicated literature, lines of empirical research, websites, and activist programs. It is important to follow the progress of this movement, including whether and how far it can eventually penetrate the precincts of political and communication power.

In the face of all this, political communication scholars are striving to further holistic understandings along two different avenues. Some are still producing analytically and empirically creative and insightful studies of political communication systems in something like their original sense—such as Aeron Davis’s (2013) mapping of the intricacies of political-media inter-elite relationships in Britain, and Pfetsch, Meyerhoffer, and Moring’s (2014) comparisons of the numerous cultural orientations that underpin politician-journalist relationships in nine European countries. Others, however, have adopted different points of conceptual departure, which they regard as more in line with current and foreseeable conditions. Arnold Chadwick (2013), for example, has advanced the notion of a hybridized news system, the messages of which emerge and evolve through both offline and online communication channels, blending the contributions

of elite and nonelite communicators. For their part, Esser and Stromback (2014) have situated earlier ideas about the mediatization of politics within a more fully developed theoretical framework, which they maintain should help us to understand the very “transformation of Western democracies.”

It may be argued, however, that these perspectives can and should be incorporated into a more encompassing notion of a political communication system, albeit one that involves much interactive reciprocity and reflexivity among prime forces and actors and that is exposed to significant currents of change (such as mediatization). After all, “hybridity” was built into the first formulations of such a system, in which political communications typically stemmed from a composite of interacting influences (see above). And some of the latest versions of mediatization theory stipulate “that the agenda interactions between politics and media are essentially bidirectional” (Van Aelst et al., 2014) and actually recommend the adoption of “a systems approach” to the analysis of political mediatization (Marcinkowski and Steiner, 2014).

## REFERENCES

- Archetti, C. 2010. *Explaining news: National policies and journalistic cultures in global context*. Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Becker, L. B., McCombs, M. E., and McLeod, J. M. 1975. The development of political cognitions. In S. H. Chaffee (Ed.), *Political communication: Issues and strategies for research* (pp. 21–63). Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications.
- Bennett, W. L. 1990. Toward a theory of press-state relations in the United States. *Journal of Communication* 40(2): 103–125.
- Bennett, W. L., and Manheim, J. B. 2001. The big spin: Strategic communication and the transformation of pluralist democracy. In W. L. Bennett and R. M. Entman (Eds.), *Mediated Politics: Communication in the future of democracy* (pp. 279–286). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Benson, R. 2010. What makes for a critical press? A case study of French and U.S. immigration news coverage. *International Journal of Press/Politics* 15(1): 3–24.
- Blumler, J. G. 1969. Producers’ attitudes towards television coverage of an election campaign: A case study. *Sociological Review Monograph* 13: 85–115.
- Blumler, J. G. 1970. The political effects of television. In J. Halloran (Ed.), *The Effects of Television* (pp. 69–104). London: Panther Books.
- Blumler, J. G., and Gurevitch, M. 1977. Linkages between the mass media and politics: A model for the analysis of political communication systems. In J. Curran, M. Gurevitch, and J. Woollcott (Eds.), *Mass communication and society* (pp. 270–290). London: Edward Arnold.
- Blumler, J. G. (Ed.) 1983. *Communicating to voters: Television and the first European parliamentary elections*. London: Sage Publications.
- Blumler, J. G. 1990. Elections, the media and the modern publicity process. In M. Ferguson (Ed.), *Public communication: The new imperatives* (pp. 101–113). London, New Delhi de Vreese and Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Blumler, J. G., and Gurevitch, M. 1995. *The crisis of public communication*. London and New York: Routledge.



- Blumler, J. G., and Coleman, S. 2010. Political communication in freefall: The British case—and others? *International Journal of Press/Politics* 15(2): 139–154.
- Blumler, J. G., and Gurevitch, M. 1975. Toward a comparative framework for political communication research. In S. H. Chaffee (Ed.), *Political communication: Issues and strategies for research* (pp. 165–193). Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications.
- Blumler, J. G., Gurevitch, M., and Ives, J. 1977. *The challenge of election broadcasting*. Leeds UK: Leeds University Press.
- Blumler, J. G., McLeod, J. M., and Rosengren, K. E. 1992. *Comparatively speaking: Communication and culture across space and time*. Newbury Park, London, and New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Brown, R. 2011. Mediatization and news management in comparative institutional perspective. In K. Brants and K. Voltmer (Eds.), *Political communication in postmodern democracy: Challenging the primacy of politics* (pp. 59–74). Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chadwick, A. 2013. *Hybrid media system: Politics and power*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Coleman, S. (Ed.). 2011. *Leaders in the living room: The prime ministerial debates of 2010; evidence, evaluation and some recommendations*. Oxford, UK: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.
- Coleman, S., and Blumler, J. G. 2009. *The Internet and democratic citizenship: Theory, practice and policy*. Cambridge UK, and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Christians, C., Glasser, T., McQuail, D., Nordenstreng, K., and White, R. 2009. *Normative theories of the media: Journalism in democratic societies*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press.
- Curran, J., and Park, M. J. 2000. *De-Westernizing media studies*. New York: Routledge.
- Davis, A. 2013. *Promotional cultures*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- de Vreese, C. H. 2003. *Framing Europe: Television news and European integration*. Amsterdam: Aksant.
- Downey, J., and Stanyer, J. 2010. Comparative media analysis: Why some fuzzy thinking might help. *European Journal of Communication* 25(4): 332–347.
- Downie, L., Jr., and Schudson, M. 2009. The reconstruction of American journalism. *Columbia Journalism Review*. [http://www.cjr.org/reconstruction/the\\_reconstruction\\_of\\_american.php](http://www.cjr.org/reconstruction/the_reconstruction_of_american.php)
- Dutton, W. H. 2009. The fifth estate emerging through the network of networks. *Prometheus* 27(1): 1–15.
- Esser, F., Reinemann, C., and Fan, D. 2001. Spin doctors in the United States, Great Britain and Germany: Metacommunication about media manipulation. *International Journal of Press/Politics* 6(1): 16–45.
- Esser, F., and Stromback, J. (Eds.). 2014. *Mediatization of politics: Understanding the transformation of Western democracies*. Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Berkshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gurevitch, M., and Blumler, J. G. 1977. Mass media and political institutions: The systems approach. In G. Gerbner (Ed.), *Mass media policies in changing cultures* (pp. 251–268). New York, London, Sydney, Toronto: John Wiley & Sons.
- Gurevitch, M., and Blumler, J. G. 1990a. Comparative research: The extending frontier. In D. L. Swanson and D. Nimmo (Eds.), *New directions in political communication: A resource book* (pp. 269–289). Newbury Park, London, and New Delhi: Sage Publications.

