International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1460–1461 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

57 Interviews with ICA Fellows

Table of Contents

Page

The Founding Parents of Communication (Introduction) 1451

A ► B *(Click on name below)* **Page**

Anderson, Jim 1462
Atkin, Charles 1469
Ball-Rokeach, Sandra 1477
Bavelas, Janet 1483
Berger, Charles 1490
Blumler, Jay 1498
Bryant, Jennings 1507
Burgoon, Judee 1515

C ► F *(Click on name below)* **Page**

Cantor, Joanne 1522
Cappella, Joseph 1530
Cohen, Akiba 1537
Craig, Robert 1544
Daly, John 1551
Dance, Frank 1558
Deetz, Stanley 1564
Delia, Jesse 1572
Donsbach, Wolfgang 1580
Duck, Steve 1588
Fairhurst, Gail 1595

G ► I *(Click on name below)* **Page**

Gallois, Cindy 1601
Giles, Howard 1609
Graber, Doris 1617
Greenberg, Bradley 1623
Gross, Larry 1630
Grossberg, Lawrence 1638
Hart, Roderick 1648
Hornik, Robert 1654
Ito, Youichi 1661

Copyright © 2012. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

J ► L *(Click on name below)* **Page**
Jamieson, Kathleen 1669
Katz, Elihu 1676
Kim, Young 1684
Knapp, Mark 1691
Krippendorff, Klaus 1699
Lang, Annie 1708
Lemish, Dafna 1715
Livingstone, Sonia 1724

M ► P *(Click on name below)* **Page**
McCombs, Max 1733
McLeod, Jack 1739
Monge, Peter 1747
Nussbaum, Jon 1755
Poole, Scott 1762
Putnam, Linda 1769

R ► T *(Click on name below)* **Page**
Reeves, Byron 1778
Rice, Ronald 1784
Roloff, Michael 1793
Rubin, Alan 1800
Seibold, David 1806
Slater, Michael 1813
Taylor, James 1821
Tompkins, Phil 1829
Turow, Joseph 1836

V ► Z *(Click on name below)* **Page**
Valkenburg, Patti 1845
Wartella, Ellen 1852
Weaver, David 1858
Wiio, Osmo 1866
Wilson, Barbara 1873
Zelizer, Barbie 1880

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1462–1469 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

JIM ANDERSON

"I'm missing the impact of our scholarship."

Jim Anderson, April 3, 2011.
Salt Lake City, UT. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1939 in Kansas City, Missouri
Education:	1961 B.A. in communication, University of Detroit
	1962 M.A. University of Michigan
	1965 Ph.D. University of Iowa
Career:	1965 Assistant Professor, University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh
	1972 Professor in the College of Communication, Ohio University
	1979 Professor of Communication at University of Utah
	1968 Director of the Broadcast Research Center
	1979 ICA Fellow
	1983 ICA President
Personal:	Married, two daughters

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Jim Anderson

Can you tell me something about your parents and about your first professional dreams?
Both sides of my family homesteaded in Salina, Kansas. Our family has a long history in farming. My father was probably the first of either side of the family to go on to college. He was, for a short time, at Creighton University, but had to leave to go to work. After some time in business, he completed a career-based MBA from the University of Chicago. My mother had a two-year teaching certificate from Marymount College in Salina. She worked in a one-room schoolhouse: all eight grades in one room.

Did religion play any role in your childhood?
On my mother's side, they were Roman Catholic, and on my father's side, Methodists. I grew up well-connected in the Roman Catholic Church. The University of Detroit is a Jesuit school. At least it was one [Jesuit] back then.

What kind of business did your father run?
He started out as a bank accountant and was successful at that, but then came the Depression. He went down to Amarillo, Texas, sold refrigerators, and came back to be the general controller for General Telephone. He also worked for Arthur Andersen. His last job was at the Ford Motor Company, from which he retired. His moves led us all around the country. My story starts in Detroit, Michigan, where I went to high school and entered college.

Do you still remember why you chose to study communication?
Detroit was one of the few schools that had a communication degree at that time. What led me into this area was educational television. I got in quite early at a local station. I worked there as a technical director and as a cameraman. You did everything. I was even on-air for a while.

Why did you abandon your beginning career as a TV star?
By then, I had been working almost eight years in television. I really couldn't see myself being 60 years old and still there. It was a career that ended fairly quickly.

Can you tell me something about your main academic teachers?
The first professor that made an impression upon me was Alphonse F. Kuhn, SJ at Detroit, a historian—and disliked by nearly everyone. He didn't praise you if you didn't do good work. He probably showed me what it could be like if you were really serious about your work. In the next semester, I opted out to the other guy who taught history, and whose name I can't remember. He was sloppy in his work. The difference between those two men was so obvious that the impression lasts till today.

How would you compare the student Jim Anderson with your students today?
I was not a particularly good student. High school was easy, even though it was a private school. When I got to college, it took me a while to learn the techniques of mastering what you had to do. After the first two years, it was pretty straightforward. If I could figure out a way to beat the system, [then] I would beat the system. That's the way it was until I came in the PhD program.

Back to Table of Contents

What happened to you there?

At Iowa, I was in the presence of Sam Becker, Donald C. Bryant, Douglas Ehninger, and A. Craig Baird, who taught past his 85th birthday. Those folks were real scholars. They showed me the way to do this business. It was also the Vietnam period. You had to make some choices, and the draft imposed those choices. I decided to get good enough grades to get into a graduate program and to succeed in that program. Vietnam was all throughout those first years of my career. When I was finishing my PhD and had my first daughter, Lyndon B. Johnson announced that he was not going to draft fathers. Then, I was a faculty marshal at Ohio University when all the troubles broke out at Kent State,[1] and we had the riots in Athens.

In between, you were in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

That was a normal school that just had turned into a university a few years before I got there. It was the perfect location for me, because although it was basically about training teachers; it was a school with potential. There were about five of us who were serious researchers. The school had an IBM 1620 which was used for the administration. The researchers could have access to that machine from 9 o'clock at night until 8 o'clock the next morning. We worked with Hollerith cards and a typewriter output. If you did something like a factor analysis, it would take at least six hours just to type out the thing.

Why did you leave Oshkosh?

The folks at Ohio University invited me to run the Broadcast Research Center down there. That center had an FCC concession to analyze the finances of broadcast stations. So I was following my father's footsteps. That concession went away, and we started looking at applications of the media for instructional purposes.

When did you know that you wanted to become a scientist, maybe a communications scientist?

I never made that decision. There were just interesting questions, and I pursued them as best I could. I've been in this business almost 50 years now. You can't do the same thing for 50 years. I reinvent myself every 10 years or so. I came in at Utah as a mass communications scholar. Then I switched over to methodology and epistemology. Now I'm in organizational communication and probably right on that intersection of moving to something else: into community engaged research. On the one side, my organizational approach is heavily quantitative and methodology-oriented, and on the other side, I'm almost entirely into this engagement business, which is pretty much touchy-feely out there in the streets.

On your website, you claim to work for "the pursuit of social justice." Can a professor fix the world?

It's a matter of fact that most academics are not willing to take the risks that are required to move our scholarship into some place where it makes a real difference. There are very few exceptions in our field.

I met Phil Tompkins, who works with a homeless shelter in Denver.

Phil has been a guide for me. I have been able to think deeply about homelessness, but at the same time, the emotional cost of doing that work takes me out of it. Ultimately, I have to walk away and to take a

[1] After four Kent State students were killed by the Ohio National Guard on May 4, 1970, a huge student strike hit U.S. universities and intensified the public discussion about the Vietnam War.

Back to Table of Contents

break. I certainly don't want to denigrate anybody else's work, but it's a fact that we write about post-colonialism, oppression, or gender for a very small readership. Most of the work disappears.

How would you rate the academic position of OrgComm scholars within our discipline?
They are on the top, where else [laughing]? Organizational communication and new media are up there because both of them are valuable across the discipline. Both have a clear avenue toward grants, either from private foundations or from government organizations. [Of OrgComm's success . . .] We live all of our lives in organizations, and corporate interests will keep that interest alive. Rhetoric or cultural studies are probably sliding on the downside, but they will reinvent themselves with a new set of issues.

Did you ever consider applying for a position outside Utah?
I turned down a few offers. I've taught for short periods of time at a lot of places, but Utah has some real benefits. There are world-class scholars in practically any field that I would have an interest in just in my own department. Right now, we are strong in cultural studies, journalism, organizational communication, and in new media. We will have some outstanding people in health who are joining us. If I have a question, all I have to do is to walk down the hall.

How did you feel when you were asked to run for ICA President?
Honored, but also excited. I was still on leave from Ohio University, but Utah got right behind it and said that they would provide whatever was necessary to make it successful. So it seemed like a good thing to give it a try.

Do you remember your presidential agenda?
When I came in, ICA was a much different institution. We were struggling with financial problems, we had a dues structure which did not work, and we had small conventions. During my period, we were able to put ICA on firm financial footing. My convention in Dallas was the largest up to that date. We started a process there. I don't want overemphasize anything I did, but if you look at it now, you can see the change.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?
I was in the first group. This is a funny story because I don't like awards. On the ICA Board, I voted against the formation of the fellows, and once it was formed, I wanted to be one of them. The people who have been elected with me and after me are outstanding.

Why do you not like awards?
It's us congratulating us. Who cares? If we can't get awards from outside, then it's just a party for us.

Do you like the role of a university manager?
I like making it possible for other people to do their work. This is something I can do well.

Back to Table of Contents

Who is Jim Anderson: a researcher, a teacher, the chairman of scientific associations, or the decision maker at Utah? What is the most important part of your academic life?

I've tried to follow Sam Becker's approach. I've taken a very eclectic route, changing my focus on a number of occasions. I served six years as a department chair and was president of the Academic Senate. That took a whole year plus two more on the Executive Committee, but all of that informs my scholarship. I had the opportunity to see how organizations put themselves together, and to be in a position where the decisions that I might make would have consequences. It's a complete package. At the same time, I belong to the Rocky Mountain Mule Association and to the Back Country Horsemen. I'm going out and being with people who are not academics in any sense of the term. They don't know us, because we don't often connect our language, our practices, or our methods to real-world issues.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

I start with a complexity of training that allows us to do good work and a breadth of analytical formats so that we are not ideologically bound into a particular approach. After that, pretty much anything is fair game, but we need to consider significant problems—problems which are more than simply advancing ourselves. Most of our journals have an impact factor below 1.0. *The New England Journal of Medicine* has a factor of about 35. Our best one is about 2.5. That should be an embarrassment to us. As a matter of fact, we need to step up the game. We are still using the same measurement methods which were developed in the 1930s, such as paper-and-pencil measurements and Likert scales. That is unacceptable. There has been no systematic evidence that connects those kinds of scales to actual behavior.

So we have got plenty of work to do.

The concern I have in the U.S. is that we may not have enough time to do it. At least for the moment, we are moving higher education into an entrepreneurial framework. The opportunity to have leisure to think things through is rapidly disappearing. I'm quite pessimistic. I see a private model with a public franchise. It's going to be the worst of both worlds. I don't expect a tremendous amount of support from taxpayers' money. When tuition goes up to the tipping point, it's going to close out certain groups of people. That would take us back into the elite discussion.

Some of my interviewees told me about the preconception that communication is about the training of students first, and only secondly about research. How is the situation here at Utah?

We are probably too far in the other direction. We are much more into the scholarship of communication than we are with its practical applications. There has to be both. Our scholarship has had no impact on things like *Fox*, or on how people deal with that sort of continuing misinformation that appears. It should. In some way or another, we should be able to give people the skills to analyze the ideology on the right, as well as the ideology on the left.

What about the respect from old-established subjects like psychology?

They don't need us, and they are struggling with their own problems. At Utah, I see an interesting development. The big foundations like NSF are requiring a public communication aspect to the grant itself. That's what brings communication people in. They get hired on as consultants, but somebody else will be the principal investigator. We are called in not for our scholarship, but for our practical skills. If you are

Back to Table of Contents

not in organizational communication, it's very difficult to find funding. At Ohio University, after the FCC commission expired, my funding basically came from education.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?

Most of the Pacific Rim is on its way to becoming a skyscraper. Singapore or Korea are very successful. Australia is probably leading in cultural studies. I'm kind of disconnected from European scholarship, but I don't see Eastern Europe doing much of anything. Great Britain has some wonderful people in media, film, and in critical audience studies.

What about the U.S.?

The U.S. is a mixed bag. We have some strong areas in organizational communication and are beginning to develop new media, but we are highly fractionalized as well. We are cutting the field up into smaller and smaller pieces and have little critical mass in all those islands of activities. I brought this up at the president's meeting in Singapore last year. I toured around all of the meeting rooms, and generally speaking, there were as many presenters (if not more) as people in the audience. We haven't been willing to discuss what the purpose of a conference is and how we can become a viable force within the field of scholarship. We are more willing to accept our own success in whatever small pond that we are playing in than we are to make the sacrifices that are necessary for us as a discipline.

What would you do if you were in charge right now?

First of all, I would need a lot of money [laughing]. That has always been a problem. Then, I would take a group of critical scholars and see if we could work out a strategy which would allow us to move our scholarship and our discipline into the value-added kind of work that I think we need to do. I talk about significant positions in government or in higher education where we make a difference.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

I don't see anything on the horizon that will solve the problem of how to come together. So I think we'll be an association by name only. We'll have a variety of smaller associations. The larger divisions will ultimately decide to break out. Organizational communication would be a perfect example. If the people who are running the association are smart, they are going to move towards a federal model. In the U.S., the future of the discipline really depends on what happens in higher education. As long as we continue to attract students, we will be successful within whatever university structure, but the other people are not stupid. They will figure out ways in order to compete. As a matter of fact, the departments within the universities will compete for the same tuition dollars.

In your paper for the Future's Committee of Utah you wrote: "Traditional areas within the department may not be supportable" (Anderson, 2011).

Rhetoric or critical studies may be examples. They don't really bring money from the outside. The more graduate students you have, the more somebody else has to teach undergraduates. The more undergraduates you have, the more graduate students you can support. At Utah, public relations is supporting graduate work in cultural studies. We'll see a lot of those tensions developing as we move more and more into an entrepreneurial model.

Back to Table of Contents

Are there any scientists who you would call a role model?
Dwight Conquergood. He was just outstanding. Another good example is how Stephen Littlejohn has taken his career. I admire the marriage of pedagogy and scholarship in his books. I think of people who have gone away from strict scholarship into community engagement, such as Barnett Pearce or Larry Frey. That's where I'm directing my efforts now. But mostly, I'm missing the impact of our work.

Looking back on 50 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?
That I survived, I guess. I should have done better, but that's who I am. My documents are the moments where a former student or someone in the community says: "Jim, you made a difference in my life."

Then again: Is there anything that you would do differently today?
We get only one life. No regrets.

What will remain when Jim Anderson is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
I have a body of work. That body will be there. I've brought a critical eye to the field to look at the stories we tell ourselves: the stories that we have to believe in order to do the work that we do. At the same time, they are stories. The idea that we have a special access to truth is probably a story that we tell ourselves too often.

Reference

Anderson, J. (2011). *Considering the challenges*. Paper for Future's Committee at the University of Utah.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1469–1476 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

CHARLES ATKIN

"It makes me feel good to be ahead of our competition."

Charles (Chuck) Atkin, April 11, 2011.
Santa Barbara, CA. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1945 in Washington, DC
Education:	1967 B.A. in communication, Michigan State
	1969 M.A. in journalism, Wisconsin
	1971 Ph.D. in mass communication, Wisconsin
Career:	1971 Assistant Professor, Michigan State
	1975 Associate Professor
	1979 Professor
	1997 Chair of Communication, Michigan State University
	2000 ICA Fellow
Personal:	Married to MSU professor Sandi W. Smith. Two children.

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Charles Atkin

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

I'm a very unusual case because my father was a professor in the field of communication. Since I was 10 years old, I hung out with communication professors. I don't think anyone else had that opportunity. Michigan State started the PhD program in the late 1950s, and my father, Kenward, was the first graduate there while carrying a full teaching load. He taught advertising and did mostly applied research, but the others who he worked with were regular communication people, Everett Rogers, for example. Those early years led me to think about a career in higher education. I have two brothers. Both of them have PhDs: one in business and the other, David, is in telecommunication at Connecticut now. It wasn't really much doubt what I would do from a very young age.

How would you compare the student Chuck Atkin with your students today?

I was much more motivated to learn research ideas, methods, statistics, and theories. Students today are primarily interested in applied skills in organizational, or in media career skills. In interpersonal, they just want to learn how they can interact with each other. They want to extract useful information. That has been the case for a long time. It's not just the last few years. For them, the class, first and foremost, should be an enjoyable and stimulating experience. When I was a student, you didn't care how entertaining the faculty member was. You just learned it.

How did your father react when you got your communication degree at Michigan State?

I think he was happy. He and his friends wanted me to go to another school to get my doctoral degree. John McNelly, who had been at Michigan State, and Percy Tannenbaum helped to arrange a fellowship. Percy was the head of the research center at Wisconsin and had been the adviser for Bradley Greenberg some years before. I knew Bradley because I did a senior thesis with him. He thought Wisconsin was a good school, but Percy left town right before I got there. Fortunately, Jack McLeod and Steven Chaffee had just started. Those two people were ready to work with me, and it worked out really well. I think I was better off having mainline communication mentors.

Was there any hierarchy among those two?

Jack and Steve were almost a co-equal pair, at least in my case. They were both supervising research studies, and they were both highly involved in my dissertation, although my master's thesis was with Bruce Westley. I met him through Malcolm MacLean, who was a faculty member at Michigan State. Jack and Steven had very few PhD students before me. Dan Wackman was an early one. Scott Ward and Gary O'Keefe were there, too. Eventually, Jack and Steven had some of the largest numbers of PhD students in the history of the field. Both won the mentor award from ICA. They were very focused on advancing the student's research and good in networking. At that time, the main association for us was the AEJ. They had one division on theory and methods. Most media researchers from that era were AEJ people. ICA came out of nowhere. Have you heard that story?

No.

It used to be called National Society for the Study of Communication (NSSC). One day, David Berlo decided that this association was ripe for a takeover. I think it was in 1969. He got a number of his

Back to Table of Contents

Michigan State colleagues, went to the convention in Cleveland, and became highly involved in it. Within just a few years, ICA began to heavily emphasize quantitative research and became a counterpoint to what we now have as NCA, which was more in humanistic approaches, due to the speech roots. AEJ had the journalistic practice roots. ICA didn't have any real roots because it was cut off and restarted. I think they called it "international" because the other one was national. Jack and Steven got involved and steered their students to go to those conventions.

How did you find your first research topics?

What I really was drawn to was media content and effects. My senior thesis was on news reports about public opinion polls. Soon after I got to Wisconsin, the federal government created a large fund about the violence on television. Jack and Steven were persuaded to do one of those projects. Neither of them was very interested in grants, but they knew I was willing to do it. We did some large surveys, really good ones. It showed up in the federal technical reports. Those NIHM studies were far better research than anything else done before. When I got to Michigan State as a faculty member, I continued studying violence because Brad Greenberg was interested in that topic. We teamed up on projects.

Dave Seibold told me about the research teams in the 1970s.

Those teams were another David Berlo concept and a fairly innovative idea. You would have one or two faculty members collaborating with a group of six or seven students, and you might be in multiple teams. This was born out of a necessity. They were taking in 40 PhD students each year, at that point, and had about 10 faculty members. That's a concept that arrived at the right time. It has become more common as grant research came in.