- Gurevitch, M., and Blumler, J. G. 1990b. Political communication systems and democratic values. In J. Lichtenberg (Ed.), *Democracy and the mass media* (pp. 305–325). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Hallin, D. C., and Mancini, P. 2004. *Comparing media systems: Three models of media and politics*. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Hallin, D. C., and Mancini, P. (Eds.). 2012. *Comparing media systems beyond the Western world*. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Jamieson, K. H. 1992. *Dirty politics: Deception, distraction and democracy*. New York and Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Jamieson, K. H., and Jackson, B. 2007. *Un-spun: Finding facts in a world of disinformation*. New York: Random House.
- Klapper, J. T. 1960. *The effects of mass communication*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Lasswell, H. D. 1948. The structure and function of communication in society. In L. Bryson, *The Communication of Ideas*. New York: Institute for Religious and Social Studies.
- Manin, B. 1997. *The principles of representative government*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Marcinkowski, F., and Steiner, A. (2014). Mediatization and political autonomy: A systems approach. In F. Esser and J. Strömbäck (Eds.), *Mediatization of politics: Understanding the transformation of western democracies* (pp. 74–89). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mazzoleni, G., and Schulz, W. 1999. “Mediatization” of politics: A challenge for democracy? *Political Communication* 16(3): 247–261.
- McLeod, J. M., and Blumler, J. G. 1987. The macrosocial level of communication science. In C. R. Berger and S. H. Chaffee (Eds.), *Handbook of communication science* (pp. 271–322). Newbury Park, Beverly Hills, London, and New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Patterson, T. E. 1993. *Out of order*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Patterson, T. E., and Donsbach, W. 2006. Psychology of news decisions: Journalists as partisan actors. *Political Communication* 13(4): 455–468.
- Pfetsch, B., and Esser, F. 2013. Comparing political communication. In F. Esser and T. Hanitzsch (Eds.), *Handbook of comparative communication research*. New York: Routledge.
- Pfetsch, B., Meyerhoffer, E., and Moring, T. 2014. National or professional? Types of political communication culture across Europe. In B. Pfetsch (Ed.), *Political communication cultures in Europe: Attitudes of political actors and journalists in nine countries* (pp. 76–102). Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Berkshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Semetko, H. A., Blumler, J. G., Gurevitch, M., and Weaver, D. H. 1991. *The formation of campaign agendas: A comparative analysis of party and media roles in recent American and British elections*. Hillsdale, NJ, Hove, and London: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Stromback, J. 2008. Four phases of mediatization: An analysis of the mediatization of politics. *International Journal of Press/Politics* 13(3): 228–246.
- Swanson, D. L. 1992. Managing theoretical diversity in cross-national studies of political communication. In J. G. Blumler, J. M. McLeod, and K. R. Rosengren (Eds.), *Comparatively speaking: Communication and culture across space and time* (pp. 19–34). Newbury Park, London, and New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Swanson, D. L. 1997. The political-media complex at 50: Putting the 1996 presidential campaign in context. *American Behavioral Scientist* 40(8): 1264–1282.
- Swanson, D. L., and Mancini, P. (Eds.). 1996. *Politics, media and modern democracy: An international study of innovations in electoral campaigning*. Westport, CT, and London: Praeger.

- Tichenor, I. J., Donohue, G. A., and Olien, C. N. 1970. Mass media flow and differential growth in knowledge. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 34(2): 259–270.
- Van Aelst, P., Thesen, G., Walgrave, S., and Vliegenhardt, R. 2014. Mediatization and political agenda-setting: Changing issue priorities? In F. Esser and J. Stromback (Eds.), *Mediatization of politics: Understanding the transformation of western democracies* (pp. 200–220). Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Berkshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Voltmer, K. (Ed.). 2006. *Mass media and political communication in new democracies*. New York: Routledge.
- Waisbord, S. 2010. The pragmatic politics of media reform: Media movements and coalition building in Latin America. *Global Media and Communication* 6(2): 133–153.
- Zaller, J. 2001. The rule of product substitution in presidential campaign news. In E. Katz (Ed.), *Election studies: What's their use?* (pp. 247–269). Boulder, CO, and Oxford, UK: Westview Press.

## CHAPTER 4

---

# A TYPOLOGY OF MEDIA EFFECTS

---

SHANTO IYENGAR

THE role of media presentations in shaping the beliefs, attitudes, and behavior of the audience is a paradigmatic question that defines the field of political communication. In this chapter, I describe the evolution of media effects research from the early preoccupation with attitude change through the development of the agenda-setting, priming, and framing paradigms (which occurred in response to findings of minimal attitude change) to the current revival of persuasion research.

In the propaganda or persuasion model, the definitional criterion of “effects” is some change in political attitudes or preferences, and the causal variable is typically the slant or direction of a given media message. Thus, news reports favoring one candidate over another are expected to increase the vote share of the candidate accorded more favorable media treatment. In the context of political campaigns, the early research demonstrated that media-based campaigns reinforced rather than shifted prevailing preferences. These findings disappointed scholars of political communication. But rather than abandon the idea of influential mass communication, they substituted changes in beliefs about the state of the political world for changes in attitudes as the standard for assessing media effects. In this new approach, the causal variable was not the direction or slant of messages, but rather, the sheer quantity of programming devoted to particular subjects. Based on the returns from numerous studies, news organizations came to be judged as powerful agenda setters.

After surveying and classifying definitions of media effects, I briefly consider how fundamental transformations in the media environment brought about by information technology may work to reshape scholarly understandings of the relationship between news sources and audiences. The availability of multiple sources makes it possible for consumers to be more selective in their exposure to news programs. Selective exposure means that people with limited interest in politics may bypass the news entirely, while the more attentive may tailor their exposure to suit their political preferences. Both of these trends imply a weakening of persuasion effects.

## A CHRONOLOGY AND TYPOLOGY OF EFFECTS RESEARCH

---

### Persuasion

The origins of media effects research can be traced to the 1920s, following the large-scale diffusion of radio. Dramatic events in Europe associated with the rise of Nazism and fascism suggested that mass publics could easily be swayed by demagoguery. Alarmed by this possibility, officials in the US Defense Department commissioned a series of studies to understand the dynamics of propaganda campaigns.

The DOD research was carried out by psychologists at Yale University under the leadership of Hovland (Hovland et al., 1953; Hovland et al., 1949). The team designed a series of experiments to identify the conditions under which people underwent persuasion. Their research program, which remains a foundation of the media effects literature, was guided by an analytic framework known as “message learning theory.” Message learning theory can be summarized by the simple rhetorical question—who says what to whom? The likelihood and extent of persuasion is contingent on evaluations of information sources, the content of incoming messages, and attributes of the receiver.

Assessments of source credibility—favorable or unfavorable—were assumed to condition receivers’ willingness to accept messages. The key attributes of sources that enhanced their credibility included expertise and objectivity, that is, the perception that the source intended to inform rather than persuade. Message factors represent the “rational” pathway to attitude change in the sense that messages are more effective when they present strong arguments and high-quality evidence.

The most important insight from the message-learning paradigm, however, concerns attributes of the receiver that influence her susceptibility to persuasion. The search for receiver-related explanations led to the identification of two very different pathways to persuasion. As developed by William McGuire, the distinction between exposure to a message and acceptance of the message became critical to understanding the outcome of persuasion campaigns. Consider the case of political interest. People with little interest in politics cannot be persuaded by the news because news programs rarely reach them; these individuals are low on the exposure dimension. If political messages did reach them, they would be persuaded because they are unable to resist, that is, they are high on the acceptance dimension. Persuasion requires both exposure and acceptance. The more-interested pass the exposure test, but fail to accept; interest makes them both motivated to disagree and capable of rebutting messages with which they might disagree. The less-interested, on the other hand, are highly acceptant, but fail the exposure test. Thus, in the final analysis, both groups are equally *unaffected* by the media (for illustrations of the exposure-acceptance axiom, see McGuire, 1968; Zaller, 1992).

The findings from the Hovland lab gradually diffused to the study of election campaigns (see Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, 1948). A series of studies revealed no net

change in vote choice over the course of the campaign. Instead, in keeping with the insights of message learning theory, attentive and inattentive voters were both generally unaffected by the campaign. People who entered the campaign with a party preference only became all the more convinced of their preferences over the course of the campaign (Klapper, 1960).

The repeated inability of survey researchers to find evidence of persuasion in campaigns gradually led them to abandon the persuasion paradigm in favor of a more “limited influence” model of media effects. In this new approach, the media were thought to act as gatekeepers—selecting issues for presentation—rather than as a platform for advocates or marketers.

## Agenda Setting and Priming

The argument that the media could not directly sway public opinion but could direct the public to pay attention to particular issues or events came to be known as media agenda setting. To borrow Walter Lippmann’s famous metaphor, the media act as a “search-light,” (Lippmann, 1922, 364) directing attention to issues deemed important by journalists; the more media coverage accorded an issue, the greater the level of public concern for that issue.

The earliest formulation of the agenda-setting hypothesis was provided by Cohen (1963); the media, he said, “may not be successful most of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think *about*” (13). The hypothesis was tested and replicated in hundreds of research studies during the 1970s and 1980s (for a review, see Dearing and Rogers, 1996). The classic study by McCombs and Shaw (1972) surveyed a random sample of Chapel Hill (NC) voters and asked them to identify the key campaign issues. Simultaneously, they monitored the print media available to residents of the Chapel Hill area to track the level of news coverage given to different issues. They found almost a one-to-one correlation between the rankings of issues based on amount of newspaper coverage and the number of survey respondents citing the issue as important.