The name Charles Atkin stands for campaign evaluations (Atkin, 1981; Rice & Atkin, 2001). Do you like the role of a government adviser?

I've worked with a number of federal agencies on health campaign design and evaluation research on topics such as binge drinking, drunk driving, safety belts, drugs, heart disease, and breast cancer. I've tried to convince the government to give greater emphasis to disciplined application of theory and formative evaluation rather than primarily relying on creative inspiration. I've testified to the Congress or to federal commissions about a dozen times, but most of that dealt with controversial effects, rather than improved campaigns. The first time I testified was on public opinion polls—on the quality of information made available; followed by TV violence, children's advertising, and alcohol advertising. Campaigns were something I didn't start out my career with.

Why did you switch over to it?

The idea of designing messages and evaluating the impact of them came into play when health became an increasingly important topic, which was in the late 1970s in this country. Ironically, that ties back to my father's career in designing ad messages. I was able to adopt a lot of advertising, PR, social psych, and experimental approaches, and to apply it to a whole variety of health-related phenomena. Most people are attracted to health in order to improve society. They don't think of it as manipulating the audiences. At least the positivists among us try to figure out the most effective way to do that.

Back to Table of Contents

Is there any evidence that politicians or people in charge of such campaigns use your knowledge?

Not politicians. The government has a huge health industry that communicates with the public. The NIH is very conscious of the most effective approaches and disseminates that. There are so many federal and state agencies or local governments that want to introduce some change related to health. They are able to adopt those ideas. It's the same thing with foundations. I had two main attempts to influence politicians: the way that public opinion polls are reported in the news, as well as children's advertising. I did advocate for certain types of restrictions on that content.

How would you rate the academic position of health communication within our discipline?

No one of the early 40 or so ICA Fellows would be considered as health comm researchers. At the time I was elected, our people thought we finally got some recognition, although health is probably only a third of my work. There are lots of other people who have been totally in health and don't seem to get that recognition. Not long ago, Michael Slater and Bob Hornik got elected. They are two of the most productive people in the field, but it took a while. Based on that evidence, I would have to conclude that health doesn't have a high degree of status relative to the traditional areas of org, mass, or interpersonal. International also has a lot of prestige. If you look at the fellows from other countries, they study international communication. Even political communication probably ranks higher than health. In academia, political science is a more valued discipline than public health.

What about funding?

There is very little research money available for political communication. The fact that health has the vast majority of the funding in our field leads people to think research is only there to get money. It's like in the media world, where journalists look down on the advertising and PR people because they are in it for the money and not for truth or political influence. Oddly enough, until recently, communication people were also not very respected in the public health field. They preferred health education-trained people for their campaigns. Health communication is a bit of a thankless area because the health people don't like you, and the communication people don't like you.

Are there no pro-arguments?

Of course there are. You can make positive impact on society, more so than in most areas of communication, and you can train students in areas that are more marketable for them to get jobs. A huge number of people are flocking to health communication. The ICA division is among the top ones in size. I bet if you did an analysis by age, health comm would have more people under 40 than anybody else. Maybe technology is at the same level. Health is much more international than interpersonal or political communication. There are health problems in developing countries. I went to Cairo a number of times to help with their campaigns, as well as to Asia and South America.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?

I was pleased. If you get nominated to something like that, almost everybody is worried to lose their face. So it's partly a relief. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, they elected only one or two per year. In 2004, when I was head of the fellows, we had one person: Scott Poole. We changed the rules partly to get more nominations, and partly to have a higher percentage approved. Fellows were never very aggressive in

Back to Table of Contents

encouraging nominations. I don't know why. Maybe they like the exclusiveness. The last several years, we had 10 or 12 people applying, and five or six being elected. At this point, it's a faster-growing club.

Do you like the role of decision maker at Michigan State?

Oh yes, especially because I waited until age 50. That's something that comes much better after you have established a career. At age 40, you get frustrated because you haven't quite accomplished as much as you wanted to in terms of research. For me, it turned out to be an excellent career shift. After 26 years at Michigan State, I knew so many previous chairs that I had a chance to observe and could bring all my experience into that position. In our field, chairing a department tends to be done by the best researchers. I don't think that's the case in other fields, too. They don't want to use their best to do administrative work.

Could you name your main goals as a chair?

In the current era, the mission is really getting money, which then enables all the other visions to be on reach. I focus mainly on ways to fund PhD students. Illinois, Purdue or Ohio State have very large numbers of PhD students that they have funding for, which is usually because they teach a basic course. At Michigan State, we don't have a speech history, and no huge basic course. We are limited to about 15 doctoral lines from the general fund. In order to have 25 or 30 students, you just have to constantly bring in money from grants, as well as from other revenue-generating practices that don't compromise the department's main focus on research.

What is your number two priority?

It's to maintain a highly respected position in the field. That's still primarily based on journal publications. In our hiring, in our reward system, and in our assignment of duties, I try to have the highly productive people have as much time to be highly productive as I can. That's worked quite well for us. In any study on the top journals that has ever been done, we are well ahead of the other schools, including schools that are twice as big as us. It's just in terms of raw article numbers in the flagship journals. We were in a good position to do that going in, just due to our history of dominating the research accomplishments.

Have you ever considered applying for a position outside Michigan State?

Sure. I've never pursued it, but I've been invited to do that. I mostly looked at places in Southern California, but the better location was not enough to give up the secure home in East Lansing. Whenever I have leaves, I go to USC, Stanford, or Santa Barbara here. So I get enough exposure to it. I wouldn't switch the department to get a better academic setting. At Michigan State, it is already as close to ideal as it could be.

Who is Chuck Atkin? A scholar, a teacher, a research manager, the icon of communication at Michigan State? What is the most important part of your academic life?

When I became chair, I cut down on teaching. I don't consider myself as a master teacher at all. I do relatively little teaching. There is a four-course load. Two of them are released for being an administrator, and you can have a third as a grant manager. Twenty years ago, my teaching was better received than now, although I think what I present is better than ever.

Back to Table of Contents

What about research manager?

This is an interesting term. As you do larger and larger projects, especially in grants, you are going to have three or four other colleagues working with you, plus a number of grad students. So you don't have to write out everything yourself that has your name on it. When I was young, you did it by yourself or maybe with one other person. Now, I'm on these journal articles with four or five other people. Your ability to organize research becomes a higher priority than your ability to come up with great ideas or hypotheses. Research manager is a major role for me, but not especially prestigious.

At least it is not as prestigious as being a chair.

This is a big part of my identity and the biggest priority. People keep wondering why I focus my attention so much on indicators of departmental prestige or productivity. It's because that is your report card as a department head. Our people are producing research, and I'm facilitating that production. Do you bring in good enough PhD students to help them do that? Are you hiring well? Every opportunity I get, I will count up how many conference presentations we have at ICA. I always count that and compare us to 15 other schools. On the average, we are ahead. Again, that's just on raw totals. I look at conventions and journal pubs. Grant money is almost impossible to compare. And then I look at impact factors and citation metrics. I'm obsessed now with the H factor. A couple of years ago, I got Howard Giles interested in this topic because I mentioned to him that he got the biggest H citation score. I think he checks it every day and makes sure that he is still ahead [laughing]. Do you know who is chasing him?

I guess Ron Rice.

Yes. I'm barely in the Top 10. Dolf Zillmann is still among the top five, even though he is not writing nearly as much as before. Maybe H score is a better indicator than just total articles. We hired Joseph Walther, who has the second highest total number of citations in the history of the field.

Who is our number one?

The most cited person by a factor of 10 is Everett Rogers. He was very effective in putting together some ideas and concepts in a way that everyone could understand and adopt them to their own work.

What about the recent study of the National Research Council?

Unfortunately, it didn't have indicators that were universally accepted. It was on purpose. They didn't want anyone to be able to say that they are the best. You really had to crunch the numbers. Actually, I tried it in a number of different ways. Penn comes out ahead of us in every way I can analyse it.

What about Stanford?

I don't pay much attention to them because it's just a tiny number of people, and they don't really get involved in the communication field. We are ahead of our main competition. That made me feel good, but it still doesn't translate to prestige. There are some other schools that are more prestigious. My goal is to make MSU well regarded. That's a goal that you can personally contribute to if you keep writing articles. It's not just like you are the boss. You are part of the team, as well.

Back to Table of Contents

Where do you see the field in 2030?

I don't project substantial changes in the types of theories people use, in the extent to which they emphasize research versus other activities, and in terms of who is on top. There is such stability in higher education. The list of the top universities changes little from decade to decade.

What about the basic phenomena people are studying?

Sure, you get some technologies that seem different, but they are not really. Things won't be much different. I've been through two of those 20-year cycles already.

No change at all?

The main change might be in teaching. We'll have different delivery models. Universities will be able to share resources and expertise. In the case of research, it's going to be more important to get money to pay for it. In our field, research isn't very expensive to do, but it is an extensive part of the salaries. The universities want to get some product. It's going to be more like an institute. Researchers who can pay their own way will be much more valued than now, and will probably be the ones that survive. It's the leading universities that are able to get the most money. So the people doing grants and the institutions where they are being done are the best you could have. We'll probably have better research. The more people rely on grants, the more incremental the progress becomes. That's another reason why I don't expect huge paradigm shifts.

Are there any scientists who you would call a role model?

I've blended together aspects of Everett Rogers, Jack McLeod, and Brad Greenberg more so than of anybody else. All three of them are productive researchers. As a chair, I invented my own role there.

Looking back on 40 years in communication: Is there anything you are especially proud of?

I'm proud of the fact that I produced research that was interesting for people to learn about, and not just for a few experts in a small obscure area. The topics I pick and the way the findings are presented are of interest to decision makers as well as to the general public. Most scientists can't really share their projects with people that they meet day-to-day. I used to pride myself in doing studies that would get into the mass media. I've been [published] in *The New York Times*, I've been in *TIME Magazine*, I've been in the local papers or on TV stations very often. It's a kind of neat that people can learn from the researcher something they didn't know before, or that one confirms some ideas they already had. I'm also proud that I was able to improve the techniques that are used to deal with health problems. That has a pretty clear pay-off in terms of societal progress at the individual level.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

No. I'm glad that I've stayed at Michigan State.

What will remain when Chuck Atkin is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

My legacy at Michigan State is going to be my leadership role. If you have done it longer than anyone, you come in contact with a whole lot of faculty and students. I would combine this with the research I've done earlier. We have got so many of our students out in very influential positions now. I was one of six or

Back to Table of Contents

eight people contributing to that research success at Michigan State during the 1970s and 1980s, but when it comes to being the head of a program, you are the main person.

References

Atkin, C. K. (1981). Mass media information campaign effectiveness. In R. E. Rice & W. J. Paisley (Eds.) *Public communication campaigns* (pp. 265–279). Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications.

Rice, R. E., & Atkin, C. K. (Eds.). (2001) *Public communication campaigns* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1477–1482 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

SANDRA BALL-ROKEACH

"Multidisciplinary, multilevel, and multi-method."

Sandra Ball-Rokeach, April 12, 2011.
USC Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism. Photo by M. Meyen

Born:	1941 in Ottawa, Canada
Education:	1963 B.A. in sociology, University of Washington
	1968 Ph.D. in sociology, University of Washington
Career:	1967 Assistant Professor, University of Alberta in Edmonton
	1968/1969 Co-director of a National Mass Media and Violence Task Force
	1970 Michigan State University
	1972 Washington State University
	1986 University of Southern California
	2008 ICA Fellow
	2011 B. Aubrey Fisher Mentorship Award
Personal:	Widow, one stepdaughter and one stepson

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Sandra Ball-Rokeach

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?
My parents were immigrants from England. My father was a physicist, and my mother was a homemaker. As a girl, I probably thought I wanted to be a medical doctor, but a doctor doesn't control his or her time. So the academic field seemed more appealing to me. It was not about money, but about autonomy.

Did religion play any role in your childhood?
When I was a youngster, the church was pretty important. I had very good counsellors in the Presbyterian denomination, and was actually a youth leader. However, when I was about 14 years old, I became an atheist. I didn't maintain those connections, but in that early adolescent period, the church was very helpful to me; not so much for the religion, as for the people who took an interest in me.

Do you still remember why you chose to study at San Diego and to start out as a triple major (Nathanson, 1996, p. 10)?
I had a scholarship at Sarah Lawrence College, but decided not to take that because I was engaged. So it was engagement that led me to go to San Diego State. I loved it there. It was a really good institution and remains a good one. I just loved learning from all of these good teachers. So I was very happy to have many majors. The only one that fouled me was French. I loved the literature and the language, but I was not good in it. I would write an exam half in Spanish and half in French, and my professors would say, "We don't know how to grade you, on your Spanish or on your French?"

Why did you finally join sociology and not history?
I thought, if I want to make a mark, that's a place to do it. The social philosophers of the 19th century were very smart, but the American sociology was still very primitive. I felt there was little understood.

How would you compare the student Sandra Ball with your students today?
I'm so privileged to have extraordinary students. The students I went to state university with were very uneven, but each of them would teach me something in their own way: not to be so serious, to like naps, or to be playful and not just concentrating on my work. Many of those kids were very bright, but they didn't have the chances that a lot of kids coming out of upper-middle class backgrounds had. There, I got an affection for working-class students, and I learned that there was so much potential there, and so little cultural capital.

Your portrait in the book* Women in Communication *tells a lot about the challenges you faced as a female grad student in a sexist environment (Nathanson, 1996). Do you like this focus at a distance of almost 50 years?
Yes. I think it's still true. I sit on university committees where people are making tenure decisions. When a woman has co-authored with a man, I will still hear sexists who ask: "How much did she contribute and how much he?" They don't do that when it is a man and a man. It doesn't happen that often anymore, but still, there are [still] too few women who are highly regarded at their universities.

Back to Table of Contents

What could a single professor do to improve the situation?

When I was at Washington State, I started the first Women's Studies program there with colleagues. The negotiations were really hard, but I learned a lot. I used to stand up in the university senate, although I was considered one of the "good" women. I was smart, quantitative at that time, and pretty good verbally. When they saw me stand up to defend a gender issue, they would look at me like: "Why are you doing that? You don't need to do that!" I learned a lot from my colleagues, both female and male in that period, but also about race and how gender and class all come together with it.

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers?

One of my most influential teachers didn't want to take me on as a master's student. I loved the guy, and he was a great teacher, but he said: "Why should I take you on? You are just going to get pregnant." I said: "But you have kids!" He said: "That's different."

We are talking about Frank Miyamoto.

A sociopsychologist out of Chicago, yes. He ended up agreeing. After I got my PhD, I said: "Frank, you are a sexist." He said: "I think I'm becoming aware of it." In my University of Washington experience, there had never been a single female full-time faculty member. Not one.

Were there other influential teachers?

Otto Larsen had a big influence on me, mostly because he let me be me and not because what he had to teach me was so mind-blowing. He encouraged me to think, to write better, and to be clear in my articulation.

Mass media and social change is one topic of your life. Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led to that topic?

All the way through grad school, I had learned the Joseph Klapper argument (Klapper, 1960), but the world around me just didn't fit (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976; Ball-Rokeach, 1998). All I was seeing was contradictory to the idea that media is not a force and, at best, crystallizes and disseminates arguments. Even so, I was stuck with the theme of media and violence (Baker & Ball, 1969; Ball-Rokeach, 1973), which I ended up finding just a bit boring. I loved some of the people in that field. I really enjoyed Albert Bandura. He was a person who could grow, and he has grown over the years. He is not someone who just stays in a little niche. I've probably learned from that.

That was the media part of the question.

My dissertation had to do with ambiguity and how people deal with ambiguity. It seemed to me that social change starts with the experience of ambiguity. First you have to ask a question that challenges your own sense of the natural. Social change has always been an individual and collective goal that we all work toward, but the mass communication studies that I was exposed to weren't dealing with those questions. They weren't being sociological, but psychological. Social conflict and social change remain central to my work. That's what I'm trying to do here in L.A.

Back to Table of Contents

How would you rate the academic position of scholars who take a sociological perspective within communication?

I wrote a piece about how sociology abandoned the field (Ball-Rokeach, 1986). It has taken a long time, but the move back is happening. I don't talk about the Lazarsfeld era. It's the next wave: Kurt and Gladys Lang, Jim Beniger, Elihu Katz, myself, and people like that who are really interested in communication dynamics and changed affiliations. Those sociologists got communication scholars to think multilevel. It's not all at the micro level. You have to situate micro-dynamics at meso- and macro-levels. That is probably the most promising effect.

What does it feel like to be a sociologist in a communication school?

Very good, because I went to the right school, which, at that time, was dominated by sociologists when I came. There was Jim Beniger, Elihu Katz, Everett Rogers, Daniel Dayan, and me. Beyond that, the school has always been multidisciplinary. That was wonderful for me, because I had to deal with fields and literature that I knew nothing about.

Does it make a difference to work at an institution like USC?

Yes. It's the first private school that I have ever worked in. USC is responsible to the community around it. I've been on a strategic planning sub-committee where we were trying to move the university in order to see how they can partner with organizations in the various working-class communities in the neighborhood. The first time at USC, I felt like a worker in the Marxian sense. I stood in front of a class of 240 students and calculated that they were paying 400 dollars a unit. It shocked me how much value I was producing [laughing]. This was a strange experience for me. I was just a teacher at state schools, and I loved the idea of land-grant colleges. On the other hand, you can get a lot more done more quickly in a private school context. This particular school has been absolutely generous to me, and it attracts utterly outstanding students. What can be better from a research and teaching point of view?

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?

That was fine. The initial group was a little more insular than it is now. It was less receptive to people who came from other fields. That has changed now. There were a few people, especially from political science, who were granted fellow status earlier in their careers than I was, but the present stand of the ICA is to be far more open, interdisciplinary, and also international.

Some people told me about their trials to break Michigan State's hold on the fellows.

When I first went to ICA meetings, I was shocked. I had never seen people dressed in three-piece suits at a professional meeting. It looked more corporate than anything academic. It's also true that white middle-class males dominated the association. I don't think that's true, anymore.

In my interviews, I found a lot of women's power.

It might be interesting if you would plot the time when women started to become appointed fellows. Women's organizations within the ICA and feminist positioning in communication were way behind those in psychology and sociology.

Back to Table of Contents

Who is Sandra Ball-Rokeach? A researcher, a teacher, the role model for the next generation of female professors, the sociologist who became a communication scholar? What is the most important part of your academic life?

I've just won a mentoring award here at the university. I don't separate teaching from research. Those two go together for me. My legacy is probably in the students I have worked with, but I also hope it's in the kinds of questions I've asked. Questions matter a lot to me. Answers are easy. I push questions that lead people to see that myopic kinds of pursuits get us nowhere.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

Communication has the advantage and the disadvantage of not being a discipline. I know many of my colleagues will get mad of me for saying that, but there isn't any particular unit of analysis that defines the field. Communication is very attractive to me and has its richness. People share a fascination with symbolic communication processes; their outcomes and how these processes are not only situated in the ruling power, but also in everyday life.

Some of my interviewees observe missing respect from old-established subjects. How is the situation here at USC?

People don't know what the communication field is any more than they do at any other university. That does not bother me. I don't care about those status-trips. If they want to know what kind of research I'm doing, fine. As a dean, I always had to explain the field: "No, it's not journalism."

Larry Gross told me the brand "Annenberg" is stronger than the brand "USC."

Yes, it is. Especially this Annenberg School. It is so interdisciplinary and so well on the edge. Many universities say that's where the action is and where we should go. We have been there a long time.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?

I've always thought I should know about the research that is going on in Germany, Israel, or England. However, China and especially Korea really came forward and are doing more important work the more mature they get. Like in the political economy, Asia is something that we should pay attention to. There is very interesting work going on in Japan that I'm involved with, to some extent. I'm really pleased to see this interdisciplinary group at the University of Tokyo. What I would like to see is much more communication with people in Latin America. Some of the people that I know in Chile or Argentina have great potential. Mexico has very much a cultural studies tradition, but I've also learned from them.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

My hope is to see the field moving beyond cognitive questions to questions of change—not on an individual-level change, but on a social change. I don't know that it will go there. I would also like the field to step back from the comfort zones that various parts of it are in. Agenda-setting, for example, needs a revolution. We have been there and done it. How many more studies should we do? I can't stand the organizational death that comes from just talking to a small group of people. I would look to the people who are bridging areas, rather than to people who are comfortable within a speciality.

Back to Table of Contents

Are there any scientists who you would call a role model?

Elihu Katz is a friend of mine, but on my Fulbright, I went to Hebrew University in order to challenge his uses and gratifications model. I was in the early period of my media system dependency thinking (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976). That was wonderful. Elihu still doesn't get MSD, but he is a true intellectual, and I pay attention to what he is looking at. His focus on public discourse and how you can't detach discourse from media is right-on. Jack McLeod is also someone whom I've learned from and I respect. He, again, is interdisciplinary and very knowledgeable in social sciences and not just in communication. I like Sonia Livingstone. She is younger than I, but I keep track of what she is doing. When I went to graduate school, I had no role models. There were few women [in the field], and those women that I tried to look at as role models didn't want to mentor a young woman when I actually met them. Thank goodness it's so different now.

Looking back on 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

I'm proud of the questions I've asked.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

I really don't think so. My personal life took a lot out of me for a lot of years (Nathanson, 1996). That's why I have an interesting publication trajectory. When my husband was sick, it was manageable, but not notable. Then it started going up. But I wouldn't have done it any differently.

What will remain when Sandra Ball-Rokeach is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

I hope scholars and researchers will embrace being multidisciplinary, multilevel, and multi-method, and not be narrow thinkers. I also hope that people start directing their attention to the challenge of our day: How do we create a civil society?

References

Baker, R. K., & Ball, S. J. (1969). *Violence and the media*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

Ball-Rokeach, S. J. (1973). Values and violence: A test of the subculture of violence thesis. *American Sociological Review*, *38*, 736–749.

Ball-Rokeach, S. J. (1986). Media and the fabric of sociology. In J. F. Short (Ed.) *The Social Fabric: Dimensions and Issues*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications.

Ball-Rokeach, S. J. (1998). A theory of media power and a theory of media use: Different stories, questions, and ways of thinking. *Mass Communication and Society*, *1*, 5–40.

Ball-Rokeach, S. J., & DeFleur, M. (1976). A dependency model of mass-media effects. *Communication Research*, *3*, 3–21.

Klapper, J. (1960). *The effects of mass communication*. New York: Free Press.

Nathanson, A. I. (1996). Sandra Ball-Rokeach (1941–). In N. D. Signorielli (Ed.), *Women in communication: A biographical sourcebook* (pp. 8–19). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1483–1489 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

JANET BAVELAS

"For me, it was always face-to-face dialogue."

Janet Bavelas, October 28, 2011.
(Interviewed via Skype)

Born:	1940 in Portland, Oregon
Education:	1961 A.B. in psychology, Stanford University
	1968 A.M. in communication, Stanford University
	1970 Ph.D. in psychology, Stanford University
Career:	1961 Research Assistant, Mental Research Institute (MRI), Palo Alto
	1966 Research Associate, Mental Research Institute (MRI), Palo Alto
	1970 Assistant Professor of Psychology, University of Victoria, Canada
	1976 Associate Professor, University of Victoria, Canada
	1986 Professor, University of Victoria, Canada
	2005 Professor Emeritus
	1980 ICA Fellow

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Janet Bavelas

Can you tell me something about your parents?

My father was union organizer. He helped organize the loggers in Oregon in the 1930s, which at the time, was very unsafe. It was very unsafe to be a union organizer then, too. I grew up on exciting stories of his being shot at and beaten up, but that all happened before I was born. When I was three, we moved to California because of my brother's asthma. My father gave up the union and worked there as a skilled laborer. Later, he went on to become a business man.

What about your mother?

She was really amazing. She was probably the second person in our family ever to go to college. She worked on a newspaper before marrying, then as a bookkeeper for my father's union until we moved, when she became a full-time mother. My parents were divorced when I was nine. We moved back to our small town in Oregon, and my mother raised the three of us as a single parent, which was much rarer at the time. She became an office manager, then got into journalism again—which she loved—as an advertising manager, then became a bookkeeper at a big company, but quit when she found that they wouldn't promote her, explicitly because she was a woman. She ended up buying a half-share of a golf course, which she managed, and was a lumber broker at the same time.

What about your first professional dreams?

I always wanted to be a scientist. I didn't have a really good idea what that was, but my father and my brother were very oriented that way. What I was good at was English and writing.

Do you still remember why you chose to study psychology at Stanford?

I was, maybe, the first or the second kid in our town to go to Stanford. I was torn between English and psychology. Psychology won out because it was about people—as English literature is—but there was also a science aspect. A psychology major also required fewer units, so I could explore a lot of other subjects, which was appealing.

How would you compare yourself as a student with today's students?

I was pretty much the same. As an undergraduate, I did well when I wanted to pay attention to it, but I was also 17 years old and away from home for the first time. So I was enjoying that. Stanford had a Liberal Arts program. One was required to take a large number of courses in every area: science, language, history, creative writing, and so on. It was a really great education. After my second year, I got a job as a research assistant, doing mostly statistics for a major project in child psychology. So I was around a lot of graduate students and real faculty research, which was quite interesting. I didn't like statistics, but at least I could see how they were using them. I learned to program computers so I wouldn't have to do the statistics with a calculator.

The MRI is famous all over the world.

It wasn't famous at all at the time [laughing]. It's weird. The reason I got there was singular. As an undergraduate, I was reading an assigned article by Don Jackson (1958). I literally remember myself sitting in the library and thinking, "Somebody else sees what I do." It's actually a terrible article, but it

Back to Table of Contents

was the first one I had read that talked about some kind of interaction going on. It spoke to something. When I graduated, there were two possible jobs: I could either do computer programming for a big company and make a lot of money, or work at this strange place called MRI where the director was Don Jackson. So I took that job because of that awful article!

How do you recall that time today?

I was there full-time from 1961 to 1966, then part-time while I was in graduate school until 1970. I would name Paul Watzlawick, John Weakland, and Don Jackson as the individuals most important to me. John is underestimated in this group. He was a major mentor for me, as was Paul. When Paul died, I wrote an article which describes a lot about that period (Bavelas, 2007). The first year at the MRI, I was actually a glorified secretary. The office part was easy to manage, so I had time to read their whole library of reprints. So I soon knew pretty much all of the Bateson group and the early MRI work. I started watching family therapy sessions whenever possible, taking notes in meetings and then writing them up for Don. What was going on was amazing in this group of very "deviant" people who were not well known at all. Their later fame really surprised me (laughing). For example, when I was in graduate school, I knew better than to mention that I worked there and had written the book (Watzlawick et al., 1967).

That is actually a surprise for me.

Yes, but *Pragmatics of Human Communication* was scorned by psychologists. It wasn't seen as real research because it wasn't experimental, but I didn't identify with psychologists during my time at the MRI. I had left my undergraduate work and found a place that I really fit in intellectually. I just knew these people saw what I did. They were very generous about letting me learn. I was only 21 when I started there. Five years later, my ideas were well formed. I went to graduate school for technical training and the degree. I knew I wanted to do experimental work, which nobody at the MRI was doing. I think that those clear goals gave me a much better graduate school experience than the people who were my cohort at Stanford.

Let's go back to the MRI.

During my time at the MRI, family and communication research were very popular, and Don Jackson could get grant money easily. For a few years, I was a ghost-writer for him. It's not a secret. I wrote articles with his notes (Jackson 1965a, 1965b). It was great. I loved writing and never felt exploited. I also worked with Jay Haley and a lot with John Weakland. I would just go talk to him all the time. We would talk about Chinese films, or what hypnotism was about, or whatever. I helped him put together a special issue on "the new communication" (Weakland, 1967). He was an anthropologist by training, and very open and tolerant. He described himself as the "uncharismatic" member of the Bateson group, which was true. Even after I came to Victoria and started doing experiments, I would consult with him about experiments—not something he knew about at all, but he always had great advice.

What about Paul Watzlawick?

Paul and I hung out a lot together. We liked to watch sessions, to listen to the tapes afterwards, and to talk about them. For example, Don Jackson had an amazing clinical intuition. He could just listen to a married couple talking and then make quite accurate statements about their family interactions. Paul and

Back to Table of Contents

I wanted to figure him out. We would sit him down every Tuesday morning and try to get him to say how he did it. Don hated it. I think he suggested *Pragmatics* to get us off his back. I'm pretty sure that part is an accurate memory, but for sure, it was also the case that funding was drying up. Don realized that there were a lot of ideas that needed to be put together. Don's assumption was that I would write his part.

That was your pattern.

Yes, and that's what happened. Paul and I sat down and outlined the book. Don checked it once in a while, said, "That's great," and went on to other things. I never had such a good writing partnership as with Paul. When I look at *Pragmatics* now, there are parts I can't tell which of us wrote. Our styles were very similar, and we were both obsessive about the editing details.

You were just in your mid-20s.

Yes, but at some point, Paul thought it wasn't fair that I shouldn't be one of the authors, so he talked to Don, who agreed. As it went on, Paul said to him, "Janet should be second author," and again Don agreed. We wrote the book with the expectation of not having anything but a place on a library shelf. Thanks to Don, the Behavioral Science Book Service bought a lot of copies as a book club offering. It started selling and basically put me through graduate school. It was a complete surprise to us. We had no idea. Now it is in eight different languages and still selling. By the way, I'm not telling any secrets about our authorship. Paul and I decided early on to be honest about Don's role, although we never pushed the topic. As a result, at least one person has promoted the idea that we essentially took dictation from Don.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led to your interest in interpersonal communication?

For me, it was always face-to-face dialogue. That's what I always watched. Even as a kid, I would notice people interacting. I wouldn't so much notice what kind of person they were. At the MRI, I had the opportunity to watch actual interactions and to talk about them. We only had audio recordings at the time, but since then, I am fascinated by the microanalysis of video dialogues, looking closely at them frame by frame. How are they actually interacting? How is one person influencing the others? There are parts in the beginning of *Pragmatics* (where we talk about our framework) that I could put in every article I do today. It's the same, but I hope in a lot more detail now.

That was more than 40 years ago.

The MRI was breaking up because of funding. A lot of people there didn't have regular degrees. They just had a master's, like John Weakland and Jay Haley. I saw what a handicap that was, and I wanted a solid degree but also experimental training. So in 1966, I decided I couldn't be a "child prodigy" any more and went back to Stanford. However, communication was solely mass media there. It wasn't what I wanted, although they had excellent methods training. I changed over to psychology again for my PhD.

Have you ever considered applying for a position outside Victoria?

No. I'm a pacifist and left the States after finishing my PhD. I also was a peaceful protester against the Vietnam War. I didn't like the violence of the anti-war movement either. Joan Baez lived in the area. I was lucky to hear some lectures from her. She is a heroine of mine. So, it was clear to me that I had to make a decision about where I wanted to be. Canada looked like a good idea, and Victoria is a lovely setting. It's

Back to Table of Contents

magical.

How did you get the position there?
We were one of the first couples in North America to have regular positions in the same department. My husband, Alex, was very senior. The ordinary way would have been that he had a position and I didn't, but he said no. So thanks to some enlightened administrators, I got a regular tenure-track position on my own merits.

Were you ever forced to think about gender questions during your academic career?
When I was hired, the chair presented me as a separate person with a different last name, so I wasn't hired because of Alex. I did run into gender stereotypes early on, but I was a productive researcher. When I started, I was only the second woman in our department. The first one was a great clinician and teacher, but never claimed to be a researcher. Everybody had to grow up and accept that I should have what a researcher needed. But the issue came up from time to time. I guess you know that I became a university administrator for a while?

From 1983 to 1987, yes. Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research.
I would go to national meetings of those administrators and be taken as a secretary. It was an entirely male group. Again, at the time, women weren't in administration. My answer to that was to dress very expensively. I was either one of them or a kept woman! There is still one serious problem in universities: sexual harassment. I became an unofficial ombudsman for that. I think that sexual harassment is an exercise of power that is very hard to fight off. You can pass all kinds of laws to get equal numbers of women among faculty and students, and that has happened. But sexual harassment goes on in the sleazy background.

How would you rate the academic position of psychologists within the field of communication?
In my experience, we are enormously overrated. Psychology thinks of itself as the queen of social sciences. Unfortunately, many in communication seem to accept that opinion of psychology. I had a lot more credit for who I was, just from having a PhD in psychology. A communication department might want to hire me, but psychology departments are not famous for hiring communication PhDs. It's a curious relationship, especially in my research area. The last thing social psychologists are going to do is to study communication. One of the reasons I started withdrawing from ICA is that I would constantly hear papers on experiments using the variables that social psychologists had come up with.

What about the Language and Social Interaction Division, your second area?
It's a more interesting division for me because we're actually looking at interaction, but it's usually dominated by conversation analysis. We experimentalists are often considered the Antichrist there; I was once denied entrance to a CA data session at ICA. But I did persist. I decided to attend meetings and address the issue directly when it came up. There were some people like Robert Hopper, Bob Sanders, Curt Le Baron, and others who were very welcoming. There was a period when I was going to LSI and not to Interpersonal sessions at all, because I will always follow my interests and not what is fashionable or powerful in any discipline.

Back to Table of Contents

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?

It was an honor. I never expected it. If you commit yourself to being deviant or at least very off-beat, then you are always surprised when somebody recognizes what you did. If it was just for *Pragmatics*, then that's okay. I like people to know I've done something since, but I think people in ICA knew that.

Who is Janet Bavelas: a researcher, a teacher, the co-author of* Pragmatics*, the wanderer between psychology and communication? What is the most important part of your academic life?

All of the above, I guess. All of those are pursuing face-to-face dialogue and learning more and more about it, wherever that is located. Especially since I retired from undergraduate teaching and committee work, I'm able to work full-time on research. I think I was a good teacher. I got some awards for it, and I still have some graduate students finishing, but I didn't want to mark papers anymore. Now, my professional life is in three unequal parts: One big part is still doing the grant-supported experimental research on dialogues. We are doing stuff I never could have imagined. I just love it. The most recent line of work started with "Gesturing on the Telephone" (Bavelas et al., 2008), and we have even better data now. Second, I now do a lot of applied dialogue research with psychotherapists and medical folks. Another small part of my life has become being "Janet Beavin Bavelas who wrote *Pragmatics*." Out of that group at that time, I'm the one who is left, so there is an obligation to talk about it. People have written that history very badly. I'm not going to spend my time correcting it aggressively, but I feel an obligation to say what it was. For example, the recent paperback edition of *Pragmatics* has an appallingly inaccurate new foreword, which completely ignores the field of communication, where the book has had its most important influence.

Are there any scholars who you would call role models?

Paul Watzlawick and John Weakland. In terms of research methods, Alex Bavelas was one, too. He was a brilliant experimentalist and a very creative one. There are people I admire now, but they are more peers than role models—Herbert Clark at Stanford, who brought dialogue into psychology, for example. I have to say that I've a bit of a problem with the notion of role models. If someone is a charismatic role model, then what the students learn is that they can be *almost* as good as that person—if they are lucky. That's a danger. I saw that happen at the MRI and afterwards. It's important to have students who don't admire you so much that they want to be like you. People have to be themselves.

Looking back on 50 years in research, is there anything you are especially proud of?

I followed what I wanted to follow. Academic fashions, like tides, come and go, and I've ignored them all. I'm most proud of that. Of course, there is some of my work, too. I'm proud of *Pragmatics*, and of a chapter about creativity in science, which is the best piece I've ever written (Bavelas, 1987). I'm also proud of the equivocation research (Bavelas et al., 1990) and the early motor mimicry research because that set me on a clearer path (see Bavelas, 2007), but I'm always *most* pleased with what I'm doing right now. Can't wait to get it written up.

Then again, is there anything that you would do differently today?

Mostly I would say no, because I like who I am. Maybe it was a mistake spending any time trying to save the field of personality and thinking that the people there were going to be convinced by evidence

Back to Table of Contents

(Bavelas, 1978). That was a detour which took some of my time in the mid-1970s. I had to learn that there are too many academic careers based on ideas that are already generally accepted, so it isn't about evidence or finding out what's going on. It's about keeping a grant going or keeping a claim on a topic. To me, that's obscene. We have an obligation to encourage young people to follow what they see. Where else could new ideas come from?

What will remain when Janet Bavelas is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
I'm trying to influence it, yes. I've always thought of what I'm leaving, even when I was younger. I knew I was working in an area that was not fashionable. So I was aiming for what people would see 20 or 25 years ahead. I hope that what I've written will still be available, like messages in a bottle. That's why I write. The data that we've gathered are solid and replicable. Those studies are well done and point systematically in a certain direction. If anyone ever wants to think about the fact that dialogue is really important, then there is a body of work they can go to and build on. I also hope—very idealistically—that young researchers would see that they can develop new methods, and that they don't have to follow any methodological rules except logic, data, and the preservation of the phenomenon they care about.

References

Bavelas, J. B. (1978). *Personality: Current theory and research*. Monterey, CA: Brooks.

Bavelas, J. B. (1987). Permitting creativity in science. In D. N. Jackson & J. P. Rushton (Eds.), *Scientific excellence: Origins and assessment* (pp. 307–327). Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications.

Bavelas, J. B. (2007). Writing with Paul. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, *33*, 295–297.

Bavelas, J. B., Black, A., Chovil, N., & Mullett, J. (1990). *Equivocal communication.* Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications.

Bavelas, J. B., Gerwing, J., Sutton, C., & Prevost, D. (2008). Gesturing on the telephone: Independent effects of dialogue and visibility. *Journal of Memory and Language*, *58*, 495–520.

Jackson, D. (1958). Guilt and the control of pleasure in the schizoid personalities. *The British Journal of Medical Psychology*, *31*(2), 124–130.

Jackson, D. D. (1965a). The study of the family. *Family Process*, *4*(1), 1–20.

Jackson, D. D. (1965b). Family rules: Marital quid pro quo. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, *12*, 589–594.

Watzlawick**,** P., Beavin, J. H., & Jackson, D. D. (1967). *Pragmatics of human communication: A study of interactional patterns, pathologies, and paradoxes*. New York: Norton.

Weakland, J. (1967). Communication and behavior—An introduction. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *10*, 1–4.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1490–1497 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

CHARLES BERGER

"We still need a generation of institution builders."