Because of well-known limitations of the correlational approach, agenda-setting researchers later turned to experimentation. In a series of experiments administered in the early 1980s, Iyengar and Kinder manipulated the level of television news coverage accorded particular issues (see Iyengar and Kinder, 1987). In virtually every case, they found that concern for the “target” issue was elevated following exposure to their experimental treatments.

A further genre of agenda-setting research tracks changes in news coverage and public concern over time, thus establishing whether it is the media that lead public concern or vice versa (see MacKuen, 1981; Baumgartner et al., 2008). In one such study, the first to test explicitly for “feedback” from the level of public concern to news coverage, the authors found no traces of shifts in the amount of news devoted to the economy attributable to changes in public concern for economic issues (Behr and Iyengar, 1985). The

authors thus effectively dismissed the possibility that the news media pandered to the concerns of the audience.

The agenda-setting effects of news coverage also extend to political elites. When public opinion seizes upon an issue, elected officials recognize that they need to pay attention to it. Legislators interested in regulating the tobacco industry, for instance, are more likely to succeed in enacting higher taxes on cigarettes when the public believes the public health consequences of smoking are a serious problem (see Baumgartner and Jones, 1993 for evidence of media influence on the elite agenda). Thus, media coverage moves not only public opinion but also serves to motivate elected officials.

As scholars began to refine the idea of media agenda setting, they gradually discovered that the state of the political agenda could contribute, at least indirectly, to attitude change by altering the criteria on which people evaluated public officials. This phenomenon came to be known as priming (see Iyengar et al., 1982). A simple extension of agenda setting, priming describes a process by which individuals assign weights to particular issues when they make summary political evaluations, such as voting choices. In general, voters give weight to opinions on particular policy issues in proportion to the perceived salience of these issues: the more salient the issue, the greater the impact of opinions about that issue on any given appraisal or evaluation (for reviews of priming research, see Druckman, 2004; Lenz, 2010).

The dynamic nature of priming effects makes them especially important during campaigns. Consider the case of the 2008 American election. Two months before the election, following the collapse of the banking sector of the US economy, American voters were subjected to a non-stop flow of news reports about the declining stock market, company bankruptcies, and the impending prospects of a severe depression (for evidence on the volume of news coverage, see Holbrook, 2009). Given the choice between Obama and McCain, the sudden elevation of the economy as the most important campaign issue provided a significant boost to the former. In the US, Republicans are generally seen as the party that favors business interests; in the context of the 2008 economic crisis, voters were disinclined to support a candidate who would favor the very interests that were seen as responsible for the crisis (for evidence of the shift in public opinion following the onset of the crisis, see Erickson, 2009).

Media priming effects have been documented in a series of experiments and surveys, with respect to evaluations of presidents (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987; Iyengar and Simon, 1993), legislators (Kimball, 2005), and lesser officials (Iyengar, Lowenstein, and Masket, 2001), as well as with respect to a variety of attitudes ranging from voting preferences (Druckman, 2004), to assessments of incumbents' performance in office and ratings of candidates' personal attributes (Druckman and Holmes, 2004; Druckman, 2004; Mendelberg, 1997), to racial and gender identities (Schaffner, 2005; Givens and Monohan, 2005). In recent years, the study of priming has been extended to arenas other than the United States, including a series of elections in Israel (Sheafer and Weimann, 2005), Germany (Schoen, 2004) and Denmark (de Vreese, 2004).

If, by making a particular issue more salient, campaigns also make voters more sensitive to their opinions on that issue when they cast their vote, that would seem quite



similar to persuasion. Because the criteria on which they assess a candidate's performance have changed, voters arrive at different choices. Thus, ironically, the abandonment of the persuasion paradigm in favor of agenda setting led researchers to evidence that media campaigns could persuade. In the aftermath of repeated failures to document widespread persuasion during campaigns, the media were assigned a more limited, agenda-setting role. As agenda-setting research proliferated, scholars realized that perhaps agenda setting could eventually produce effects that were similar to persuasion.

## Framing Effects

The concept of framing, the subject of a different chapter, will receive limited treatment here. Conceptually, framing resembles persuasion, but rather than focusing on messages that might persuade, the causal factor is presentation. To frame is to present information in a particular manner. In the classic studies by Tversky and Kahneman, framing outcomes as financial gains or losses (Tversky and Kahneman, 1981) powerfully influenced subjects' choices between these outcomes.

In the political arena, the two principal "presenters" are the news media and public officials. Scholars have identified media frames—presentations associated with particular news sources or genres of journalism—as well as topical frames associated with subject matter emphases in news coverage or elite rhetoric.

As developed by Druckman (2001, 2001a), definitions of the framing concept can be arranged along a continuum ranging from presentations that differ only minimally in substantive content ("equivalence" framing) to presentations accompanied by numerous content differences ("emphasis" framing). The great majority of framing studies produced by political science and mass communications scholars embody the emphasis-oriented, less precise definition of framing.

A final basis for cataloguing the framing literature corresponds to the distinction between one-sided and two-sided messages in persuasion research. Scholars have recently begun to incorporate more elaborate framing designs in which study participants are exposed simultaneously to not just one, but a pair of competing emphases on contentious issues. When exposed to two-sided framing, the competing frames tend to "cancel out" and individuals tend to fall back on general predispositions as opinion cues (see, for instance, Sniderman and Theriault, 2004; Chong and Druckman, 2007, 2008).

As this description of the media effects literature suggests, the field has gradually turned full circle over the past forty years. Initially researchers were preoccupied with questions of persuasion, but lost interest in the face of evidence suggesting that media campaigns persuaded few people to cross party lines. Agenda setting became the paradigm of choice and agenda-setting researchers discovered that changes in the public agenda prompted changes in political attitudes. In the case of the framing concept, as researchers gravitated to an emphasis-oriented definition of frames, framing effects have morphed into persuasion effects.



## CHANGES IN THE MEDIA ENVIRONMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR MEDIA EFFECTS

---

Fifty years ago, television dominated the media landscape. On a daily basis, close to one-half the adult population watched one of the three network evening newscasts. Moreover, it made little difference which network Americans watched because their offerings were so homogeneous that the same content reached virtually everyone. In the era of old media, therefore, exposure to the same set of news reports was near universal; the news represented an “information commons.”

Both the development of cable television in the 1980s and the explosion of media outlets on the Internet more recently have contributed to a more fragmented audience. Obviously, the rapid diffusion of new media has made available a wider range of media choices, providing much greater variability in the content of available information. Thus, on the one hand, the attentive citizen can—with minimal effort—access newspapers, radio, and television stations the world over. On the other hand, the typical citizen—who is relatively uninterested in politics—can consume vast amounts of media but avoid news programming altogether.

The availability of increased programming choices is likely to have at least two important consequences for media effects research. First, the less politically engaged strata of the population may now have close to zero exposure to news. Second, the more attentive may decide to follow news outlets whose programming they find more agreeable. Both possibilities suggest a possible return to the era of minimal consequences, as least in the case of persuasion.

### The Demise of the Inadvertent Audience

During the heyday of American network news, the combined audience for the three evening newscasts exceeded sixty million viewers. A significant component of the audience was uninterested in politics; it watched the news mainly to await the entertainment program that followed. Exposure to political information was driven not by political motivation, but rather by loyalty to a particular sitcom or other entertainment program (Robinson, 1976; Prior, 2007). These “inadvertent” viewers may have been watching television rather than television news. Precise estimates are not available, but the inadvertent audience is likely to have accounted for a significant share of the total audience for network news.

Because the news audience of the 1970s included politically unmotivated viewers, exposure to television news had a leveling effect on the distribution of information. Inattentive viewers exposed to the news were given an opportunity to “catch up” with their more attentive counterparts. But once the major networks’ hold on the national

audience was loosened, first by the advent of cable, then by the profusion of local news programming, and eventually by the Internet, unmotivated exposure to news was no longer a given. Between 1968 and 2010, the total audience for network news fell by more than thirty million viewers (see Iyengar, 2011). The decline in news consumption occurred disproportionately among the less politically engaged segments of the audience, thus making exposure to information more tied to motivational factors. Paradoxically, just as technology has made possible a flow of information hitherto unimaginable, the size of the total audience for news has shrunk substantially.