Charles Berger, April 4, 2011.
University of California, Davis. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1939 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Education:	1961 B.S. in psychology, Penn State
	1966 M.A. in communication, Michigan State
	1968 Ph.D. in communication, Michigan State
Career:	Korean linguist in the U.S. Army (1961–1964)
	1968 Assistant Professor of Psychology, Illinois State
	1971 Assistant Professor of Communication, Northwestern
	1974 Associate Professor, Northwestern
	1978 Professor, Northwestern
	1991 Professor, University of California, Davis
	1987 ICA Fellow
	1995 ICA President
	2008 Distinguished Scholar, NCA
	1983–1986 Editor, *Human Communication Research*
	1994–1999 Co-editor, *Communication Research*
	1999–2002 Associate Editor, *Communication Theory*
Personal:	Married, four children

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Charles Berger

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

My father was a schoolteacher in industrial arts. He had an extra job to support us. My mother stayed at home. So I spent more time interacting with her than with my father. I was the youngest child of three for many years. My parents had another child who is 10 years younger than I am.

Your family name sounds very German.

My father's father came to the U.S. from Meerane in Saxony when he was 15 years old. He grew up in the Germantown section of Philadelphia and lived in the U.S. through both World Wars. Although we never learned German, one of his gifts to all of us was his strong work ethic. Jobs were to be done well and with dispatch, but this was tempered by his penchant for jokes and fun. He was an accomplished puppeteer.

So, I guess you were a good student.

In sixth grade, I went to an all-boys private school for two years. The level of education was more demanding than public school. In junior high, I went back to public school. In general, I was not very fond of school. I was much more interested in sports.

Was there already any link to the media or communication?

I became an amateur radio operator when I was 11 years old. Through the last part of junior high and high school, I would talk all over the world. I talked to people from Eastern Europe and Russia during those Cold War years. My older brother studied civil engineering and ended up getting a PhD in Mechanical Engineering. I started off in electrical engineering. Even though I had practical experience, I just wasn't that interested in engineering. So I switched to psychology and wanted to become a researcher.

How did that happen?

As a part of the psychology major, students were required to take two courses in statistics, another in psychometrics, and another in attitude measurement. I also had two courses in experimental psychology, where we actually ran experiments and wrote up the results. As an undergraduate, I stumbled into a graduate-level philosophy of science class. After the first session, I went to the professor and said, "I can't take this class. It's a graduate class." The professor grabbed me by the arm and said, "You are the only person in here from the social sciences." All the other people in the class, if they weren't in philosophy, were in physics and chemistry. He made me stay. It was an accident. That class piqued my interest in scientific explanation. I knew that I wanted to do research, but I didn't know if I wanted to do it academically or in a commercial setting. I did take undergraduate courses in marketing and advertising. I did not take journalism classes, but I did learn something about that industry. So, I went on to graduate school. I was accepted into psychology graduate programs, but I couldn't make up my mind if I wanted to do that or something like an MBA in marketing.

I guess that's why you joined the army for three years.

Actually, I was on the brink of being drafted into the army in Fall 1961. So, I enlisted in the army for an extra year in order to be able to choose a specialty. That specialty was electronic intelligence, and I was sent to Army Language School in Monterey, California, to study Korean for a year. During that year, in my

Back to Table of Contents

spare time, I learned about the communication field. As an undergraduate, I didn't even know that that field existed. Someone put me onto it and said, "There are three programs you ought to look at: Stanford, Michigan State, and Illinois," since I was interested in persuasion, experimental work and attitude change. I applied to all of them while I was in Korea, and two weeks after I was discharged from the army, I went to Michigan State, mainly because they offered me more money than the other two. I was flat broke.

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers in communication?

At Michigan State, David Berlo was chair at that time. He had recently published *The Process of Communication* (Berlo, 1960). Gerry Miller was the guy I sort of clicked with. There were other people such as Hideya Kumata, the cross-cultural person. Those were the two most influential people on me. I had a mass communication class with Bradley Greenberg. Students had to take a quarter in both, mass comm and interpersonal. I also took classes in social psych with Milton Rokeach and Eugene Jacobson.

How would you compare the student Charles Berger with your students today?

I was a real anomaly in 1964 at Michigan State. I was one of the few graduate students with the background that Berlo and Miller were looking for. They wanted people with quantitative social science backgrounds who could do both experiments and surveys. I had already been trained in that way. There were a lot of people coming out of journalism or English majors who had zero background in quantitative social science. Most of them had never had statistics as undergraduates. Miller had come out of Iowa, but Berlo, Kumata, and Erwin Bettinghaus had all come out of Illinois and were all exposed to the same model. There was a big social science push in the program. Those people were infused with a quantitative, social science vision of the field. In their view, the humanities approach in rhetoric and traditional speech was doomed.

They were right.

I think they have been proven wrong. Look at ICA. First philosophy of communication came in, and now other humanities foci have entered. So, it is as if their vision has not been borne out. If they were alive, they might be disappointed. That was the Michigan State ethos. They received a lot of criticism for it from many quarters. Traditionalists in speech, as well as journalists, were hammering away at these quantitative people. When I was there, it was like a war between the old and the new guard. When we graduated, I was shocked to see what was available in the field.

Are you talking about Illinois State?

For my first job, I spent three years there teaching social psychology and could see what was going on in the speech department there. At Northwestern, I encountered people from rhetoric, and the Michigan State model was clearly not applicable there. There was a great deal of resistance. But, there is a crucial problem that applies to both quantitative and qualitative points of view. It is tragic that the field has not developed a unique body of communication theory. In the 1960s at Michigan State, the buzzword was interdisciplinary. We were to celebrate this. I understand that, but then one can only be a borrower for so long. When one goes into debt, one eventually has to come up with a contribution. Communication people became well trained methodologically, but conceptually, the impulse was not to be as concerned with theory development and explanation.

Back to Table of Contents

Do you have any explanation for that?

I don't know. The impulse animating the field was much more practical and still is. I call it the contextualization of the field. There are applied areas, such as health and instructional, and some people behave as if each context requires unique conceptualizations. I don't believe that the variability, conceptually, is so much a function of context. There are certain fundamental communication processes that cut across and transcend these apparently unique contexts. Recognizing this is our problem.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to uncertainty reduction theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975)?

There are a couple of things. I spent at least a year in South Korea trying to understand the intentions of the North. I didn't like the army, but found the job interesting. I worked with cryptologists and other linguists, many of whom were very bright and talented people. That was part of it. At Northwestern, I was under fire from some people. I wanted to counter their argument that human behavior is not predictable. I looked for predictable communication phenomena and found initial conversations between strangers. When people meet for the very first time, what they say is quite stereotyped: Where are you from? What do you do? There are variations in different cultures, but at a certain level of abstraction, the ritual is very similar. Why would people communicate this way? Part of the answer is that they are in an uncertain environment. Could this be a ritualistic form of communication that has been fabricated to cope with a highly uncertain situation?

How would you rate the position of psychological-orientated scholars within communication?

What do you mean?

Are they on top?

Yes. Next question [laughing]. I don't think it is psychology versus sociology. It is more methodological. There are quantitative researchers within sociology and qualitative in the other. There are boundaries or confidence intervals around what constitutes social science. If you look at ICA, a lot of the additions to the association have been beyond the social science and in the humanities-oriented areas. People are increasingly coming out of ideological perspectives. Those areas have probably grown more than the social science-oriented areas.

How would you rate the position of interpersonal scholars within communication?

There are the demands of obtaining grant money, and there is the financial crisis. If people want to study face-to-face interaction or computer-mediated communication, they have to slide into an applied context, such as health. They can receive grant money by studying physician-patient interaction. It is going to be difficult to continue to study the romantic relationships of undergraduates or family communication. If the area is not fundable, they won't do it. That is a disaster. One can't develop a wide range of theories within the context of a narrow applied area. I do not like to be identified as a denizen of a particular ICA division because the whole divisional structure is not intellectually defensible. I remember when there was no health communication division, and the face-to-face research that was done in the health context came to interpersonal. In the late 1970s, some people doing health-related work became dissatisfied for a variety of reasons and formed their own division. Political rather than academic considerations motivated these developments.

Back to Table of Contents

Sociology of science would find reasons to create an area of your own where you can establish your stuff.

That was the issue. The papers were not getting on the conference programs. A long time ago, the counter to that was, "I'm sorry, but the quality of these papers was not where it should be." People may not like that answer, but that was the answer.

You served as an editor of two major journals. Could you put your criteria of evaluation in some key words?

Ideally, editors would publish research that presents and advances theory. If it is done in a health or political context, it could advance theory. In health, some research has considerable practical value, but few theoretical implications. With political, I would argue that even practically oriented work concerning election campaigns can be anchored in some kind of theoretical rationale, for example, the spiral of science (Noelle-Neumann, 1993).

How did you feel when you were asked to run for ICA President?

I was very honored and surprised.

Do you remember your presidential agenda?

At that time, there were a lot of recurring themes. ICA was international in name only. We should have conferences abroad and more membership from other countries. We had done conferences in Berlin in 1977, in Hawaii in 1985, in Dublin in 1991, and in Australia in 1994. We weren't into the current rotation system yet. In the 1980s, ICA tried to do a conference in Korea, but it did not work out. That was one of the things I wanted to change. We were also reacting to financial issues, which were straightened out from the 1990s to the early 2000s. I still worry about how communication as an academic endeavor is perceived by those in other, related disciplines. Back in the 1960s, we could always claim newness. Now, the field has been around for a while.

Why do you worry about it?

Can people in communication bring unique insights to the table when dealing with important issues? Or, are they simply engaging in derivative scholarship and drawing on theories developed in cognate areas? I believe researchers cannot get respect if they are doing that within the academic community. Even in the humanities-oriented areas of communication, many of the big names tend to come from outside of the field.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?

I was honored and surprised, but I don't look at that kind of thing. For me, it's not so important. I'm just trying to be a productive scholar. The most joy that I have comes from playing with ideas and theory.

Could you ever understand colleagues who would never leave Northwestern for California?

Yes. Northwestern was great. There was a constellation of factors that drew me out here. After 19 years of being there, I saw what the future of interpersonal would be like. I would often work with Mike Roloff. He is a good friend. It was difficult to leave for that reason, but they had set up a typical multi-discipline

Back to Table of Contents

communication department where they were doing humanities and social science side-by-side. Northwestern had been very strong in rhetoric, debate, and argumentation for many years, and I thought these areas would continue to dominate. I thought the interpersonal area and the social science focus would be limited, and that they would not expand. When I came here, the model was similar, but then there were budget cuts and re-organization in the 1990s. The department contracted into a quantitative social science operation. From day to day, it is not an enjoyable experience to argue over basic epistemological issues. Perhaps one could claim that it is useful to debate such issues, but playing that game over a protracted period can become a waste of valuable time and energy.

Who is Charles Berger? A researcher, a teacher, a chairman of scientific associations, a commuter between communication and psychology? What is the most important part of your academic life?

As an undergraduate, I wanted to be a researcher. I enjoy teaching, but I am primarily a researcher. This is difficult for undergraduates to understand, because they are not so into research but must be exposed to it. They must understand that this field is not just about documenting effects. We are really trying to explain something, and we are trying to explain it in ways that other fields don't explain it. When I worked with Steve Chaffee on the first *Handbook of Communication Science* (Berger & Chaffee, 1987), we said that communication did not have enough institution builders, such as Schramm and Berlo. Steve and I agreed that our generation was really interested in research. We served as ICA presidents, but we were not very political and not interested in institution building. That may be one reason why there are no communication programs at most Ivy League schools and other top-tier U.S. universities. There are programs at Penn, Cornell, and Stanford, but there are none at Harvard, Yale, Princeton, or Chicago. We still need a generation of institution builders. That job is not done.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

We are trying to theorize and explain by building theories about how communication works. What we have not done a great job of doing, is to focus on messages: How and why do they produce some kinds of effects? I don't look at the problem in terms of quantitative or qualitative. The issue is explanation. One can do a-theoretical qualitative research, and one can do a-theoretical quantitative research. Ideally, if one takes a social scientific approach, one is neutral with respect to what the answers ought to be. One is not an ideologue. But communication and social science seem to attract some reform-oriented individuals. People who want to improve society. There is certainly nothing wrong with this impulse, but we better know how to do it before we try. We need to understand the fundamental processes that underlie human communication. That's our job.

How is the reputation of the discipline here at Davis?

Actually, we started in the late 1990s. This department grew from five to 11 full-time faculty. It would still be growing if it weren't for the weak economy. Communication is very popular among the undergraduates. Its courses are heavily subscribed. The administrators can't avoid that. That's good. We have shown relevance, but that does not mean that we have respect from other departments. You know how academic colleagues can be. They say, "You have attracted so many undergraduates, it's an easy major, isn't it? But substantively, what are you characters doing?"

Back to Table of Contents

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?

It is fair to say that back in the 1950s, the term "communication" was appropriated by people such as Schramm in the United States. I never looked at the use of the term in the academy at that time in Europe, Asia, and the rest of the world. The U.S. led the way during that era. I wouldn't go so far to say that right now one cannot obtain a good graduate education in communication outside of the United States. If students want to learn more about "x", they might be better off studying in Munich. In social psychology, there is now a heavy contribution from Europe, especially from Germany, the UK, and the Netherlands. In Italy, there is a lot of activity in neuroscience. There are a lot more choices geography-wise now than back when I was attending graduate school.

Were do you see the field in 2030?

The big move is in technology. I am suspicious because we have people who are predicating entire research careers on studying the impact of ever-evolving technologies. There is no theory guiding many of these inquiries. There is just one study after another as new technological innovations occur. There is Internet addiction, then Twitter addiction, and then iPod addiction. In terms of its design, some of the research is very sophisticated, but conceptually, it is not. If one argues that one goal of science is to explain things as simply as possible, then the studies that are done to demonstrate the principles ought to be simple, too. But some seem to believe that all one has to do is to achieve methodological sophistication, and that will automatically ensure theoretical sophistication. That is not true. In 2030, there is going to be more new technology, which, by default, means more research to determine its effects. Communication technology is a growth industry right now. Health communication research is growing by dint of the fact that there is grant money to be had in the area. If the grant money dries up, it will become a declining enterprise.

Are there any scientists who you would call a role model?

I can't think of anyone, because there have been a lot of people who have been really intriguing in the way they think about communication. Some of them work in artificial intelligence and are interested in designing interactive systems. They are thinking broadly about how communication works. Anybody who thinks that way is potentially much more interesting than people who are thinking in a narrow context. They have the context as their primary identity.

Looking back on almost 50 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

Proud? No. I am not afflicted with pride that much [laughing]. The longer you are in this business, the more you realize that you are a part of a community which is larger than any individual. I have been very fortunate to be a member of the community and to play in the game. It is more a feeling of gratitude for the opportunity of being able to spend my life this way. I sometimes feel guilty for receiving a paycheck because I really enjoy doing this work. I am always amazed by URT. It keeps on popping up. I don't feel proud of it. If one does science, one has to be humble because one's theories are going to be picked apart and demonstrated to be in error some ways. One has to think of it as a contribution that may help people in the way they go about doing theory and research.

Back to Table of Contents

Is there anything that you would do differently today?
Nope.

What will remain when Charles Berger is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
When Charles Berger is gone, things will improve drastically [laughing]. I don't know. That is really difficult to say. What I am most concerned about is the longevity of the discipline. When tough economic times like these arise, administrators would not give a thought to eliminating the philosophy department. Every university must have a philosophy department. So they go down that list of the must-have departments. Every university *must have* a math department.

Communication?
Well, communication is vulnerable. Communication departments have to get themselves on that *everybody has to have one* list. I don't think we are on that list. People try to handle this by saying, "Ok, we'll have get on the *don't cut* list and the way to do this, is generate a lot of revenue for the university." It sounds like faculty are working in some commercial enterprise or bank. They reason that administrators would never eliminate a thriving profit center. But philosophy departments are generally not profit centers. Why are they valuable? They are valuable because of the core ideas and issues with which they deal. Consequently, departments want to be on the *no cut* list not merely because of the grant money they generate, but rather because of what they contribute intellectually to the entire enterprise.

References

Berger, C. R., & Calabrese, R. J. (1975). Some explorations in initial interaction and beyond: Toward a developmental theory of interpersonal communication. *Human Communication Research, 1*, 99–112.

Berger, C. R., & Chaffee, S. H. (1987). *Handbook of communication science*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications.

Berlo, D. (1960). *The process of communication: An introduction to theory and practice*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Noelle-Neumann, E. (1993). *The spiral of silence: Public opinion – Our social skin*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1498–1506 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

JAY G. BLUMLER

"There are values at stake."

Jay G. Blumler, October 14, 2011.
Leeds, UK. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1924 in New York
Education:	1947 B.A. in political science, Antioch College. Postgraduate work at the London School of Economics
	1949 Oxford. D. Phil
Career:	1949 Lecturer in political theory, Ruskin College
	1963 Director, Granada Television Research Unit, later Centre for Television Research, Leeds University. Chair in Social and Political Aspects of Broadcasting
	1983 Joint appointment, College of Journalism, University of Maryland.
	1986 Founding co-editor of *European Journal of Communication*
	1989 ICA President
	1991 ICA Fellow
Personal:	Widowed, four children

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Jay G. Blumler

Can you tell me something about your parents?
I was an only child. My parents were quite different from each other, but equally good for me. My mother was serious and my father fun-loving. They divorced when I was nine, but my father kept good touch with me. In elementary school, I had progressive teachers who were trained in the philosophy of John Dewey. In junior high, I took part in a public speaking contest and came in second. During my last two years of high school, I was in a very rough school in a deprived part of East Harlem. But I was treated a bit like a treasure by the teachers [laughing]. I skipped two grades. So I went to college at the age of 16.

What about your first professional dreams?
I don't know that I had many of those, but when my parents' friends would ask me, I used to say, "I would like to be a diplomat." I think I have a diplomatic temperament [laughing]. There is one other thing I should say about all that background. My parents were left-wing. My mother was a New Deal Democrat, and my father was a keen supporter of the Socialist Labor Party, a small but active Marxist group based on the ideas of Daniel De Leon.

What did your father do for a living?
He was a freelance commercial artist doing mainly jobs for advertising agencies. He would go into Madison Avenue offices and give them his work. I loved to see him in his studio.

Was he a painter?
No, it was lettering.

What about your mother? What did she do?
She claimed that she was the first woman to work on Wall Street as a secretary. That would have been in the 1920s. Later, she was a saleswoman in a piano store, organized a real state agency, became secretary of a wartime rationing board in a New York suburb, and joined the Women's Army Corps of the U.S. Army. At the age of 85, she moved to Leeds and stayed here until she died at the age of 98.

Were there any university graduates in your family or in your environment?
No. One of my five cousins was good enough to win a scholarship to Annapolis, to the Naval Academy. In the war, he was on a ship that was torpedoed.

Do you still remember why you chose to major in politics at Antioch College?
In a way, I do not. It just seemed to be the natural thing. In an American college like that, you have a Liberal Arts education first. It was chemistry, physics, English literature, or statistics—a wide range. The political science people were great. They were not only good teachers, but had reputations. Did you gather what kind of place Antioch was?

I read that it is noted for its cooperative education programs (antiochcollege.org).
I was there from 1940 to 1943, and then again from 1946 to 1947. At that time, Antioch was the nearest that I can imagine to have been in a Utopia. The ethos, the idealism, and the living up to all that were

Back to Table of Contents

remarkable. For example, there were no rules for students' behavior with the opposite sex. The idea was that students would be responsible. They had a concept of community participation and an honor system for exam taking. You could even do it in your own rooms. They also had a faculty that was quite dedicated. I just blossomed there. Sometimes, I said to myself afterwards, "Yes, these things can be."