To reiterate, the increased availability of media channels and sources makes it possible for people who care little about political debates to substitute entertainment for news programming. As a result, this group is likely to encounter very little information about political issues and events. Their reduced exposure to news programming and to a low level of political information implies that on those infrequent occasions when they do happen to encounter political messages, they will be easily persuaded.

## Selective Exposure among Information Seekers

The extinction of the inadvertent audience is symptomatic of one form of selective exposure—avoidance of political messages among the politically uninvolved. But the increasing abundance of news sources also makes it necessary for the politically attentive to exercise more active control over their exposure to information. In particular, enhanced media choices make it possible for consumers to avoid exposure to information they expect will be discrepant or disagreeable and to seek out information that they expect to be congruent with their preexisting attitudes (for a more detailed discussion of selective exposure research, see the chapter in this volume by Stroud).

The new, more diversified information environment makes it not only more feasible for consumers to seek out news they might find agreeable but also provides a strong economic incentive for news organizations to cater to their viewers' political preferences (Mullainathan and Schleifer, 2005). The emergence of Fox News as the leading cable news provider is testimony to the viability of this "niche news" paradigm. Between 2000 and 2004, while Fox News increased the size of its regular audience by some 50 percent, the other cable providers showed no growth (Pew Center, 2004b).

## CONCLUSION

---

The repeated findings of significant media effects in the second half of the twentieth century contributed to an image of strong media. One of the factors contributing to the ability of media to set the public agenda, prime, frame, and persuade public opinion was the dominance of the broadcast media. Exposure to television news during the 1970s and 1980s was extraordinarily high. Both the disappearance of the politically inattentive

from the news audience and the tendency of partisans to select sources that reflect their worldview result in a fundamentally altered news audience. Instead of a vast heterogeneous audience, today, there are fragmented audiences, each consisting of like-minded individuals. News stories reach only the more attentive, who also hold strong opinions on political issues. This subset of the population, not surprisingly, is the most difficult to sway. In the world of niche media, the prospects for large-scale, media-induced changes in public opinion are slight. As media audiences become increasingly self-selected, it becomes less likely that media messages will do anything other than reinforce prior predispositions. Most media users will rarely find themselves in the path of attitude-discrepant information.

The increasing level of selective exposure thus presages a new era of minimal consequences, at least insofar as persuasive effects are concerned. But other forms of media influence, such as agenda setting or priming may continue to be important. Put differently, selective exposure is likely to erode the influence of the slant or tone of news messages (vis-à-vis elected officials or policy positions) but may not similarly undermine media effects that are based on the sheer volume of news.

The increased stratification of the news audience based on level of political involvement conveys a different set of implications. The fact that significant numbers of Americans avoid news programming altogether means that this segment of the electorate knows little about the course of current issues or events. On those infrequent instances when they can be reached by political messages, therefore, they are easily persuadable. When political events reach the stage of national crises and news about these events achieves a decibel level that is sufficiently high or loud so that even those preoccupied with entertainment are exposed to information, the impact of the news on these individuals' attitudes will be immediate and dramatic. In the case of the events preceding the US invasion of Iraq, for instance, many Americans came to believe the Bush administration's claims about the rationale for the invasion since that was the only account provided by news organizations (see Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston, 2007). The inattentive audience, in short, is a manipulable audience.

To sum up, the changing shape of the media universe has made it increasingly unlikely that the views of the attentive public will be subject to any media influence. But as increasing numbers of citizens fall outside the reach of the news, they become more vulnerable to the persuasive appeals of political elites.

---

## REFERENCES

- Baumgartner, F. R., De Boef, S. L., and Boydston, A. E. 2008. *The decline of the death penalty and the discovery of innocence*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Baumgartner, F. R., and Jones, B. D. 1993. *Agendas and instability in American politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Behr, R. L., and Iyengar, S. 1985. Television news, real-world cues, and changes in the public agenda. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 49: 38–57.

- Bennett, W. L., Lawrence, R. G., and Livingston, S. 2007. *When the press fails*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cohen, B. E. 1963. *The press and foreign policy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Chong, D., and Druckman, J. N. 2007. Framing public opinion in competitive democracies. *American Political Science Review* 101: 637–655.
- Chong, D., and Druckman, J. N. 2008. Dynamic public opinion: Framing effects over time. Unpublished manuscript, Department of Political Science, Northwestern University.
- Dearing, J. W., and Rogers, E. 1996. *Agenda-setting*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- De Vreese, C. H. 2004. Primed by the euro: The impact of a referendum campaign on public opinion and evaluations of government and political leaders. *Scandinavian Political Studies* 27: 45–64.
- Druckman, J. N. 2001. On the limits of framing effects. *Journal of Politics* 63: 1041–1066.
- Druckman, J. N. 2004. Priming the vote: Campaign effects in a U.S. Senate election. *Political Psychology* 25: 577–594.
- Druckman, J. N., and Holmes, J. W. 2004. Does presidential rhetoric matter? Priming and presidential approval. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 34(4): 755–778.
- Erickson, R. S. 2009. The American voter and the economy in 2008. *Political Science and Politics* 42: 467–472.
- Givens, S. M. B., and Monahan, J. L. 2005. Priming mummies, jezebels, and other controlling images: An examination of the influence of mediated stereotypes on perceptions of an African American woman. *Media Psychology* 7: 87–106.
- Holbrook, T. M. 2009. Economic considerations and the 2008 presidential election. *Political Science and Politics* 42: 479–484.
- Hovland, C. I., Janis, I. L., and Kelley, H. H. 1953. *Communications and persuasion: Psychological studies in opinion change*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Hovland, C. I., Lumsdaine, A. A., and Sheffield, F. D. 1949. A baseline for measurement of percentage change. In C. I. Hovland, A. A. Lumsdaine, and F. D. Sheffield (Eds.), *Experiments on mass communication* (pp. 284–289). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Iyengar, S. 2011. *Media politics: A citizen's guide*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Iyengar, S., and Kinder, D. R. 1987. *News that matters: Television and American opinion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Iyengar, S., Kinder, D. R., and Peters, M. D. 1982. Experimental demonstrations of the “not-so-minimal” consequences of television news programs. *American Political Science Review* 76: 848–858.
- Iyengar, S., Lowenstein, D. L., and Masket, S. 2001. The stealth campaign: Experimental studies of slate mail in California. *Journal of Law and Politics* 17: 295–332.
- Iyengar, S., and Simon, A. F. 1993. News coverage of the Gulf War and public opinion: A study of agenda-setting, priming, and framing. *Communication Research* 20: 365–383.
- Kimball, D. C. 2005. Priming partisan evaluations of Congress. *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 30: 63–84.
- Klapper, J. T. 1960. *The effects of mass communications*. New York: Free Press.
- Lazarsfeld, P. F., Berelson, B. R., and Gaudet, H. 1948. *The people's choice*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lippmann, W. 1922. *Public opinion*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.
- MacKuen, M. B. 1981. *More than news: Media power in public affairs*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

- McCombs, M. E., and Shaw, D. L. 1972. The agenda setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36: 176–187.
- McGuire, W. J. 1968. Personality and susceptibility to social influence. In E. F. Borgatta and W. F. Lambert (Eds.), *Handbook of personality theory and research* (pp. 1130–1187). Chicago: Rand-McNally.
- Mendelberg, T. 1997. Executing Hortons: Racial crime in the 1988 presidential campaign. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 61: 134–157.
- Mullainathan, S., and Shleifer, A. 2005. The market for news. *American Economic Review* 95: 1031–1053.
- Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. 2004a. Cable and internet loom large in fragmented political news universe. <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=200>
- Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. (2004b). News audiences increasingly politicized: Online news audience larger, more diverse. <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=215>
- Prior, M. 2007. *Post-broadcast democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Robinson, M. J. 1976. Public affairs television and growth of political malaise: The case of the “selling of the Pentagon.” *American Political Science Review* 70: 409–432.
- Schaffner, B. F. 2005. Priming gender: Campaigning on women’s issues in US Senate elections. *American Journal of Political Science* 49: 803–817.
- Sheafer, T., and Weimann, G. 2005. Agenda building, agenda setting, priming, individual voting intentions, and the aggregate results: An analysis of four Israeli elections. *Journal of Communication* 55: 347–365.
- Sniderman, P. M., and Theriault, S. M. 2004. The structure of political argument and the logic of issue framing. In W. E. Saris and P. M. Sniderman (Eds.), *Studies in public opinion* (pp. 133–165). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Tversky, A., and Kahneman, D. 1981. The framing of decisions and the psychology of choice. *Science* 211: 453–458.
- Zaller, J. 1992. *The nature and origins of mass opinion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

## CHAPTER 5

---

# THE POWER OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

---

MICHAEL TESLER AND JOHN ZALLER

FOR most of the past generation, Klapper's (1960) claim that the effects of mass communication are minimal has been the worthy foil of review essays. At this point, however, the evidence is overwhelming: Media effects are "far from minimal," as Iyengar and Simon wrote in 2000, and "quite impressive," as Kinder put it in a 2003 review.

The general question raised by Klapper nonetheless remains vital: Exactly how much power do the mass media possess to shape public opinion? More specifically:

- How politically consequential are the effects of mass communication? Media-induced changes in mass attitudes that neither affect the political system nor perhaps matter very much to the individuals expressing the opinions should not be taken as evidence of media power.
- How durable are the effects of mass communication? Several studies that investigate this question find duration to be low. How powerful can communication be if its effects are fleeting?
- To what extent is the impact of mass communication due to more or less *factual reports* about conditions in the world, to *political cues* that originate with politicians and other interest groups, or to *information dug out by journalists*?
- If mass communication can influence opinion, can it also run roughshod over it? What, if any, are the boundaries of media influence?

None of these questions has a clear answer in extant research and some have scarcely been raised. Happily, however, research in the past decade has provided better building blocks for answering them than ever before. Our aim in this paper is to capitalize on this new research to answer these questions and construct an assessment of the power of mass communication.

## A TURN TOWARD FIELD STUDIES

---

A notable feature of media research has been ongoing dialogue between laboratory experiments and field studies (e.g., Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1995; Kinder, 2003). But laboratory studies, with crisp results on such topics as source effects, priming, and framing, have led the communication studies agenda. A big reason is that laboratory experiments can readily establish causality, which field studies often cannot.

The leading role of laboratory experiments in the study of communication may, however, be ending. Very large rolling cross-section and panel surveys are now done with relative ease, and researchers have become adept at leveraging temporal variation in these and older data sets into causally valid arguments. The result is a flurry of field studies able to make strong claims to both internal and external validity. Our review centers on this body of work.

## THE SIZE OF COMMUNICATION EFFECTS

---

By happy coincidence, three well-designed field studies have made estimates of what can be seen as the same parameter: The effect of slanted news coverage on voting in national elections. In this section, we review the three estimates and consider their implications for the general question of media power.

In the first study, Gerber, Karlan, and Bergan (2009) conducted a baseline survey to identify northern Virginia residents who did not subscribe to either the liberal-leaning *Washington Post* or the more conservative *Washington Times*; these individuals were then randomly assigned to receive a free subscription to one of the two papers or to a control condition. The major finding of the post-treatment survey was that voters receiving the *Post* were about 11 percentage points more likely than controls to vote Democratic in the Virginia gubernatorial election.

In the second of these studies, Ladd and Lenz (2009) turned up a sterling research opportunity in an older data set: a multiyear panel survey that bracketed the decision by publishers of the *Sun* and of three other British newspapers to change their usual endorsements in the 1997 general election. Using several estimation techniques, the investigators showed that the newspaper switches caused a shift of about 11 percentage points among all readers of the affected papers and 20 points among habitual readers.<sup>1</sup> These pro-Labour votes, as was further shown, constituted about 14 percent of Tony Blair's overall margin of victory (405).

The third study, by Della Vigna and Kaplan (2007), leverages the largely idiosyncratic diffusion of cable systems carrying Fox News at the time of the 2000 presidential election into an estimate of Fox's political effect, which they estimated to be a 0.55 percentage point vote gain for George W. Bush in Fox markets (1211). For individuals who actually watched Fox News, however, the effect was bigger: About 12 percentage points.<sup>2</sup>



These three studies are, to our knowledge, the first to estimate the effect of news slant on voting in national elections. What we learn from them is that the effect is big enough to be politically consequential—big enough, that is, to have swayed the very close US presidential election of 2000 and quite possibly others. But let's look more closely. Exactly how big are the effects of slanted news?

This question turns out to be quite tricky. Consider the Fox News effect. Fox was the first conservative TV news source in the markets it entered. As such, it may have attracted voters ripe for conversion, and a 12 percent rate of conversion among favorably disposed viewers does not seem very great. But big or small, the effect is hard to view in general terms: It says that people who chose to see news with a certain slant changed their politics toward the slant; but what does that say about the effect of slanted news on other people who do not choose such news?

To be clear: We do not doubt that Fox News had a true causal effect on voting preferences. But we cannot tell whether we should be impressed by the size of the effect or what the estimate tells us about the effect of slanted news more generally.

The setup for the Ladd and Lenz newspaper study seems closer to what scholars have in mind when thinking about the effect of slanted news: A set of four UK papers traditionally covered politics from one partisan point of view and then suddenly changed sides. Readers did not choose the newspaper because of its new slant and may actually have preferred the old one. Hence there is no element of choice in the causal impact.

Yet to interpret the effect in this study—an 11 percent shift toward Labour among persons subscribing to one of the four papers before the change of endorsement—one must keep in mind the characteristics of the newspapers, their audiences, and the politician they endorsed. The papers were national newspapers in the British journalistic tradition, which means that they supported their endorsee not only in editorials but also in aggressively partisan news coverage. The newspaper subscribers tended to be downscale and accustomed to partisan news reporting. And the endorsed candidate was the moderate Tony Blair. One must ask whether *USA Today* could do what these newspapers did and have the same effect. Probably not. We have, then, a clear, valid finding but also a circumscribed one.

The adjectives *clear*, *valid*, and *circumscribed* apply similarly to the causal effect demonstrated in the Virginia newspaper study. Recall that this study gave free subscriptions of the *Washington Post* or *Washington Times* to persons not already subscribing to one of these papers. However, only 34 percent of those given free subscriptions to the *Post* said afterward that they read the paper, and only 13 percent claimed to have read the *Times*. Some actually refused their free subscriptions. The authors duly reported newspaper effects for all respondents selected to receive the newspapers, whether they said they had read them or not. In the language of experimental analysis, they report the “intent to treat” effect. They did not estimate the “treatment on treated” effect, which is the effect on the people who actually looked at the newspapers.

Yet for purposes of gauging the power of mass communication, researchers must care more about the latter effect. To see why, consider another kind of experimental study—a study of the effect of door-to-door canvassing to increase voter turnout. The purpose of



such work is to learn how to reach and mobilize people who are not voting. Such studies need a statistic that includes information about both reaching and converting the treated. The intent-to-treat statistic does exactly that. Yet studies of the power of mass communication are not usually concerned about effects on people outside the media system. They care, rather, about the people who regularly and voluntarily receive media “treatment.” The intent-to-treat statistic says little about such people.

The treatment-on-treated effect, if validly estimated, would tell us the effect of newspapers on people who normally shun them. Researchers might, for some purposes, want to know exactly this. However, researchers could not use the treatment-on-treated statistic as a basis for inference about people already in the media system—unless, of course, they were willing to assume that effects would be the same for those who read a newspaper on their own and those who read it only when someone gave it to them free. There are strong reasons, however, to believe that populations differing in their attentiveness to news would not be equally susceptible to media influence (Zaller, 1992, 1996; Sears and Kosterman, 1994; Deli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Kinder, 2003).