It was a special place, of course.

Antioch in that version was established in the mid-1920s by Arthur Morgan, who was sort of a self-made engineer, but also interested in philosophy and education. He got some businessmen to support his ideas. Morgan was a socialist, a pacifist, and a Quaker. Although he was no longer president in the 1940s, his influence was still there. There is a statue on the campus of the college-founder Horace Mann, with one of his sayings: "Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity." There you go.

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers?

I don't remember a lot now. One was Donald Kingsley. He wrote about public administration with a progressive flavor (Mosher & Kingsley, 1936) and about representative bureaucracy (Kingsley, 1944). When I came back after the war, he had a post in the Truman administration. I also remember John Sparks, who was a good teacher and had a wide-ranging awareness of politics not only in the U.S. The economist Valdemar Carlson, as well as Lewis Corey, who had a communist past and had become a strong anti-communist, were also memorable figures, too.

Why did you go back to Europe after World War II?

I had three years in the army. About six months of that was spent in Berlin in the Office of Military Government. I was a Russian interpreter there. I started learning it at Antioch. After entering the army, I was enlisted in an intensive Russian course at Georgetown University, where I was for nine months. When the war ended I was sent first to Frankfurt, and then to Berlin. I went back to Antioch for my last year and wanted to do postgraduate work. Have you heard of the GI bill?

Ron Rice told me about it, yes.

That was not only available for education in the U.S., but anywhere else, as long as you got accepted. Both Kingsley and Sparks had spent time at the LSE with Harold Laski. Sparks encouraged me to apply, which I did. Laski became my supervisor.

Did you already have a master's?

No, I didn't have one. I don't recall now exactly why I was allowed to go directly to a PhD registration, but I was. Laski proposed that I should do my dissertation on the relationships between the trade union movement and the state in Britain.

Sounds like a great subject.

It was, yes. With access to Laski's address book, I managed to interview many people in the labor movement of that period. I was very sympathetic to the Labour side of the political fence then, but in my second year doing this, I realized that I wouldn't be able to write a dissertation from it. Around that time, I heard about a vacancy at Ruskin College. I applied, Laski supported me, and I got it.

Back to Table of Contents

Did you ever think about returning to the U.S. back then?

I did, but several things conspired against that. I met the lady who became my wife. She was English. Eventually, we had children. And I found the atmosphere at Ruskin so fulfilling. Motivated adult students are great to teach. Most of them were labor movement-oriented. They had to relate their convictions to the subjects they were studying. That sometimes posed challenges. It was quite a ferment there, which I was pleased to take part in.

You were there for 14 years.

Eventually I said to myself, "Jay, you have to make a choice." I could either carry on this way or try to find a position where I could develop my own line of scholarship. The two wouldn't work together. I was sure of that. I applied for the Granada Television Research Fellowship at Leeds University. I probably had applied for a number of other things, but when I got the invitation for an interview, I looked around as much as I could to find what was known about mass communication research.

There was not so much around back then.

I didn't find a lot, right. Of course I did encounter Joseph Klapper (1960). There were a few other things as well, but I also found an article by Elihu Katz (1959) on the future of the field. I got some ideas where this research might go and some confidence in them, although the base for them was paper-thin. Fortunately, the interviewing committee consisted of four professors, each from a different department that had an interest in the unit, rather than knowing anything about the subject. So, I blinded them with science [laughing].

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led to your work on the influence of television in elections (Blumler & McQuail, 1968; Blumler et al., 1978)?

I don't know of a crucial experience. If you think back to 1963, television had diffused quite a bit and was already taking over people's leisure time. Many people, including researchers, saw it as a major communication development, and therefore worth studying, even in influence terms. I say "even" because of the Klapper book. I was the second Granada Television Research Fellow. Did you know that?

No. Who was the first one?

Joseph Trenaman. He hired Denis McQuail as his assistant. The two of them had carried out a fine study of TV effects during the 1959 election campaign (Trenaman & McQuail, 1961). But not long after, he contracted leukemia and died. With my background, getting involved in politics and the media was the most natural thing you can imagine. I was already familiar with uses and gratifications (Blumler & Katz, 1974).

How did that happen?

At some point, I read a chapter that Elihu [Katz] contributed to the Great Debates book (Katz & Feldman, 1962). It was a typical piece of work of his, summarizing what had been done by all the others and pointing out the next steps. He was surprised that nobody had asked what viewers were trying to get out of watching these debates. Was it entertainment, education, politics, or something else? Here was a dimension that was not explored at all, but very important. So, Denis and I would incorporate it into our effects study, partly with the intention to merge uses and gratifications and effects approaches.

Back to Table of Contents

Did you succeed in that?
Not to the same extent as we had hoped, perhaps, but interesting findings did emerge as a result.

Denis McQuail (2008) wrote that you also played a key role in the development of communication in the UK. How would you, by yourself, describe that role?
Denis was maybe exaggerating. I always participated in discussions of approaches to the field, being somewhat critical of neo-Marxist and cultural studies theorists without despising any of them at all. I recognized that they were trying hard and addressing important subjects. But it is true that in the mid-1970s, I chaired an influential committee which assessed and validated new communication degree proposals. And in the 1990s, I chaired a steering committee that oversaw a large-scale program of research on media economics and culture. Of course, I also served as an examiner for several university programs and for students' doctoral dissertations, including those of Philip Schlesinger and Sonia Livingstone.

Could you tell me the story of the* European Journal of Communication*?
It first came up with me when Steven Chaffee asked me to do a sort of plenary presentation at a conference at Wisconsin. I built up a kind of discussion of different emphases among European and American scholars (Blumler, 1980). In addition, in 1980, I had a visiting professorship at Madison. I became aware of how graduate students were taught there. Although the training was impressive, I also formed the idea that much American work was just too concentrated on the bits and pieces of research, as well as being unaware of what was going on in other countries, especially in Europe. I felt if we could have a good journal, we could, in part, use it as a vehicle for creating awareness amongst Americans of European ideas and approaches.

Do you like the grown journal?
Yes, very much. I think it's good. It was starting to have too many British scholars and not enough Continentals, but now it's right again.

Did you like the role of a public intellectual supporting the public role of television (McQuail, 2008)?
I would not use that wording for me, but the BBC ethos was really very different from a commercially governed system and tapped the idealism which had come through my life up until then. I felt very positive about many aspects of it, but I was able to be critical of some things, as well. In the 1980s, the Thatcher government set up the Peacock Committee on Financing the BBC. It was assumed that Thatcher hoped it would recommend that the BBC be financed by the sale of advertising and all that. One member of the committee wanted research that might put another point of view. I wouldn't say we had a strong influence there, but we were certainly happy to play ball with him. One of the things I did was a large interview-based study amongst American TV people on the likely impacts of increased competition for advertising. A conclusion of which was that competition for advertising revenue could be deleterious for the range and quality of programming. At any rate, the Peacock Committee did not recommend advertising as a revenue source for the BBC.

Back to Table of Contents

One of your book subtitles mentions values in broadcasting (Blumler, 1992).
It shows how I approach these things. There are values at stake in how the media are run, not just viability, even not just audience satisfaction. I personally have wanted to be identified with values that are relevant to our field, and that scholarship should have something to say on. In political communication research, the concept of informed, engaged, and effective citizenship has played that part.

Why did you take the joint appointment with Maryland?
It has to do with the big failure in my career. The center here in Leeds had a research record and recognition in the field, but I could never get the university to invest in it. Their funding consisted of my post, a research assistant, a secretary, and some modest expanses. I was frustrated and even thought of accepting one of the full-time appointments that might have been offered to me. Opportunities arose at Madison, USC, Cleveland State, and Syracuse, where Max McCombs still was, but I couldn't really see myself pulling up all the roots here. Michael Gurevitch, who was a lifelong colleague, had got to Maryland the year before. He knew how I was feeling and persuaded the dean to offer me a position for one semester a year.

What was the problem at Leeds? Was it about the reputation of the discipline?
At the time I kept trying, I was told even by a sympathetic vice chancellor, "You have to know, Jay, there are trees and branches. And you are just a branch. When things get difficult, we have to look to the trees." My center was somehow out on a limb. I tried to outline the attraction of the subject to students, but I failed as a persuader in that line. But when I had to retire, the university set up a committee to consider what should be done in the future and only then decided to establish a quite large department, now known as its Institute of Communications Studies.

How did you feel when you were asked to run for ICA President?
Flattered, I think. It was Brenda Dervin who suggested it. I quite liked the idea. One of the things I'm good at is chairmanship. However, I assumed I wasn't going to get it. My opponent was Doris Graber, a wonderful person. I assumed she would be president. She phoned to congratulate me soon after I was elected and said, "It's because they love you, Jay" [laughing]. The theme of my conference in San Francisco in 1989 was "Comparatively Speaking" (Blumler et al., 1992). That harked back to an early essay on the need for comparative approaches (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1975).

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?
It was a great honor. When they ask you for a short biography, I certainly mention that.

Some people are glad to finally retire. Could you name the stimulus that keeps you going?
There are two stimuli connected with each other. I really have enjoyed thinking about what's going on in the field, especially in political communication, but not exclusively. Reading good stuff and collaborating with people is terrific. What more fulfillment could I have? I'm a baseball fan, I have got eclectic music tastes, and I belong to a local choir; but our research area has such a dynamic development and offers changes and wrinkles that continually stimulate one to think and to study.

Back to Table of Contents

What about the second one?
It just has to do with the availability of wonderful people round the place. Here in Leeds, I can interact with people like Stephen Coleman now (Coleman & Blumler, 2009).

Who is Jay Blumler? A researcher, a teacher, the founder of communication in the UK, the pioneer of the uses and gratifications approach? What is the most important part of your academic life?
It's very difficult to rank them. When I came to Leeds having spent 14 years in teaching, there was a big difference. Here I had almost entirely research, but no teaching. In those days, I thought that research was more important, but I do like myself better as a teacher. I'm certainly not *the* founder or *the* pioneer, but a founder.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?
I never ventured to write about that. People study media and communication in different ways and with different disciplinary influences. The best we can do is try to understand and learn from each other. I must confess that I was never convinced by people who advocated the concept of communication as a discipline. Maybe the nearest somebody has got toward it is Sonia Livingstone, with her views on "the mediation of everything" (2009).

Where do you see the field in 2030?
I think it will be in good shape. The field will be sufficiently established in the main universities, it will continue to attract funding and be regarded as important for both society and students.

Are there any scholars who you would call a role model?
Elihu Katz. I have worked with many great scholars, but I place him above them all. Who else? Lance Bennett, for his way of looking at the news media. I also think of Sonia Livingstone. She may have thought of me as a role model once upon a time, but I could return the compliment. She is so productive and energetic across a range of subjects and still seems to be coming on. Jack McLeod, whose purposive, sophisticated, and productive handling of quantitative data has been outstanding. He also has been such a fabulous mentor to his students. Denis McQuail might be astounded that I should mention him in this connection. He is so good in his line. He has the ability to absorb a whole host of approaches and bring them together (McQuail, 2010). Where else can you encounter a textbook like his writings on mass communication theory?

Looking back on about 50 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?
I'm glad that I pursued, from start to finish, this normative line I mentioned earlier. I'm probably proud of particular pieces of work. There are several. Our first book, of course (Blumler & McQuail, 1968). It could be claimed that we produced the most thought-through application of uses and gratifications that one could find in the literature. Incidentally, Paul Lazarsfeld liked the book. Do you know the story of that?

Back to Table of Contents

No.

The book was going to be published by Faber and Faber, but Morris Janowitz suggested that it also should be offered to the University of Chicago Press. As it is natural, Chicago put the book out for review—to Paul Lazarsfeld. He wrote back, "It should be published. However, there are a few points I would like to discuss with the authors if they could come to see me in Paris." We met him in one of these Parisian cafes with tiered seating. He was great. His recommendations were sharp and we incorporated all of them into our final text.

Back to pride and glory.

There is another line of research that I'm also proud of. In 1966, I was invited by the BBC to stay with their news and current affairs team during the entire election campaign of that year. Although then, there was a hiatus, after that, in the elections of 1979, 1983, 1987, 1992, 1997 and 2001, I conducted observation research at the BBC, from three to six days each time and therefore enough to get something out of it. That gave me a purchase on political communication change over time. I was truly pleased with the book that I wrote with Michael Gurevitch, which came out of all that (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995).

Then again, is there anything that you would do differently today?

No. I'm content with what I've tried to undertake. The only regret has to do with the institutional situation here.

What will remain when Jay Blumler is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

The field will remain, with lots of worthwhile things being done, but I'm afraid that the most important questions, whatever they might be as things go along, could get lost because there are so many specific things now that people can try to examine. It may not turn out that way, but there is a danger that the big points that the British, as well as continental Europeans, have often been concerned with will become less attended to.

Back to Table of Contents

References

Blumler J. G., & Katz, E. (1974). *The uses of mass communications: Current perspectives on gratifications research*. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications.

Blumler, J. G. (1980). Mass communication research in Europe: Some origins and prospects. *Media, Culture & Society*, *2*, 367–376.

Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1975). Towards a comparative framework for political communication research. In S. H. Chaffee (Ed.) *Political communication* (pp. 165–193). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Blumler, J. G. (Ed.). (1992). *Television and the public interest. Vulnerable values in West European broadcasting*. London: SAGE Publications.

Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1995). *The crisis of public communication*. London: Routledge.

Blumler, J. G., Gurevitch, M., & Ives, J. (1978). *The challenge of election broadcasting*. Leeds, UK: Leeds University Press.

Blumler, J. G., McLeod, J. M., & Rosengren, K. E. (Eds.) (1992). *Comparatively speaking: Communication and culture across space and time*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications.

Blumler, J. G., & McQuail, D. (1968). *Television in politics: Its uses and influences*. London: Faber and Faber.

Coleman, S., & Blumler, J. G. (2009). *The Internet and democratic citizenship: Theory, practice and policy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Katz, E. (1959). Mass communication research and the study of culture. *Studies in Public Communication, 2*, 1–6.

Katz, E., & Feldman, J. (1962). The debates in light of research: A survey of surveys. In S. Kraus (Ed.) *The great debates: Kennedy vs. Nixon, 1960* (pp. 173–223). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Kingsley, J. D. (1944). *Representative bureaucracy*. Yellow Springs, OH: Antioch Press.

Klapper, J. (1960). *The effects of mass communication*. New York: Free Press.

McQuail, D. (2008). Blumler, Jay G. (1924–) In L. L. Kaid & C. Holtz-Bacha (Eds.) *Encyclopedia of political communication*, *vol. 1* (pp. 61–62). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's mass communication theory* (6th ed.). London: SAGE Publications.

Mosher, W. E., & Kingsley, J. D. (1936). *Public personnel administration*. New York: Harper.

Trenaman, J., & McQuail, D. (1961). *Television and the political image: A study of the impact of television on the 1959 general election*. London: Methuen.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1507–1514 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

JENNINGS BRYANT

"I helped the discipline mature."

Jennings Bryant, March 18, 2011.
Marion, NC. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1944 in Georgia
Education:	1967 A.B. in history, Davidson College
	1971 M.A. in communication and counselling, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
	1974 Ph.D. in mass communication, Indiana
Career:	1974 Assistant Professor, University of Massachusetts.
	1979 Associate Professor
	1981 Professor, University of Evansville
	1984 University of Houston
	1987 University of Alabama
	2002 ICA President
	2006 ICA Fellow
	2011 Steven H. Chaffee Career Productivity Award
Personal:	Married, three children

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Jennings Bryant

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

I was born in Georgia, and then we moved north to North Carolina. We lived in a beautiful farm about 20 miles from here up in the high mountains. My father was in the furniture industry as a vice president for corporate communication of a big company. My mother was a librarian. We had a wonderful life out in the country. My mother is still alive, and my two sisters live right there. For a long time, I was not sure what I wanted to do. Both of my parents were very eclectic in their interests. My mother was constantly bringing books home from all sorts of areas. They always encouraged all of us children to explore a lot of diverse interests.

Do you still remember why you chose to study history at Davidson College?

As an undergraduate, I tried to look at everything as much as I could. For a long time, I was a pre-med and a history major at the same time. In my senior year, I decided rather to take the law school route than to go to med school. Then I went to both schools at North Carolina, but only for a year. I didn't enjoy either one of them. Both were professionally interesting, but not intellectually stimulating. I went to a theological seminary which was a wonderful experience because you could deal with life questions and issues. There, I probably decided to become not a pastor, but a professor.

How did this happen?

I enjoyed teaching. I taught Hebrew and Greek in the seminary, as well as in a Jewish community center and in a Greek orthodox church. In my second year, they made me a teaching assistant, and I fell under the influence of the wonderful Daniel Wessler, who had unusual courses like "The Gifts of Silence," which was nonverbal communication (Wessler & Wessler, 1976). Even as a student, I was a sort of dedicated scholar. In my third year, they asked me, "Why don't you go into communication?" So I contacted the deans of some prominent schools in the field and got reading lists from George Gerbner, David Berlo, and the like. When I graduated in 1971, I had pretty much studied everything of great substance [that] there was in communication at that time, which really wasn't very much.

Why did you go to Indiana?

The key was just to pick the right person for the PhD. I asked all the deans I had been working with about fresh brilliant scholars. So I came to Dolf Zillmann at Penn, who had been the director of the Cohen Holding Group in Zurich, a very practical kind of communication research enterprise (Bryant, Roskos-Ewoldsen, & Cantor, 2003, pp. 12–13). I was accepted at Annenberg and was preparing to make the move to Philly, when all of a sudden I got a call. My professor was going to Indiana. So I pulled out all the stops and got accepted there at the 11th hour. This was truly a last-minute move.

Have you ever considered working as a journalist?

No. I was more interested in the discipline than in the profession, although I had some practical experience. When I graduated from college not knowing exactly what I was going to do, I took a job as associate director of an anti-poverty program. They quickly realized that I could write and put me in a PR position, but this was not really what I wanted to do. Communication had big questions that hadn't been

Back to Table of Contents

even asked. Both Dolf Zillmann and I were interested in entertainment, which had not really been explored in a sophisticated way.

How would you compare the grad student Jennings Bryant at Indiana with today's students?
Because the field was very young, we didn't just take traditional communication courses. It was a kind of umbrella program that was part of seven different departments. We not only had journalism, telecommunications, and speech but also folklore, philosophy of science, sociology, and psychology. The difference is that I basically continued my liberal arts explorations at the doctoral level. In my second year, I knew what was out there in mass communication and began to ask questions I was interested in. Today, students are mastering much more cohesive and abundant literature with its core in communication. They are part of a highly structured discipline that I wasn't a part of.

Can you tell me something about your main academic teachers?
I was really fortunate. I had two courses with Michael Scriven, a great philosopher of science. I had T. A. Sebeok, who was a wonderful semiotician. I took two courses in animal communication. And I had two great psychology professors.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to entertainment and media effects?
I was just looking for the most interesting questions that hadn't been answered well. It wasn't anything personal. I actually didn't think that media had particularly profound effects. I had no contact with a lot of media except from books. So I was absolutely flabbergasted when we began to discover empirically that the electronic media had more effects than I had previously thought. We quickly moved into new models and techniques like selective exposure, mood management, and a variety of behavioural measures (Bryant & Zillmann, 1986; Zillmann & Bryant, 1985).