We thus conclude that the field’s most compelling causal estimates are inappropriate for developing a general estimate of the effect of media bias. They are individually interesting but tell us little about the most common situations of potential media bias in the United States.

Political scientist Tim Groseclose, however, takes another view. In *Left Turn: How Liberal Media Distort the American Mind* (2011), he uses the effect sizes from the Fox News and Virginia studies for exactly the purpose for which we have just said they are unsuitable: the construction of a general estimate of the effect of news on public opinion. His work provides an excellent example of what media scholars should, in our view, make more of an effort to do but cannot yet do with extant findings.<sup>3</sup>

In previous work, Groseclose and Mylo (2005) develop a method of assigning ideological locations to individual news media outlets. In his recent book, Groseclose applies the method to all media groups—national TV news, local TV news, newspapers, and radio—and constructs a measure, weighted by audience share, of the American news media’s ideological location. He calculates that the media’s overall score is 60 on a 100-point scale, where high values are more liberal and the average American is at 50.

To estimate the effect of the media’s liberal slant, Groseclose notes that the entry of Fox News to the national mix reduced average media liberalism by about one point (to about 59) and moved the aggregate Republican vote share (per Della Vigna and Kaplan) about half a percent to the right. With some rescaling and a simple model, Groseclose leverages these results into an estimate that the “natural” ideological location of the average American—that is, the public’s location absent the influence of the liberal media—is 31 on his 100-point scale. This score compares with 38 for Fox News and 18 for the average Republican member of Congress.

Moving the American public from 31 to 50 on a 100-point ideology scale indicates substantial media power, but is the estimate valid? Beside the general reason already given, we see two specific reasons for doubt. One is that neither partisan voting, trends in party attachment, nor the positions of the two major political parties

have been drifting to the left in recent decades, as would be expected if the liberal media had so much power. The other is that when Groseclose applied his method to the effect size reported in the Virginia newspaper study, he obtained an estimate that was more than three times greater than its theoretical maximum, a problem he acknowledged.

Despite our reservations about Groseclose's point estimates, we see his general approach to media effects as bold and well conceived: Measure the overall slant of the news and estimate the effect of small changes in that slant on overall voter opinion. With more appropriate measurements of key inputs, it may bear fruit. In the meantime, limitations on the available quantitative evidence impel us to a qualitative approach to gauging the power of mass communication.

## THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

---

In another field experiment, Gerber, Green, Gimpel, and Shaw (2011) managed to persuade an actual candidate in a Texas gubernatorial primary to experimentally vary his advertising over a one-month period and twenty media markets. This study disclosed that ad buys of 1,000 gross ratings points (GRPs) per week moved opinion about 5 percentage points toward the sponsoring candidate. Meanwhile, a study of the 2000 presidential election found that the effect of a 3,500-GRP advantage in the final week of the campaign gained George Bush about 0.75 percentage points of vote share (Hill, Lo, Vavreck, and Zaller, 2011). Thus, GRP for GRP, ads seemed to matter much more in the gubernatorial contest.

One cannot, of course, take this difference at face value: Because preferences in the final week of a presidential campaign are likely to be firmer than preferences at the beginning of a gubernatorial primary, ads must get more credit for moving the former than the latter. An analyst could adjust for this problem by imposing a control for attitude strength or importance. The result would be a general estimate of the unit effect of advertising GRPs on vote preference, *ceteris paribus*. Such an estimate would have interest for psychologists, who focus on individual-level effects. Ultimately, however, our aim is to estimate effects at the level of the political system. From that perspective, what strikes us most strongly about the two ad effects is how little one mattered and how much the other did. The Texas candidate allowed academics to randomly assign his advertising precisely because he knew it didn't much matter. By contrast, a handful of ads at the very end of a long presidential campaign was just enough to move Florida into Bush's Electoral College tally and thereby change the outcome of the presidential election, as first documented by Johnston, Hagen, and Jamieson (2004). Notably, Bush's campaign advisers understood that final-week ads could have this effect and conserved cash for this purpose.

Communication that affects important political outcomes are obviously powerful, and especially so if political agents can deploy it at will for this purpose. This is true whether it meets a psychological criterion of changing strong attitudes or only weak ones and whether many or few people are swayed.

In the remainder of this essay, we use this system-level criterion to gauge the power of communication. We cannot always determine with certainty when communication has affected political outcomes, but we can do so often enough to make the criterion useful.

## THE DURATION OF COMMUNICATION EFFECTS

---

The Texas field experiment was designed not only to provide a causal test of the impact of advertising but also to test the duration of its effects. The design was random assignment of advertising that turned on and off in media markets at different times. Results disclosed that only traces of ad effects survived for as long as one week. The on-and-off feature of the design, along with the certainty that ads were not being run more often where consultants felt they were more needed, make a compelling demonstration that, whatever is true about the size of persuasive impacts, the rate of their decay can be massive.

The tendency toward rapid decay of experimentally induced persuasion has been well known for many decades.<sup>4</sup> Yet few studies have been designed to detect it and most that do give it short shrift (although see Chong and Druckman, 2010). Reviewing three such studies, Kuklinski, Gaines, and Quirk (2007, 6) comment that authors typically reported “the lack of enduring effects as an aside. Suppose, instead, that they had included the words ‘transitory effects’ in their original titles?”

Scholars interested in the power of mass communication should not regard decay as any sort of artifact; they should see it, rather, as feature of the persuasion process.

Communication effects that decay rapidly are not necessarily less powerful for that reason. They may create different winners and losers. For example, Hill and colleagues (2011) observe that the rapid decay of advertising effects can work to level the playing field in elections, as it prevents the better-financed candidate from building an ever more insurmountable lead over the campaign. The general point here—communication closer to the point of decision matters more—has wide relevance, as we show below.

## WHAT PART OF THE MESSAGE MATTERS?

---

If communication studies of the past fifty years have taught us anything, it is that communication has many different facets that may independently affect impact. Prominent among them are the frame, source, strength, and primacy or recency of messages. Field research cannot capture most of these factors. Extant field studies do, however, permit

some distinctions: They can distinguish party versus journalist or sponsored communication and can also roughly distinguish the effects of the raw ingredients of news from the packaged news product. We argue that these distinctions, as applied in field studies, generate useful insights into the power of communication.

Consider first the effects of the 9/11 attacks on public opinion. Since most Americans learned of the attacks in the mass media, it is natural to attribute the effect to the mass communication that carried it, including any slant given to it by journalists. Yet when foreign enemies attack a nation, citizens are likely to become alarmed about it regardless of how journalists frame the news. So how much did the journalistic frame matter? Two recent studies have plausibly argued that, at least for the case of 9/11, the attack itself was more important to the public's response than how the news played it or politicians responded (Atlhaus and Coe, 2011; Kam and Ramos, 2008; see, however, Bennett, Livingston, and Lawrence, 2007).

Laboratory studies could, in principle, address this question by testing the effect of competing news frames or cues. But we wonder whether competing experimental scripts could adequately capture the news that Americans experienced in real time—*"my country has been attacked!"*—and, if not, whether the tests of competing frames of the news would be fair. We wonder as well whether any frame strong enough to affect opinion in a laboratory study could realistically have been deployed in the event itself, when even entertainers were constrained to tread carefully.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the findings of the two field studies may yield results not available from a laboratory study.

Presidential elections are a particularly fruitful domain in which to explore the effects of message content. We begin our analysis with the following rough calculation: In the last three weeks of the 2000 election, the average resident of a battleground state viewed forty campaign ads—or roughly 20 minutes of party-controlled communications—per day (Hill et al., 2011). We are aware of no comparable estimate for how many minutes of televised news content about the presidential election the average citizen absorbed in the final weeks of the campaign but estimate that it was less than 20 minutes.<sup>6</sup> Some TV news is given over to reports of candidate activity and hence is partly controlled by partisan sources, but the larger fraction is devoted to horserace, hoopla, and other matter not intended to sway votes (Patterson, 1993; Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2008). Our conclusion, therefore, is that parties control the larger part of the televised communication openly aimed at influencing the outcomes of US presidential elections. The Fox News study demonstrates, however, that journalistic slant does have a real effect.