What about entertainment?
This issue came relatively late and was linked to *Sesame Street*. I went to the Children's Television Workshop during the early 1970s with Keith Mielke as a part of a Spencer Foundation grant. Our purpose was to develop new methods for testing the effectiveness of educational TV programs on children. We were given carte blanche. We spent two days with Marcia Guttentag looking at evaluation (Guttentag, 1971) or with Ward Edwards, who taught Bayesian Statistics, and Michael Wolf, who worked in formative evaluation in advertising. We developed methods that are still used today. We also decided to test how appealing the different segments of the *Sesame Street* are and learned quickly that there was just not enough known about appeal, enjoyment, entertainment, and the like. We began to read Aristotle and Freud, who had struggled with entertainment, but also other philosophers or from the forerunners of psychology and not from a scientific perspective. We realized that these questions had to be answered if the discipline was to mature.

How would you rate the position of media psychology within communication?
It has certainly changed over the years. When we first submitted manuscripts on the topic, most of the journals didn't know what to do with us, especially with the entertainment perspective. Today, conferences and mainstream journals are sometimes dominated by the media psychological perspective.

Back to Table of Contents

So certainly it moved into the mainstream, but I remember all too well when it was almost next-to-impossible to get published with empirical pieces in the entertainment theory arena. Communication journals evaluated our research as psychology, and psychology journals tried to put us into applied psychology. In fact, psychology was more receptive than communication. When I came up for tenure, I probably had published 30 articles. And 22 or 23 of them were in psychology journals.

How do you explain this change?

One point is the public interest. George Gerbner was very interested in press attention and realized the market value of media psychology in general, and entertainment theory, in particular, for the *Journal of Communication*. First, he was hard to convince that entertainment issues are relevant, but journalists were picking up on our stuff, and he was always tuned in to the public's interest. Moreover, Gerbner was an incredibly strong editor. What he wanted to publish, that was published no matter what the reviewer said. He essentially changed the criteria of credibility. A second point is that some of our articles ended up in some really good psychology journals, so when we submitted a manuscript to communication journals, their editors and reviewers saw the cross-referenced articles and seemed to decide that there might be something to this more psychological approach to media issues.

How would you rate the position of communication scholars within psychology?

It's less prestigious there, although that's also changing. Only in the last five or ten years, psychologists are recognizing that it is important to have people who conceptualize things differently from communication's perspective. Most of my invitations to do public presentations and doctoral program reviews are coming out of psychology departments.

You founded the journal* Media Psychology *at age 54.

I've no idea how old I was.

You were already in your 50s. Was there no short-cut?

I was aware of the fact that we needed a journal like that 10 years before it came out. People like Lawrence Earlbaum said, "It's a great idea but make it a first-class journal. Make sure that your editorial board represents good senior scholars in both communication and psychology." There were simply not enough senior people who did media psychology back then to come up with a compelling, senior-level editorial board relying primarily on U.S. scholars. Later, the German example showed that there were a number of people that could contribute the field. *Zeitschrift für Medienpsychologie* was something in-between a newsletter and a journal, but it showed the potential of what was there.

*W**hile some academics stay at the very same place, you moved a lot. Was it so difficult to find a home?***

The first move I had made was a geographical one. I loved New England. In many ways, I would have been happy to spend my entire life in Amherst, but when I got there we had frozen salaries for the first five years. We were beginning to have children, and you couldn't raise a family with the income of an assistant professor. In the summers, I went to other places to make a living. As a chair in Evansville, I wanted to see if I liked administration.

Back to Table of Contents

What about Houston and Tuscaloosa?

I had a lot to teach in Evansville. I was chairing a department. We had a radio station that was number three in the market; we had a yearbook and a daily newspaper. There was just no time to be a scholar. In Houston, there were five former or current deans in the Radio-Television faculty that I was invited to chair. That was a hard place to be a chair, but I learned a tremendous amount and had a lot of fun. But living in Houston was truly a pain, and it wasn't a great university by most traditional criteria. The offer from Tuscaloosa had a tremendous amount of flexibility. The mandate of my endowed chair was to work under the freest possible conditions to advance the state of the discipline and the status of Alabama in the field of communication. I couldn't imagine a better opportunity.

How about reality?

I basically taught one doctoral-level course a semester most of the time. When I chaired a state task force or something like that, I did not necessarily teach. For a liberal arts person who wanted to go ahead and continue to address a lot of different questions with different methodologies, this was the ultimate position. The finances were there, the infrastructure was in place, and the university supported an entrepreneurial spirit (Thompson, 2006). I never heard a "No." I was always told, "Let's see how we can find funding for it. I'm sure we can make it work out."

Sounds perfect.

It was a pretty rare position. Over the years, I was offered a number of deanships on the best communication schools. Ultimately, I always decided I'd much rather have my freedom and the support that I've got than the opportunity to move.

During the past decades, you served as reviewer of hundreds of manuscripts. Could you put your main criteria of evaluation in some keywords?

First of all, did it ask new questions in fresh ways, and was it advancing our body of knowledge? This includes scientific standards like reliability or the chance of replication. The second point was the rigor. I did not care whether it came from a critical background or from a social scientific perspective.

How did you feel when you were asked to run for ICA President?

I was humbled. I had never seen myself as a public servant within the discipline. I was still trying to answer critical questions. First I said no. They asked three times. I've been asked by NCA, too. Finally, the nominating committee said this is something the discipline needs you to do. ICA was ready for some changes. I liked the aspirations of Michael Haley, who was the new executive director, and I knew that there were some really good presidents going ahead of me. Role models like Peter Monge and Joe Cappella had left the place in good shape. My conference was in Seoul. I've had no experience in Asia before. I thought it's a fascinating opportunity to learn more about the world.

In 2002, you named three presidential goals of internationalization, diversity, and more travel grants for graduate students (Bryant, 2002, p. 164). Did you succeed in meeting these goals?

I think we did. We placed our conferences strategically and raised the membership from various countries. We were looking to build diversity in every level, including race, gender, sexual orientation, and epistemology. ICA has been a very rigid social scientific organization. We began to put people in key

Back to Table of Contents

positions whose work was different. Michael Haley helped tremendously in that regard. The financial success had partly to do with renegotiating the journal contracts. That's where most of the money comes from. We were able to move the headquarters to Washington. This infrastructure allows the organization to achieve those other goals.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?
It was a great honor. Most fellows thought that I already was one. My name suddenly started showing up on the fellow's page in the program in the late 1990s, the result of some clerical error I'm sure, and it has been listed there ever since, but I had never been elected a fellow. Finally, Michael put me up and I was elected, making an honest man out of me.

Do you like the role of a local celebrity?
I spent a lot of time doing newspaper or TV interviews. In some periods of my life, there was not a day without one. It was nice, but I never considered that a big deal. I quickly learned that I had the ability to do sound bites, and I knew from looking at people like George Gerbner that it was essential to do that. Joanne Cantor, who is a good friend of mine, has done this strategically. It certainly helps the discipline, but I'm actually pretty shy. When I didn't push it, the PR arm of our university did.

Who is Jennings Bryant: a researcher, a teacher, the founder of* Media Psychology*, the icon of Alabama's Department of Telecommunication and Film? What is the most important part of your academic life?
That's interesting. First of all, I'm a father and a husband. The personal life has always been more important to me than the professional. I go in academia with the same values. If I did anything right, it was probably the role of being a mentor and helping young scholars I've always been most comfortable with. I have spent a lot of time working behind the scenes, advancing careers and uplifting the contributions of others.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?
To me, it is the study of human symbol systems. It was critical that we have been able to develop a disciplinary perspective. We recognized that there are diverse groups doing this kind of research, and that all the different ways are valuable. Some are better in gaining status in the university, but that doesn't mean that they are really better in answering questions.

How was the reputation of the discipline at Alabama?
Communication moved from being a fringe discipline to being central to the life blood of the university. Faculty from communication were chairing search committees for vice presidents or presidents. By acting locally, we showed what Aristotle or Plato recognized early on: Communication issues are important.

What about the preconception that communication is about the training of students first and only secondly about research?
We actually had a hybrid situation. We did a pretty good job in professional training at the undergraduate level. Even at the master's level, we were more successful in the professional branch than in the disciplinary, but in our doctoral program, we didn't want people with a continuing professional orientation.

Back to Table of Contents

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?

I see big changes. Twenty-five years ago, the action was almost always in the Big Ten research universities. They were exporters of ideas and importers of doctoral students. The rest of the world paid attention to what communication was doing in the U.S. That's not the way things are happening any more at all. In the Netherlands, the Royal Dutch Academy for Arts and Sciences was putting out some real money for communication. In Germany, we also see fresh ideas and brilliant young scholars. Central European programs are, in some terms, more rigorous and more diverse than in the U.S. They are beginning to export some of their great scholars. In Asia, it's the same. In Korea, Australia, China and Japan, people are doing fascinating things. There are no skyscrapers yet, but three-store buildings. It has really become an intellectual sharing worldwide.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

Right now, it is driven to fundable topics like health or political communication. Graduate students see were the money is. I think we are building a bit too many silos within those areas. I don't see real progress in the key epistemological questions. In a few years, it will be time for a new issue of *Ferment in the Field*. We have to ground ourselves in a worldwide intellectual infrastructure and look at the continued advances, both in methodologies and theoretical models, including the professional research branch. Our best PhD students are not going necessarily to academic institutions, but in the applied research. The commercialization of communication as an intellectual enterprise will definitely change the field. People look at what faculty can earn and realize they can get five times as much in the communication industries than they can in academe.

What about the academic infrastructure of communication?

I don't think that we should continue to develop more and more or larger and larger departments. Undergraduates are particularly sensitive to market forces. If they are not able to get jobs, we'll see some shrinking at this level. At the same time, the field needs think tanks. We, as a family, are renovating a home for faculty sabbaticals here at the top of the hill. There, they'll have the best private library you can imagine. We want to be able to bring people together for discussing great ideas right here in tiny, little Glenwood.

Are there any scientists whom you would call as role models?

For me, that was certainly Dolf Zillmann. He is the most original thinker I've ever run across and a great methodologist. So he was able to test his ideas. A second important role model was Brad Greenberg because he never stopped researching. When I became 58 or 60, my life turned towards service for the discipline. I probably wrote 100 letters of recommendation a semester and did at least 25 evaluations for tenure promotions in other places. Each one of those things takes a day of your life. People like Dolf just said, "I'm not going to do that." I became less productive because I directed doctoral programs, edited journals, and did book things. I also admire Joanne Cantor. We were cohorts at Indiana. She went to a strong doctoral program early on and was able to influence a whole generation of scholars. Wisconsin always attracted great doctoral students.

Back to Table of Contents

Looking back on 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?
I helped the discipline mature. For example, I started a book series, which ended up producing more than 600 volumes. At Massachusetts, a philosopher who was an external reviewer of our communication program wanted to see the three communication books I'm most proud of. One of the books I pulled off the library shelves was the Blumler and Katz (1974) volume. The book was still almost new but fell apart because it was poorly produced. He said, "You can't have a great discipline when you don't have great books. These things create the second-class status of communication."

Is there anything that you would do differently today?
Probably, I would be a little more selfish. I had so many ideas that I didn't have time to pursue because I was doing work for other people.

What will remain when Jennings Bryant is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
The journal, the book series and the fact that entertainment and media psychology have become key areas of inquiry. And hopefully, the doctoral students that I've raised from kids will be there.

References

Blumler J. G., & Katz, E. (1974). *The uses of mass communications: Current perspectives on gratifications research*. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications.

Bryant, J. (2002). Interview with Prof. Dr. Jennings Bryant. *Zeitschrift für Medienpsychologie*, *14*(4), 164–165.

Bryant, J., & Zillman, D. (Eds.) (1986). *Perspectives on media effects.* Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Bryant, J., Roskos-Ewoldsen, D. R., & Cantor, J. (2003). A brief biography and intellectual history of Dolf Zillmann. In J. Bryant, D. R. Roskos-Ewoldsen & J. Cantor (Eds.), *Communication and emotion: Essays in honor of Dolf Zillmann* (pp. 7–27). Mahmah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Guttentag, M. (1971). Models and methods in evaluation research. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 1, 75–93.

Thompson, S. A. (2006). Jennings Bryant: The "compleat" scholar. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 50, 164–170.

Wessler, M. J., & Wessler, D. B. (1976). *The gifts of silence*. Atlanta: John Knox.

Zillmann, D., & Bryant, J. (Eds.) (1985). *Selective exposure to communication*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1515–1521 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

JUDEE K. BURGOON

"Bringing a communication perspective into the hard sciences."

Judee K. Burgoon, April 15, 2011.
University of Arizona at Tucson. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1948 in Ames, Iowa
Education:	1970 B.A. in speech and English, Iowa State University
	1972 M.S. in speech, Illinois State University
	1974 Ph.D. in communication and educational psychology, West Virginia University
Career:	1974 Assistant Professor, University of Florida
	1977 Vice President of the National Center for Telephone Research, New York, and Adjunct Assistant Professor, Hunter College, New York
	1978 Michigan State University
	1980 Associate Professor
	1984 Professor, University of Arizona at Tucson
	2007 Distinguished Visiting Professor (part-time), University of Oklahoma
	1989 ICA Fellow
	1997 B. Aubrey Fisher Mentorship Award
	1999 Distinguished Scholar, NCA
	2006 Steven H. Chaffee Career Productivity Award
Personal:	Divorced, one daughter

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Judee K. Burgoon

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

My parents met at Iowa State. My mother started out with music but changed to home economics. This was good because eventually she was going to be the mother of five children. My father was aspiring to be a politician, but he also had a lot of entrepreneurial ideas. He ultimately ended up becoming a car dealer and then was elected to the State Legislature in Iowa (Le Poire, 1996). When he was politicking and running for office, he asked me to write campaign speeches for him. He didn't need them. He just wanted me to have work experience in writing. Long-term, it was very helpful. At that time, I was in high school and wanted to become a teacher. I was also very active in debate. Forming and articulating arguments was excellent preparation for teaching, becoming a debate coach, and eventually, for doing research.

Did religion play any role in your childhood?

Yes, it certainly did in terms of my values. We were regular attendees of the Methodist church, and I was a member of the Methodist Youth Fellowship. My father liked to attend Sunday school, where he could argue about issues and ideas. My mother came from a very religious family. Her brother became a Baptist pastor. That side of the family was very traditional, and Iowa was a very conservative place to grow up. Even though my father prepared me to think along those lines, I became much more liberal than he was, much to his chagrin.

Do you still remember why you chose to study at Iowa State University?

Both of my parents were from Iowa State. It was within state, it was affordable, and the university gave me a scholarship. At age 13, I had started working odd jobs to make money so that I could go to college. My father said, "With five kids, I can't afford to help you too much." I went to Iowa State with the expectation of being a teacher. I started out teaching high school for a year before I went on for my master's. Even though I was a straight-A student, it was not until I was in my master's program that anyone, for the first time, suggested to me I should get a PhD. At that time, teachers didn't encourage women too much. They just didn't think of it.

So you chose speech and English because you wanted to be a teacher.

In that era, it was very common for women to think about traditional career options. Teaching was one of those. Way back in ninth grade, I had a teacher who was very influential for a lot of students. She taught speech and also had a voice choir. We were directed almost like a music chorus, but the group was speaking poetry or theatre. That got many of us interested in communication and debate.

How would you compare the student Judee Stringer with your students today?

I was a very good student. I loved school and was very disciplined and motivated. Many of the students today are not. Many of our undergraduates have an entitlement mentality. They expect to have their hand held along the way and expect that they are going to be given As and Bs. Many of them don't know how to study and are not very serious, maybe, in part, because they have not had to pay for their own education. Their parents have made it very comfortable for them. They also are easily distracted and expect you to entertain and make things exciting for them. I find the undergraduate body, on average, not very enjoyable to work with. Of course, there are always those really bright and engaged students

Back to Table of Contents

who still make it satisfying to be a teacher, but it's much more gratifying to work with the graduate students.

Can you tell me something about your main academic teachers?

There has been an interesting mix of people who have influenced me: My teacher in ninth grade, a lot of very good teachers at a really fine high school, and some marvelous college faculty in anthropology, sociology, and speech. I also had wonderful debate coaches. I thoroughly enjoyed exploring both sides of an argument and acquiring the evidence for each.

Who was your master's adviser?

Brad Lashbrook, who also co-advised my PhD work—a brilliant and really idiosyncratic individual. He brought us into the world of research methods. Many people in communication are math avoiders. When I first had to learn methods as a master's student, Brad said to all of us, "I'm going to bring you screaming and kicking into this world." And he did. He did fun things to make it appealing for us. He gave out candies for right answers or played graduation music when we got an exam back. It was like a big event. We learned so much about statistics and design with him. When he moved to West Virginia University, it was a natural to have him continue as my advisor there.

What about the educational side?

There, I had Rogers McAvoy. I also learned a great deal from B. F. Skinner's daughter, Julie Vargas. At first, I was resistant to Skinnerian thinking, but when she taught the class on behavior modification, her father came to speak to us. It was enlightening. I found that it was a very smart way to think about things, to focus on observables without having to get into the "black box" of the mind. Ever since, I think that's been an important underpinning of what I do on the nonverbal side. I ask myself: What is it that we can see, and how is that connected with what we can't see? Skinner's thinking had a profound influence on my approach to methodology and on expectancy violations theory (Burgoon, 1978).

When did you know that you wanted to become a scientist, maybe a communication scientist?

When I learned that we could study communication from a scientific perspective. The first person who taught me about argumentation came from Michigan State and brought those ideas with him [unnamed]. In my master's program, I got much more of the science of communication from Brad Lashbrook and Jim McCroskey.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to nonverbal communication?

That was during that master's program. McCroskey taught a class on that topic. At the time, there were no books on the subject, so he had all of us go out and search out literature. That's where things started for me. The interest in nonverbal communication grew out of the interpersonal area (McCroskey, Larson, & Knapp, 1971). Jim and Mark Knapp had worked together, and Mark ultimately produced one of the first books (Knapp, 1972), along with Randy Harrison from Michigan State (Harrison, 1974). That class at Illinois State is what sparked my interest, and it continued when I went to West Virginia, where both McCroskey and Lashbrook had gone, not to mention, Michael Burgoon, whose work on expectancy violations also clearly affected the direction of my early nonverbal communication research.

Back to Table of Contents

How would you rate the academic position of interpersonal within the discipline?
Interpersonal and mass are the two bedrocks in our field. Let me add organizational, which is clearly an important area and has become even more visible over the years. Interests in interpersonal and mass communication spurred the founding of ICA. So I would say interpersonal is extremely important. In turn, many of us have been part of some of the other divisions that grew out of interpersonal, such as language and social interaction in ICA, and social cognition or nonverbal communication in NCA.

Mark Knapp observed "misplaced emphases on government grants and any kind of grants." Could you understand this standpoint?
Sure, but I don't agree with it. By acquiring external grants and contracts, we've been able to do much more sophisticated and ecologically valid research. As a discipline early on in our development, we followed many of the methods of psychology, including their sampling strategy of using a lot of undergraduates. Extramural funding gives us the resources instead to sample "real people" (other than students) and to move out of the laboratory into field settings, which is the most "stringent" laboratory for seeing communication in action. Because communication has not had access to the funding agencies the way other disciplines have, we don't have our own program officers or programs dedicated to communication. So it has been easy for many to take the stand that we don't want to be "contaminated" by grants. Mark has been in universities where more of the faculty are in the humanities, where there has been less need for grants, or there is more emphasis on writing books, which does not require grants, either. Ours is a different kind of scholarship. For stature in academia right now, having funding is the coin of the realm. It validates your work in the scientific community. If you are in a discipline that does not obtain outside funding, you are not really seen as a first-class citizen in academia. Now, through the funding that we are attracting, we are being recognized by entities like the National Academy of Sciences, the National Research Council, or the National Science Foundation, and are becoming a more visible, respected discipline.

You served as editor of* Communication Monographs *and of course as reviewer of manuscripts. Can you put your main criteria of evaluation in some keywords?
Originality, scientific rigor, hypotheses situated in a larger framework, and not confirming the obvious. It's very easy to do communication research that's trivial. Sometimes it looks very sophisticated and new by importing new methods that others don't yet understand. I'm not a fan of surveys in the interpersonal area. It is necessary to study real messages and real communication patterns. In other disciplines, they may talk about factors that influence communication, do hand waving over the communication part, and only look at the outcomes. We are supposed to be the ones that come in here, look at what actually happens in the interaction and understand that process. When I'm judging interpersonal and nonverbal research, those things matter.

Were you ever forced to think about gender questions during your academic career?
I've been fortunate in many respects. On the one hand, I was doing things in the male dominated area of argumentation and debate, but on the other hand, communication is a field that has been receptive to women coming into it. In the academic world, I've not faced as many gender issues as I have when doing consulting or media research. There, I've found more resistance toward me being the expert. It's by no means across the board, but I can still remember one occasion where I was trying to explain something in

Back to Table of Contents

the data to a group of men and they kept turning to the other man in the room. I finally lost my cool. That finally got their attention, but it wasn't the best way to be taken seriously as an expert.

Some of my interviewees described the university as a sexist environment.
I should take that back about almost never facing gender issues in academia. When I went up for tenure "early" at Michigan State, they said, "No, you need to wait a year"—even though I had met all the criteria and I had a better record than several men they had promoted "early." I think it was gender-related because the only thing they wanted me to do was to spend one more year in rank. Another example: At the University of Florida, I was on a temporary position and received a pink slip. They had to lay off people and started with those who had been hired most recently. The women's organization there went to battle over this because most of us being laid off were female. When they reviewed my case, they asked, "Why was she even put on a temporary position? She should have been on a tenure streamline." I didn't even realize that they were not treating me the same way they were treating males. But I have been fortunate that along the way, there have been a lot of people who have been real champions for women and for me.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?
Very, very happy. To me, ICA has been a wonderful organization. I think I may have been the youngest woman ever to be elected. No gender bias or ageism there.

You got awards from ICA as well as from NCA, and you have served for both associations. If you had to choose between both, which one would be your favorite?
I really can't. I have split allegiances. For quite a while, I identified myself more with ICA. It has a strong scientific orientation that is very powerful. Then I got pulled back into more engagement with NCA, in part because Jim Gaudino kept trying to draw some of the scholars back. Jim was NCA's executive director for many years, as well as being a Michigan State graduate and a friend. NCA is now so strong in [the] interpersonal area, plus adding the nonverbal division and some other areas I have interest in, like small group communication, language and social interaction, social cognition, and communication theory. There is a nice critical mass of scholars there. Lately, I've become very intrigued with the new technological areas. ICA is definitely in the forefront of that one. I have a deep appreciation for both associations.

Who is Judee Burgoon: a researcher, a teacher, the chairwoman of scientific associations, the champion of nonverbal communication? What is the most important part of your academic life?
I never like to do a "most." Frankly, what I'm most proud of are the students I've produced who are going out in the nonverbal and interpersonal areas. I had the fortune of having so many good students who then, in turn, have been producing other good students. That's probably the core of what matters to me. The honors and things like that? In 50 years, nobody is going to know any of that, but I'll still have had students who have influenced other students. So I'll have a legacy.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?
Do you know who Don Campbell is? He talked about the fish-scale model of disciplines (Campbell, 1969). In communication, we have many overlapping scales. So I wouldn't want to say there is a single definition of who we are. For me, the core is the exchange of messages between people or some kind of other

Back to Table of Contents

"intelligent" entity. It is this process that brings us all together. It involves humans who generate those messages, as well as the patterns of interaction and their consequences.

Some of my interviewees told me about missing respect from old established subjects. How is the situation here at Tucson?

I don't have any involvement with the Communication Department here, but when I was involved with it, we gained a lot of respect on this campus. We were becoming one of the top programs in the country and also bringing in lots of external money. We were seen as generating very rigorous research and as one of the key disciplines on campus. But even here, there was a dean from psychology who placed us way down in the academic pecking order, along with social psychology. He was a cognitive psychologist. As a discipline, we continue to struggle not to be seen as only a service department handling a lot of undergraduates and not necessarily as belonging at the table with all the other major players on campus. We have no presence at the Ivy League schools. That's where many people get their models of who "belongs" in academia.

What about the other department you are affiliated with here: Management and Information Systems?

They have some of the same identity crises, but I think as technologies grow in importance in all of our lives, that's going to help management and information systems become more visible. It's the same thing for communication. Both disciplines are going to become more central.

Where do you see our field in 2030?

The driving forces of human-robot interaction, computer-mediated interaction, and social media are going to make communication and information sciences more critical. Maybe they will even merge together with fields like media, library science, and computer science. We actually tried to form a School of Communication and Information Systems here that brought together all these fields. I saw that as a natural. That kind of merger is happening elsewhere.

Are there any scientists who you would call a role model?

One of them was, of course, Brad Lashbrook—in terms of his intellectual curiosity, his engagement with students, and his love of science. He was very influential to me. Another one was Bob Rosenthal, who sponsored me for my Harvard sabbatical. He is a brilliant psychologist and has a lot of the same values as Brad. Even though he is retired, he is still working with students all the time and still producing scholarship. And Michael Burgoon modelled what it is to be a serious and rigorous theoretician, researcher, and author.

Looking back on 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

I'm proud of the scholarship I've produced and making communication more respected and understood by people in other fields—in recent years, the work with NRC or NSF making us more visible with funding agencies. I'm proud of bringing a communication perspective into the hard sciences and even the softer sciences at a national level. They need it desperately. I'm talking about things like DHS, Department of Defense, and NSF. They really need to understand what we, as communication scholars, are doing and what our field can offer.

Back to Table of Contents

Then again, is there anything that you would do differently today?

I would have gone to a different school, just because I think it always held me back. Part of my choices has been influenced by what was possible. I came from a family that didn't have a lot of money, and scholarships were going much more to men than to women at that time. For instance, Purdue offered my debate colleagues who were C-students scholarships. I was a straight-A student and they didn't offer me one. I went to West Virginia in part because they offered me an all-university fellowship. Maybe attending top schools would have sped [up] my progress, because people always look at your pedigree. Otherwise, I've been very lucky with a lot of the things that have happened. Leaving the academy for a while and doing the work I did on the media side was fantastic and an important addition to my persona as an academic.

What will remain when Judee Burgoon is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

I hope my students carry this work forward. That includes the students who I'm now advising in the MIS department. I hope that the integration of my interests in psychology, communication, and information systems will be infused into the new generation.

References

Burgoon, J. K. (1978). A communication model of personal space violation: Explication and an initial test. *Human Communication Research, 4,* 129–142.

Campbell, D. T. (1969). Ethnocentrism of disciplines and the fish-scale model of omniscience. In M. Sherif & C. W. Sherif (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary relationships in the social sciences* (pp. 328–348). Chicago: Aldine.

Harrison, R. (1974). *Beyond words: An introduction to nonverbal communication*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Knapp, M. (1972). *Nonverbal communication in human interaction*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Le Poire, B. A. (1996). Judee K. Burgoon (1948–). In N. D. Signorielli (Ed.), *Women in communication: A biographical sourcebook* (pp. 40–49). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

McCroskey, J. C., Larson, C. E., & Knapp, M. L. (1971). *An introduction to interpersonal communication*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1522–1529 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

JOANNE CANTOR

"We need to share what we do."

Joanne Cantor, August 25, 2011.
(Interviewed via Skype)

Born:	1945 in Newport News, Virginia
Education:	1967 B.A. in French literature, Cornell University
	1971 M.A. in communication, University of Pennsylvania
	1974 Ph.D., Indiana University
Career:	1974 Assistant Professor, University of Wisconsin at Madison
	1978 Tenure
	1990–1994 Associate Dean, College of Letters and Sciences
	1999 ICA Fellow and B. Aubrey Fisher Mentorship Award
	2000 Emerita
Personal:	Married, one son

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Joanne Cantor

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

My parents were both supportive and very much in favor of education. In fact, when I was three and we moved to Washington, DC, they looked first where the best public schools were, and then for a house in the area for those schools. My father went to Cornell, which he considered one of the greatest things in his life. I was the youngest of three children, and it was assumed that we'd all go there, which we did. Way back in the mid-1950s and the early 1960s, women were not really supposed to have high-power careers. There were three appropriate options: teaching, secretarial work, and nursing. I thought I would either be a teacher or a secretary. I also assumed that I would only work until I got married and started having babies. That was what everybody seemed to expect in those days.

What was your favorite option: teacher or secretary?

I thought mostly about teaching. Even in first grade, I would always think about how the teacher was trying to explain something, and how I would have explained it better when kids didn't understand. So, I had the idea of being a teacher very young, but I also thought about being a secretary. When we were in high school, girls had to take typing while boys had to build things, so I learned how to type. My father belonged to the only golf club in Washington that had Jewish members. All the Jewish Congressmen and Cabinet officials were honorary members there. My father got to know Newton Minow, who was the FCC Chairman under President Kennedy. Minow would come to our house for breakfast before playing golf with my father. I had to pass a civil service test, but my first summer job was working in Minow's office. My first job in the communications field.

What did your father do for a living?

He was originally an attorney, but he started out during the Depression. When he couldn't make enough money as an attorney, he became a building contractor.

What about your mother?

When I was young, she didn't have a paid job, but she was a constant volunteer in social organizations. She went back to school when I was in high school, got a master's degree in social work, and became an administrator in Washington, DC's Department of Social Welfare.

Did religion play any role in your childhood?

We were raised in a Reform Jewish household. I went to Sunday school, but I never got into organized religion too much. However, there are two things I took away from my training. One, we should do good on this earth because it's the right thing to do, and not wait for rewards in the afterlife. And two, when you die, you live on in the hearts and minds of those who cherish your memory.

Do you still remember why you chose to study French literature?

I was good at languages. I had taken French and Spanish in high school and thought I would be a high school teacher of French.

Back to Table of Contents

What happened to that idea?

When I got to my senior year in college, I decided that this was going to be a very unpleasant way to make a living. In my own high school, teaching language was so much about drilling and repetition, and most students didn't want to be there. You can learn a language much better if you go to live with people who speak it. My roommate and I decided we would go to live in France after graduation. I ended up with two choices: teaching English to young children in a convent school in a small town, or working as a secretary in a bank in Paris.

Of course, you took the bank.

Yes. I lived in Paris for two years, but I left the bank after three months. I then got a job at Twentieth Century Fox-France. This was a production office, much more exciting than the bank. I was there when they were filming *Patton*.

Your second brush with communication.

Yes. And it was a wild time to be in Paris. I was there during the riots and general strikes of 1968. So, it was quite an experience. Most of my friends were other expatriates. They were German, Belgian, and British.

How did you finally get back to university?

I got bored of a job that was just that. Although I was officially an assistant to the casting director, I was basically a secretary. So I decided to go back to college. The problem was that my undergraduate major only prepared me for subjects that I wasn't interested in. Then I read in the *International Herald Tribune* about Marshall McLuhan and the new field of communication. There were only a few schools with graduate programs, and they had no undergraduate prerequisites for applying because the field was so new. That's how I ended up at Annenberg.

Sounds like pure chance.

Not *pure* chance, but there were certainly chance elements to where I ended up. I had applied to Stanford, too. I really wanted to live in California, but somehow my scores got lost and they didn't arrive in time. I got a scholarship to Annenberg. I think chance plays a big role in most people's career trajectories.

How would you compare the student Joanne Cantor with today's students?

I was totally lost as an undergraduate, and I decided on my major too soon. As a graduate student, I still didn't know what I was interested in until I saw what Dolf Zillmann was doing. Once I got into that kind of work, I was totally motivated. You couldn't keep me out of the lab. I still didn't know what I wanted to do with my degree. I just knew that this was the most fun and the most rewarding work I had ever done. Today's students are a mixture of people who are really strongly motivated and those who are there because it's expected of them. Most of the students that I have been privileged to mentor have had feelings similar to mine and have had a great work ethic.

Back to Table of Contents

Could you tell me a bit more about your main academic teacher?
Dolf Zillmann was the person who lit a fire within me to be excited about communication research. He was enormously creative in so many different areas, but also great in methodology. He had very high standards, but he was also supportive. When Dolf left Annenberg to go to Indiana, he took me along as his research assistant.

When did you know that you wanted to become a communication scientist?
I didn't really think I wanted to be a professor necessarily. I just loved doing the research. It was the obvious next step to become a professor once I completed my dissertation.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to study children's fright reactions to television?
When I was in graduate school, I mainly studied the things that Dolf was interested in: media violence and its effects on aggression, persuasion, and emotional effects. When I got to Wisconsin, I continued these topics for a while, but I was also advised that I should carve out my own area. Some of my graduate students started telling me that they couldn't understand why their children were frightened by certain television programs that didn't seem frightening. One of these programs was *The Incredible Hulk,* actually. I also remembered how scared I was as a child by *The Wizard of Oz.* So I started thinking about studying fear because it interested me and nobody was studying it at the time.

That's funny, because Barbara Wilson told me about exactly the same* Wizard of Oz *experience.
I had certain movies that really got me, *Wait Until Dark,* for example, and *Jaws.* Fear responses to media turned out to be an extremely fruitful area for research. For my first major grant, I related theories of cognitive development to children's fears to make predictions about what should frighten children of different ages and which coping strategies should be effective (Cantor, 1998).

Is there any evidence that politicians or lawmakers use your knowledge?
In the early 1990s, I was involved in the National Television Violence Study. My research showed that the age recommendations in movie ratings actually attract kids to content geared to more mature audiences. I testified before Congress a few times about the new rating system the TV industry was developing. The industry's proposal involved age recommendations only. Together with the National Parent Teacher Association, we did a survey and showed that parents prefer content information over age recommendations.

Were you successful in pressuring the networks to add content information to their ratings?
With the help of a few Congressmen, yes. I also had a lot of input into the medical, psychology, and psychiatric communities, giving presentations to their groups and contributing advice to their publications. Even now, I get calls from the media all the time for articles in parenting magazines and feature stories in newspapers about how can we help our children cope with what's on TV, particularly during times of natural disasters or war. For the past few years, my new area has been cyber overload—that is, overcoming digital distractions. My advice receives lots of exposure on radio and TV, in newspapers, and on the Web about that as well. I also blog regularly on this topic for *Psychology Today.* And I give

Back to Table of Contents

presentations to corporations, professional associations, and colleges about making the most of your time and your talents in the Internet age.

Do you like being a public spokeswoman?
I enjoy it very much. Getting our information out is one of the most important things for communication people to do. We should not just do our academic research. If we don't share it, somebody else will advise the public based merely on intuition. We need to share what we do. Communication researchers need to be good communicators!

How would you rate the position of scholars that are interested in children within our discipline?
We have some superstars. Certainly Patti Valkenburg is one. So, we do very well. I don't know how to compare our area to others in terms of prestige. I think most people rank their own area more highly than someone else's area. But studying children and media is a relatively new tradition. When I started in the area, there was a very small group of people doing it. Now we suddenly have an ICA division. It's a thriving and a really fundable area.

How would you rate the position of psychological-orientated scholars within communication?
I think it's high, and there is a growing acceptance of psychological and social science research. Ages ago, I had a job interview and talked about my research on the effects of media on fear. Some of the faculty members objected and said, "This is not communication; it's psychology." But I think that opinion is rare now. The psychological effects of communication are a central part of our discipline.

Jennings Bryant told me that you influenced a whole generation of scholars. How would you yourself describe that influence?
I have been fortunate to have some of the greatest students. They came to me already being very smart and very motivated. I'm extremely proud of them. Most of them have gone on to academic careers at good places. They have become good mentors, too. If I role-modeled that, I'm happy. It's really fun for me to go to ICA and to see some of my academic "grand-students" talking about their research. A few years ago, I actually met my first great-grand-student. I'm proud that there are four generations still being productive.

Your portrait in the book* Women in Communication *tells a lot about the challenges you faced as a female grad student in a sexist environment (Nathanson, 1996).
It wasn't just sexist. There was a lot of overt sexual harassment. Things that would be crimes now were going on routinely then. When I was an undergraduate, people felt women were taking up space that a man could put to better use, because we were supposedly only there to find a husband. Then, in graduate school, many people didn't believe that women would actually go on to be professors. When I came to Wisconsin, I was the only female faculty in the department. My first teaching assistant was a male, and everyone assumed that he was the professor and I was the TA. I helped to change the gender ratio in my department. One semester, when I was acting chair, I ended up hiring five new people. All of them were women because they turned out to be the best candidates. I believe they accepted the offers because I helped make them feel that this was a welcoming environment for women.

Back to Table of Contents

Obviously, things are changing.

Yes, but there are still problems even today. At least three of those five women left because their spouses had a job somewhere else. My guess is that on average, the men in our field are still making more money than the women. Many women also have children and lack the flexibility that is necessary to move repeatedly in search of more lucrative offers. The academic career is stressful, too. For me, I love doing research. So work was never a chore. But when you have a child and he's clamoring for your attention, achieving a balance and not feeling guilty is always a challenge. I already had tenure by the time my child was born, and that made it easier.

You retired very early from Wisconsin. Was there nothing to do anymore?

In fact, there was too much to do anymore (laughing). I had become successful not only in the academy; I was called to Washington to testify and was being asked to travel for media appearances. I just felt like I was being split in too many directions, so I decided to retire from teaching. I had been teaching for 26 years in the same department. When I stopped, it allowed me actually to do more research, more writing, more speeches, and more traveling. I feel like I'm on sabbatical. I don't have my own PhD students, but I continue to mentor younger scholars informally. And as Outreach Director for the Center for Communication Research at Wisconsin, I still stay connected with my department.

Sounds like a good decision.

I feel like I'm more productive and creative since I became an Emeritus Professor. I would never have retired just to retire. I always have to have a new project. In studying the research on information overload and creativity for my latest book (Cantor, 2009), I've learned that you are more likely to come up with creative ideas when you are not constantly working. It's not an academic book; it's just 100 pages. I enjoy taking academic findings and making them accessible and useful to the general public. And I'm getting really positive feedback from readers and attendees at my presentations.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?

I didn't know I had been nominated. So I was totally surprised and very happy.

Who is Joanne Cantor: a researcher, a teacher, the public spokeswoman, the role model for female professors? What is the most important part of your academic life?

Am I supposed to choose one?

It's up to you.