Raw news ingredients also matter in presidential elections, foremost among them the performance of the national economy in the few months prior to the election. The correlation between percent change in real disposable income and vote share of the incumbent party is above 75 percent, which indicates that more than half the variation in vote swing in US elections is explained by this one raw news ingredient. Other raw news ingredients—such as war, scandal, terms in office, and personal qualities of the candidates—no doubt explain an additional fraction of vote outcomes.

How do these effects compare? If the Della Vigna and Kaplan estimate is correct, the bias of the mainstream news is a regular advantage for the Democrats. And if Groseclose

and Milyo (2004) are right, that Fox is the lone major TV outpost of conservatism in a sea of liberal voices, the overall pro-Democratic effect could be more than the Della Vigna and Kaplan estimate of half a percent. We'll guesstimate 2 percent. Bartels (2008), meanwhile, has estimated that the Republican Party typically outspends the Democrats by nearly \$2 per vote and that this adds an average of 2 percentage points to its vote share.<sup>7</sup> These two effects may thus be about equally big—and also big enough to sway even a not-so-close election. So by our criterion of size, each effect is big. Meanwhile, variation in the performance of the economy causes swings in the presidential vote that are typically about 4 percent from one election to the next.<sup>8</sup>

We have, then, three effects—from liberal TV news, the normal Republican edge in advertising, and the performance of the economy. Although none of the estimated effects is anything like razor-sharp, they are sharp enough that we can roughly compare them. This level of precision in the estimate of three different effects is all but unattainable in laboratory studies. And knowing magnitudes, we can gauge political importance. We can estimate, in particular, that the liberal TV and Republican money advantage may roughly cancel each other out, leaving the probably larger effect of the economy decisive.

Another area in which firm evidence exists on the relative influence of news sources is popular support for war. For several decades, scholars have highlighted different influences. One group emphasized the cues of party and government leaders as transmitted by professional journalists (e.g., Bennett, 1990; Cohen, 1963; Zaller, 1992), while another focused on foreign casualties (Burk, 1999; Feaver and Gelpi, 2004; Gartner and Segura, 1998; Mueller, 1973). In studies of American wars from World War II through the war in Iraq, Berinsky (2009) pitted the two causal claims against one another. Focusing on changes in party cues and casualties across time in these wars, he found that that public opinion responded much more to cues than to casualties. In a time-series analysis of public support for the Iraq War, Baum and Groeling (2010) report support for a novel theory arguing that in the early stages of war, "partisan rhetoric" has much more impact on opinion than do war casualties, but that if war continues, casualties may have moderately more important than party rhetoric. Overall, however, party cues tend to matter more than events on the ground in Americans' support for war.

Party-sponsored communication thus seems to dominate the raw ingredients of news. Other studies, however, show that the story is more complicated. Local casualties have very large impacts on local opinion; death for death, their impact is 100 times greater on local opinion than national opinion. Presumably this reflects the personalized coverage of local war heroes by local media. But rather than cumulate over time toward greater impact, the local effects instead decay rapidly. According to one study, effects of local casualties survive only about two weeks (Hayes and Myers, 2009); according to another, impacts fall to a fraction of their original size after about two months (Althaus, Bramlett, and Gimpel, 2011). The reason, then, that party cues dominate casualties in influence on national opinion may be that the former are continually present in the national debate, whereas, with few exceptions, the latter are brief events in local media.

Hence, decay accentuates the importance of one kind of communication and limits that of another.

Despite limits in the available evidence, we wish to examine two additional cases: public opinion about national health insurance and global warming. In 1993 and 2009, Democratic presidents, buttressed by favorable public opinion polls, attempted to persuade Democrat-controlled congresses to enact national health insurance. In the first case Democrats failed completely, and in the second they settled for half a loaf. Those two episodes can be sketched as profiles in the power of different kinds of communication.

For years prior to the presidential initiatives, the health issue was framed in terms of the unmet needs of the uninsured and resulting stress on the healthcare system. The frames came from health professionals and interest groups and were featured in the news reports of professional journalists. Once consideration of legislation began, a new source became important: the partisan rhetoric of Democratic and Republican leaders and their allied groups (Jacobs and Shapiro, 2000). The newly prominent frames included such ideas as fairness, government doctors, the Constitution and the Tenth Amendment, Hillarycare and Obamacare, “death panels,” and greedy private insurance companies. The effect of the party-sponsored frames was rapid and readily visible in published polls: a drop in support for national health insurance among Republicans and Independents, leading to an overall decline in public support and a deeper polarization of Democrats/liberals versus Republicans/conservatives.<sup>9</sup> In these conditions, wary Democratic legislators from swing districts pulled back—and still often lost their seats for being on what had initially seemed to be the popular side. In the heat of legislative decision-making, party-sponsored communication thus seemed more important than other kinds, transforming a proinsurance majority into opposing partisan camps. That parties were (in our rough account) less active in setting the agenda for legislation did not prevent them from coming in at the end and shaping the outcome.

The media’s reporting on party-sponsored communications also appears to dominate scientific information in mass opinions about global warming. Tesler (2013) finds that conservatives doubt the existence of global warming in large part because of Republican rhetoric. The finding is based on the following: (1) news reception is perhaps the strongest predictor of conservatives’ climate change skepticism; (2) the United States, where political elites are far more divided over the causes of global warming than any other country, is the only nation where news reception significantly predicts conservatives’ doubts about climate change; (3) news-attentive conservatives were actually more likely to believe scientists’ warnings about global warming in the 1990s, before, as content analysis showed, the media began to cover climate change as a partisan issue; (4) an experiment showing that Americans in general and conservatives in particular would be less skeptical about human-made warming if more Republicans in Congress endorsed the idea.

Where in the past Congress and the president worked behind mostly closed doors to shape legislation, national policymaking now occurs in the media spotlight and the court of public opinion (Kernell, 2007). The extended debates over healthcare



proposals and global warming are thus representative of a large class of important cases. From our rough examination, the role of communication in these two areas appears similar to the case of war policy: Party cues trump the raw ingredients of news, including even scientific facts, in shaping public opinion and determining outcomes. Journalistic frames may set the stage of legislation, but they don't close the deal. Obviously these assessments are more than a little rough, but we think they are sufficiently plausible to be worth stating.

Which leads to a final question: Few would worry if it were shown that the raw ingredients of news have more effect on public opinion than the slants that party or journalists give them. But party-sponsored communication, as it has emerged in our analysis, is a strong, elite-controlled, and potentially worrisome force. How strong? Can it override even the strong feelings and basic perceptions of the citizens who receive it?

## CHANGING SIDES OR CHANGING MINDS?

---

When parties and their leading politicians adopt new positions or focus attention on older ones, voters may respond by either changing their minds to the salient party position or changing sides to the other party. Which do they do? If the former, it highlights the power of party-sponsored communication to shape citizen opinion. If the latter, it suggests that citizens can stand up to at least some mass communication.

Two political scientists, Thomas Carsey and Geoffrey Layman, framed their 2006 study of party position taking on abortion in these admirably clear terms. Their answer was mixed, but mixed in a revealing way. Citizens for whom the issue was salient tended to maintain their views on abortion and to switch to the party closer to those views. Voters who cared less about the issue but followed politics closely enough to be aware of party position taking tended to follow the lead of their traditional party by adjusting their views on abortion. Although Carsey and Layman do not emphasize it, many citizens seem to have taken the option of ignoring the new party position. This pattern is consistent with the view that party-sponsored communication, though often influential, does not override strongly held opinion.

Three recent studies utilize panel data to examine some twenty additional cases in which parties offered voters a choice of changing sides or changing minds. These studies—having other fish to fry—do not focus explicitly on this frame but do report evidence bearing directly on it, as follows.

Lenz (2009, 2012) demonstrates how a variety of prominent campaign issues—such as public works in 1976, defense spending in 1980, and Social Security privatization in 2000—typically led voters to change their minds about policies in order to become consistent with the positions of the candidates they had already decided to support.

Lenz (2012) also shows, however, that for another class of issues—what he calls performance issues—citizens respond differently. Most importantly, citizens who have decided that the economy is strong or weak do not change their views on this as

campaigns focus attention on it; rather, they switch to the party indicated by their prior performance evaluation.

Tesler (2012) further clarifies the conditions under which voters are likely to change sides or change minds. He notes that in most of the cases where Lenz finds voters changing their minds involve policy issues on which, as studies since Converse (1964) have argued, citizens often have weak or nonexistent views. But Tesler finds that campaign appeals to more deeply rooted predispositions—notably attitudes about Catholics in the 1960 elections, homophobia in the 2004 presidential election, and religiosity in the elections of the 1980s and 1990s—cause voters to change partisan preferences rather than change values or predispositions. He also notes evidence from a long-term panel study showing that voters changed sides rather than minds when race became a salient party issue in the 1960s (Sears and Funk, 1999; for additional cases see also Kinder and Kam, 2009; Tesler and Sears, 2010; Hillygus and Jackman, 2003).

These studies are consistent with the view that party-sponsored communication can shape political attitudes, but they also show that it does not run roughshod over all voter attitudes.

## THE POWER OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

---

We began our essay with four questions about the power of political communication. Based mainly on results of field studies, we now supply our answers. To the question of whether political communication can affect political outcomes, our answer is strongly positive. From a variety of sources, it is clear that long-term journalistic slant, party-sponsored advertising, and raw news ingredients have effects that are large enough to swing the outcome of national elections. Some of these effects may tend to cancel out, but the raw effects are nonetheless clear.

As to the duration of communication effects, evidence is limited, but all of it points to the fairly short duration (or rapid decay) of most persuasion effects. But short duration does not imply lack of political importance if the persuasive communication continues over a long period of time (as in the case of news slant) or targets political decision-making (as in party-sponsored communication on policy questions). On the other hand, short-term or one-shot communication that targets general attitudes independent of any relevant political decision—as may typify many nonpartisan news reports—may have little political consequence.

The third question is whether some kinds of communication are more persuasive than others. Our tentative answer is that some raw ingredients of news—the performance of the economy, perhaps the 9/11 terrorist attack—may have more power to shape opinion than either long-term journalistic slant or party-sponsored communication. It is nonetheless clear, however, that long-term journalistic slant (e.g., Fox News) and party-sponsored communication (e.g., on healthcare reform) can have effects that are big enough to sway political outcomes.



An important question is what happens when party-sponsored communication clashes with journalist-sponsored communication. From limited evidence—our sketch of healthcare and global warming communications—we suspect that partisan communication is the more powerful. It was widely believed that journalists' investigation of Watergate led to President Richard Nixon's resignation from office, but journalists made little dent in President Clinton's popularity during the Lewinsky scandal. It should be remembered that the national economy was much better during the Lewinsky matter than during Watergate, and that Democratic members of the House Judiciary Committee were more supportive of Clinton in 1998 and 1999 than their Republican counterparts were of Nixon in 1974. This constitutes evidence that, in a conflict between party- and journalist-sponsored messages, the fraction of the public that sides with journalists seems to be rather insignificant.<sup>10</sup>

Our fourth question is whether political communication can override strong personal beliefs. There is evidence that it cannot.

In sum, political communication cannot easily override strong personal beliefs and does not usually produce enduring effects. Of the three kinds of communication we identified—factual reports, partisan cues, and journalist-initiated news—the first two are the more powerful and can sometimes influence political outcomes. The power of the third is uncertain. Surely it is important, but it is not clear how.

The state of existing evidence does not permit us to offer these conclusions with any confidence, but we think they are the right conclusions to be investigating in our post-Klapper world and urge researchers to focus their energies accordingly.

---

## NOTES

1. This is the average of the multivariate estimates in Table 2, 400.
2. This is the average of the four estimates reported on p. 1222.
3. Conflict of interest declaration: Groseclose teaches at UCLA, where Zaller is on the faculty; until recently, Tesler was a graduate student there. Neither read his book until it was in press.
4. See, for example, a 1978 review essay by Cook and Fey, "The Persistence of Experimentally Induced Persuasion."
5. E.g., "Terrorist Attacks Spark Cowardly Debate," ABC News. September 26, 2001. Available at: <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/story?id=121312&page=1#.UZbozpXCHZY>
6. Survey data indicate that Americans watch about 30 minutes of TV news a day (Pew Research Center, 2010). Separately, the Project for Excellence in Journalism reports that coverage of the 2008 election accounted for 52 percent of the total news hole in the final three weeks of the campaign (see [http://www.journalism.org/news\\_index/101](http://www.journalism.org/news_index/101)).
7. Bartels estimated effect is 3.5 percent of vote margin, which translates into about 2 percentage points of share.
8. The variance of incumbent share of the two-party vote from 1948 to 2012 is about 30, about half of which is, as noted, explained by changes in real disposable income. The typical vote swing explained by the economy is then about 4 percentage points ( $15^{.5} \sim 4$ ).
9. A CBS News Poll from February 2007, for instance, disclosed that 67 percent of Independents and 41 percent of Republicans thought the federal government should

guarantee health insurance for all Americans. After the intense debate over healthcare reform legislation in the summer of 2009, however, according to a CBS poll in September 2009, only 42 percent of Independents and 23 percent of Republicans supported such a guarantee. See also Henderson and Hillygus (2011) for declining public support in panel data.

10. In our accounting, any persuasion effects from MSNBC or Fox would be due to partisanship rather than journalism.

## REFERENCES

- Althaus, S. L., and Coe, K. 2011. Priming patriots: Social identity processes and the dynamics of public support for war. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 75(1): 65–88.
- Ansolabehere, S., and Iyengar, S. 1995. *Going negative: How political advertisements shrink and polarize the electorate*. New York: Free Press.
- Bartels, L. M. 2008. *Unequal democracy: The political economy of the new gilded age*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Baum, M. A., and Groeling, T. J. 2010. *War stories*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Bennett, W. L. 1990. Toward a theory of press-state relations. *Journal of Communication* 40: 103–127.
- Bennett, W. L., R. Lawrence, and Livingston, S. 2007. *When the press fails: Political power and the news media from Iraq to Katrina*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Berinsky, A. J. 2009. *In time of war: Understanding American public opinion from World War II to Iraq*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Berinsky, A. J., and Kinder, D. R. 2006. Making sense of issues through media frames: Understanding the Kosovo crisis. *Journal of Politics* 68(3): 640–656.
- Burk, J. 1999. Public support for peacekeeping in Lebanon and Somalia: Assessing the casualties hypothesis. *Political Science Quarterly* 114(1): 53–78.
- Carsey, T. M., and Layman, G. C. 2006. Changing sides or changing minds? Party identification and policy positions in the American electorate. *American Journal of Political Science* 50: 464–477.
- Chong, D., and Druckman, J. N. 2007. Framing theory. *Annual Review of Political Science* 10: 103–126.
- Chong, D., and Druckman, J. N. 2010. Dynamic public opinion: Communication effects over time. *American Political Science Review* 104(4): 663–680.
- Cohen, B. 1963. *The press and foreign policy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Converse, P. E. 1964. The nature of belief systems in mass publics. In D. E. Apter (Ed.), *Ideology and discontent* (pp. 206–261). New York: Free Press.
- Cook, T. D., and Flay, B. R. 1978. The persistence of experimentally induced attitude change. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 11: 1–57.
- Della Vigna, S., and Kaplan, E. 2007. The fox effect: Media bias and voting. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 122: 1187–1234.
- Delli Carpini, M. X., and Keeter, S. 1996. *What Americans know about politics and why it matters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Feaver, P. D., and Gelpi, C. 2004. *Choosing your battles: American civil-military relations and the use of force*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Gaines, B. J., J. H. Kuklinski, and Quirk, P. J. 2007. The logic of the survey experiment reexamined. *Political Analysis* 15: 1–20.