I feel it's a combination. I'm a researcher who enjoys making findings useful to the public and mentoring other people to follow in that track. What got me into this was Dolf's idea that you can discover something important that nobody knew before, and that is useful to others. Because you did the research, you are the world's expert on what you did. Studying French literature, I never knew what the answer was because I didn't have any criteria. I would write a paper for a class and have no idea whether I would get an A or a C. Doing social science, it was different. I knew when I had the right answer. I appreciate the fact that whenever anybody replicates a part of one of my studies, they confirm the same basic principles

Back to Table of Contents

and outcomes. And also, whenever I speak about fear, I always get anecdotes from the audience that fit exactly with my theories.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?
I'm not a big definition person. I think communication is really the interaction between people or between people and machines. So, I have an expansive view of communication. When I was studying with Dolf and we would talk about almost anything, he would always end up saying, "In the end, it's really a communication problem." And he was right.

Most of my interviewees told me about missing respect from old-established subjects. How was the reputation of the discipline at Wisconsin?
In general, it was the same. The older the discipline, the more respect it has. Math, physics, and chemistry have great respect. Then you go one step down to psychology and sociology. Communication is even further away. I've had really good relationships with psychology professors at Wisconsin. They have respected me individually, but when my students have taken their courses, those professors seemed to be surprised by how good the students were. On the other hand, at Wisconsin we have had a lot of stars in communication. So, we are very competitive as individuals. Our department also has had many people being selected as academic deans.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?
I don't know so much about the academic landscape worldwide. Obviously, ASCoR is a great place. But in general, I'm more familiar with my area than with the reputation of whole departments. But overall, I think that communication is a very hot discipline in terms of students' interest. This will continue to grow because we have all this new electronic technology that everybody is trying to come to terms with. Communication is burgeoning everywhere.

Are there any scientists who you would call a role model?
Dolf Zillmann was my role model in many ways. It was the enjoyment of finding out new things with methods that allow you to be confident in your findings, as well as looking at a lot of different interdisciplinary influences and not focusing only on communication scholars.

Are there other role models as well?
Some of my students. I would always recommend that they take courses in other departments and then come back and tell me what they had learned. They also have much more statistical expertise because many of the statistical tests that are used now did not exist when I was in grad school.

Looking back on 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?
I'm very proud of the research program on fear. I'm also extremely proud of my graduate students who are now, in some ways, continuing my tradition. And then I'm proud of my ability to bridge the gap between academia and the general public, and to write books that don't sound like academic texts.

Back to Table of Contents

Then again, is there anything that you would do differently today?
I guess I would try to make more face-to-face connections with people in other fields. But all in all, I'm happy with the way things have turned out.

What will remain when Joanne Cantor is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
One of the reasons I don't feel so bad about not teaching in the classroom anymore is that I've influenced some people who are still teaching. So I feel that some of my ideas about communication research will continue for some time. I also hope that more communication scholars translate their findings for public consumption.

References

Cantor, J. (1998). *"Mommy, I'm scared": How TV and movies frighten children and what we can do to protect them.* San Diego, CA: Harvest Books.

Cantor, J. (2009). *Conquer CyberOverload: Get more done, boost your creativity, and reduce stress*. Madison, WI: CyberOutlook Press.

Nathanson, A. I. (1996). Joanne Cantor (1945–). In N. D. Signorielli (Ed.), *Women in communication: A biographical sourcebook* (pp. 50–59). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1530–1536 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

JOSEPH N. CAPPELLA

"I have always been interested in messages."

Joseph N. Cappella, May 28, 2011.
Boston, MA. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1947 in Auburn, New York
Education:	1969 B.A. in physics, Johns Hopkins University
	1973 M.A. Michigan State University
	1974 Ph.D. in communication, Michigan State University
Career:	1974 Assistant Professor, University of Wisconsin-Madison
	1979 Associate Professor, University of Wisconsin-Madison
	1984 Professor, University of Wisconsin-Madison
	1990 Professor, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania
	1990 ICA Fellow
	1996 B. Aubrey Fisher Mentorship Award
	2000 ICA President
	2005 Distinguished Scholar, NCA
Personal:	Married, two children

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Joseph N. Cappella

Can you tell me something about your parents?

I was born in a small town. My parents are both of Italian extraction. My father came here when he was maybe 18. It was about 1920, when there was a lot of poverty in Italy. His father had come to the United States to make some money and then slowly the family came over, too. My mother was born in the United States, but her parents were both from Italy. So I'm first generation-and-a-half.

What did your parents do for a living?

My father was a tailor. He was trained in Italy. He worked in a custom tailor shop and made all my suits and jackets throughout college. Over time, those have shrunk [laughing]. They don't fit any more. My mother was just a laborer in a factory. She and my father struggled financially.

Were there any university graduates in your family environment?

No. I was one of the very first. Some of the cousins in my generation went on to college, but I was the only one with advanced degrees and a PhD.

Did religion play any role in your childhood?

I was born in a Catholic family, went to Catholic schools as a kid, and to a Catholic college as well. My training was all with the nuns, priests, and brothers in those environments. I was probably a good student. At least that was the feedback I got from people.

What about your first professional dreams?

I wanted to be in the hard sciences. That's why I pursued an undergraduate degree in physics. I was always fascinated with the technical side of things, with bridge building and engineering. I'm not sure why I gravitated toward physics. I didn't think I was a good enough mathematician to do math. When we got to linear algebra and beyond three dimensions I said, "Oh my god, what are four or five dimensional spaces?'" It just made no sense to me any more. Physics was more grounded and more real. I almost dropped out of physics in my freshman year because I didn't do that well in my first semester. I remember during the semester break reading a whole series of biographies of great physicists, history of science and so on. I became inspired. In my second semester, I was doing very well then, and thought I could be a physicist.

Why did you abandon that idea?

I did some graduate work in physics also at Johns Hopkins. Once I got there doing only hard science, I found that insufficiently stimulating. When you are an undergraduate and get liberal arts training, it is possible to deal with a diverse set of ideas.

Why did you enroll in communication at Michigan State?

That's an interesting story. As an undergraduate student, I dated the person who is my wife now. In graduate school, she went to Michigan State in communication, even though her major was math. In fact, Gerald Miller recruited her. While I was still at Johns Hopkins, we renewed our romance, and she was writing me about the exciting things she was doing in communication. When I visited her, they welcomed

Back to Table of Contents

me with open arms into their seminars, even though I wasn't a student. I remember sitting in Everett Rogers' house just talking about the work they were doing in developing countries. They were trying to introduce safe sex and family planning practices at the time. That was pretty fascinating.

So you don't have any experiences in journalism or debating.
Zero. It was all hard sciences, actually.

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers in communication?
In my first year, I was really disappointed. I said that this is not really good stuff and not challenging. But then I met Don Cushman (Cappella et al., 1986). He was at the faculty of Michigan State at the time, still working on his dissertation at Wisconsin. A very smart guy and probably the person who kept me in communication. Don started to give me stuff to read. Then he ran a seminar in philosophy of science, which I found very stimulating. He turned us on to his ideas of the world of intentional systems and to the work of Daniel Dennett. It was really more the philosophy of social science that got me excited.

What about Gerald Miller, who became your adviser?
He was a brilliant guy in a lot of ways. He let me do the things that he thought would keep me stimulated and found some fellowships for me to work with people in system science, as well as in communication research. I also found a guy over in psychology. His name was Jack Hunter. I took several courses from him. He was a mathematical psychologist and became my co-adviser.

When did you know that you wanted to become a scientist, a communication scientist?
I think I finally figured out that I was in the right field about six years after I got my PhD [laughing]. Sometimes you just make decisions and go along in life. We had children, you do graduate work, you are going to become a professor, and then the question is: Have you made the right decisions? I had the opportunity to sit back and to reflect on what I was doing. I was learning how to become a good reviewer of articles and a person who knew how to write articles and said, "This is good."

You first moved to Madison after finishing your PhD.
Don Cushman talked a lot about Wisconsin and how great it was as an institution to become trained in. The Big Ten had a program of cooperation. Graduate students could transfer for a semester or so. I got the permission to come to Madison and took courses from people with very different points of view: theories of rhetoric from Lloyd Bitzer, philosophy of language from Dennis Stampe, mathematical sociology from Seymour Spilerman, and social psychology from Leonard Berkowitz. That was probably a watershed semester for me. I learned a tremendous amount in that period of time. I think Wisconsin also learned about me as a graduate student. When I was ready to leave there, they said we are going to have a position next year. What should the job listing say?

You started out of micro-level questions in the interpersonal area and moved to political or health questions at the macro-level. How do you explain this personal development?
I'm not sure I have a coherent explanation for that. The story I tell to myself is that I have actually always been interested in messages. In the micro-case, I'm interested in nonverbal messages, primarily in the way in which those nonverbal characteristics influence the non-verbal displays of other people. All the

Back to Table of Contents

studies that I have done in politics and health have also been concerned with messages. How are messages engineered to produce certain kinds of effects in audiences? Why are messages sometimes successful and sometimes not? When people ask me for a syllabus in health or in political communication, I say I don't teach those. I teach how messages work.

Colleagues like Stan Deetz or Scott Poole admire your rigor. Do you know what they mean?

The older I get, the more I'm concerned that our findings are robust. By that, I mean it's not just true in a little self-selected sub-sample, but in a broader sense. The findings should have a shelf life beyond the point until the next study has come along that says no, it's not true. It's probably a function of aging. You want your ideas to last a bit longer.

Do you still remember why you chose to name your chair after Gerald Miller?

Absolutely. I've never considered him to be an intellectual model for me, though I admired his intellect. What I admired most about Gerry was the way he treated me as a graduate student. He just tried to create an environment for me where I could do the things I needed to do to make a contribution as a scholar. Some of my own students need more hand-holding, but in other cases, it's best to get out of their way. Scott Poole is an example of that. He was a student of mine and didn't need a lot of direction from me.

Could you put your main criteria of evaluation for journal articles in some keywords?

If I get past the rationale and I don't care if it's one way or another, it's a bad article. There can't be core design flaws. If it's an experiment, there can't be confounds. Over-interpretation of data is a fatal flaw. I'm not as fussy about the statistics as some people are, but I dislike true believers who say that they know the one-and-only way that something should be analyzed. I don't tend to be like that. My core criterion is: Is there any chance that I use this article in a class?

Mark Knapp observed "a misplaced emphasis on getting government grants or any kind of grant." Could you understand this standpoint?

No. I can understand the notion that people are driven by getting money, but there is a difference between a grant that allows you to do something that you could not otherwise do and money for a contract that simply pays a salary. I don't care about the latter, but I care a lot about the former. I have lots of ideas that I would love to pursue. Grants give me a way of doing that, sometimes. Contracts actually wouldn't. I see people who end up having a big system with lots of staff. They suddenly feel constrained to keep their people funded. That's why they go after almost anything. In communication, we are lucky to be in places which are paying our salary whether we get grants or not. In medical schools, people are in tenure-track but have zero salary unless they bring it in. Most of my career, I didn't have grants. It's only recently.

How did you feel when you were asked to run for ICA President?

I've been asked several times before I actually decided to run. I basically said "no" because I thought it would be too much work. I had been on the Board of Directors for a very long time. So I felt a strong relationship to the association and wanted to make sure that ICA would move forward. At that time, it

Back to Table of Contents

needed a strong leadership. Now the organization is in a much better place, it can get away without having a strong president. I'm not saying it doesn't have one, but it could have presidents who don't care about their responsibilities and everything would still go just fine. In those days, that wasn't true.

So you did succeed in meeting the goals of your presidential agenda.
I think we met a couple of the parts of that agenda. One was to put the organization on a track to a long-term financial stability, and to add leadership that would allow ICA to benefit the members in ways that would not tax them too much. I think we did that. Now we have an organization that is in good financial shape. It's got a four-and-a-half-million-dollar bank account and a beautiful building in a wonderful location in Washington, DC, that is going to be paid for in four or five years. ICA also has terrific contracts with publishers. I don't say this is my doing. It's a doing of a whole bunch of people. The attendance at this conference will be 2,600, which would be double the size of the association when I was president.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?
I was very pleased. Fellow status was not that big deal in those days. There was not much recognition given to it. We didn't do any kind of honorific, and nominations were not well-perceived back then. Now we are doing a better job of electing people who should be elected. I was much happier with the mentorship award that I received. That means a lot more to me than almost anything else because your students nominate you and write letters for you.

Who is Joe Cappella: a mentor, a researcher, a teacher, the chairman of scientific associations, or the role model for communication scholars? What is the most important part of your academic life?
I think it's twofold, and I can't decide between the two. I like to solve puzzles, and I'm a mentor.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?
I think it is fundamentally about the influence of messages in social systems and their creation. If we only look at effects, we ignore the institutions that produce the messages that ultimately create effects. The study of culture is the study of the effects of various message systems. That includes interpersonal, as well as mass and otherwise—even though these are all converging into a big mishmash.

Most of my interviewees told me about the preconception that communication is about the training of students first and only secondly about research. How is the situation at Penn?
We are in a luxurious situation. Our undergraduate teaching loads are smaller than they are in other places. We emphasize the graduate program, but for me, doing research is part of teaching. Even though I could now buy my salary down to teach almost nothing, I think that would be a disaster not only for my program, but for me. Teaching forces me to be broader than my research is, and research informs my teaching because I bring hot stuff to the class, from the anti-drug or the anti-smoking areas for example. Kids realize that you are a player in those bigger arenas. There is no question that, in the field at large, your time is dominated by teaching, and evaluation is dominated by research. At Penn, we are able to make those a little bit equivalent.

Back to Table of Contents

What about the reputation of the discipline?

There are some disciplines which have a particular lack of respect for the study of communication. Political science is one of those. Even though I've done substantial work in political communication, I have never found that political scientists had a whole lot of respect for that. To some degree, there is a lack of respect from psychology, too. On the other hand, I have nothing but highest respect from my colleagues in the hard sciences—from people in psychiatry, in neuropsychology, or in marketing in the Wharton School. I've done a lot of interdisciplinary work with those people. They are sure of themselves and don't think that they have to spit on the people around them.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?

That's a big question. Let me ignore the problem of national boundaries. I don't care about that. What I care more about are the areas of work. One of the things that makes communication the discipline of the 21st century is the fact that we pay so much money to carry out our daily communications. There are big moneymaking institutions whose business is creating and disseminating communications. Those institutions need to be understood. Whereas other disciplines are tied very much to the past, communication is tied to the present and the future. Health care, prevention, and control? Sure, but maybe a more middle-sized building. The new technologies are ours to make sense of and to criticize.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

That's a long way off. My guess is that the field will be broken down into subfields. ICA is probably getting too big. It becomes increasingly difficult to meet the needs of subgroups. Just as ICA 50 and some years ago spun off from SCA, I would not be surprised to see certain groups breaking off from this ICA in 10 years or maybe in 20—but sooner, rather than later.

Could you name the driving forces of that development?

I have no idea. I can see technologies breaking off, maybe. The way ICA is growing is all in good directions. We put into place some people who wanted to do an interest group in journalism and it took off like crazy. There is a tremendous interest in this. There was an unmet need, and it got met.

Are there any scientists who you would call a role model?

John Cacioppo in psychology. I love the questions he addresses and how he does it. He is just brilliant. I also think a lot of Annie Lang, Michael Slater, and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, of course. I don't want to forget about Kathleen. She is an intellectual giant in many ways.

Looking back on about 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

I'm mostly proud of my students. I've done a couple of articles that were pretty cool. I think I even have a couple of cool articles that haven't been published [laughing].

Back to Table of Contents

Could you name your two coolest articles?

One is the article on origins (Cappella, 1991). There was an intellectual progression from my first study of the talk and silence sequences (Cappella, 1979, 1980; Cappella & Planalp, 1981) up through that piece. It was a long line of research that got me to the place where I was thinking in evolutionary terms. The other is probably a literature review that I did (Cappella, 1981). That is the one of my refereed articles that has been most widely cited. I guess it would be crazy not to mention our book on the spiral of cynicism (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). It has got 1,500 or so citations. I was kind of surprised by that success. It's a great title. I guess those three mean the most to me.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

I was pretty naïve starting out as an assistant professor. I wish that I had spent more time developing collaborations outside of my field earlier. I would have been much more successful in terms of grant money. At Wisconsin, I really did pretty small stuff. Once I got to Penn, resources expanded, and we could do the bigger studies.

What will remain when Joe Cappella is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

We would all like to have some lasting ideas. I'm not naïve enough to believe that anything but a few ideas will have a long-term shelf life. I hope my students will continue to make contributions, and that I produced a few memories of approaches and points of view that will influence the way they think.

References

Cappella, J. N. (1979). Talk-silence sequences in informal conversations I. *Human Communication Research*, *5,* 3–17.

Cappella, J. N. (1980). Talk and silence sequences in informal conversations II. *Human Communication Research*, *6,* 130–145.

Cappella, J. N. (1981). Mutual influence in expressive behavior: Adult-adult and infant-adult dyadic interaction*. Psychological Bulletin, 89,* 101–132.

Cappella, J. N. (1991). The biological origins of automated patterns of human interaction. *Communication Theory*, *1,* 4–35.

Cappella, J. N., & Jamieson, K. H. (1997). *Spiral of cynicism: The press and the public good.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Cappella, J. N., & Planalp, S. (1981). Talk and silence sequences in informal conversations III. Interspeaker influence. *Human Communication Research, 7*, 117–132.

Cappella, J. N., Cegala, D. J., Farrell, T. B., McPhee, R. D., Monge, P. R., Poole, M. S., et al. (1986). Donald Cushman: Larger than life. *Communication Quarterly*, *34*, 379–388.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1537–1543 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

AKIBA COHEN

"Cross-national context is almost an imperative."

Akiba Cohen, May 29, 2011.
Boston, MA. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1944 in Detroit, Michigan
Education:	1966 B.A. in psychology and sociology, Hebrew University
	1971 M.A. in communication, Michigan State University
	1973 Ph.D. in communication, Michigan State University
Career:	Four years service in Israeli army
	1973 Lecturer, Hebrew University
	1978 Senior Lecturer, Hebrew University
	1988 Associate Professor, Hebrew University
	1996 Professor, Tel Aviv University
	1993 ICA President
	1997 ICA Fellow
Personal:	Married, one daughter and one son

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Akiba Cohen

Can you tell me something about your parents?

My father was a social worker by training. In March 1946, he was asked to go to Germany and work with Jewish survivors of concentration camps under the auspices of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the world's leading Jewish humanitarian organization. My mother and I remained in the States because there were no facilities for families in post-war Germany. On my third birthday, we travelled by ship to Germany. The three of us lived a year-and-a-half in Munich, and a year-and-a-half in Frankfurt, where my sister was born. At the end of 1950, my father was asked to work on the receiving end of those displaced persons. So we moved to Israel, and ultimately settled there. My parents were always Zionists and saw this move as the fulfilment of their dream.

What about your first professional dreams?

I can give you an anecdotal story. In the main street of our hometown, there was a store that sold stationery and newspapers. When I was seven or eight, I would go to that store, probably two or three times a week, and look at different papers. It became almost the talk of the town that little Akiba was reading newspapers. I wouldn't call that a professional dream, but it was an interest that I must have had and it already involved "comparative" reading of news.

Were there any university graduates in your family?

Both of my parents had gone to university in the States. They were second-generation Americans. My father did his undergraduate work at Wayne University in Detroit. He did his master's in New York at the then-Jewish School for Social Work that was affiliated with Columbia University. My mother studied to be a dietician, but didn't work for long in that area. Since she was about 18 years old, she became hard of hearing because of a series of ear infections. In Israel, she became very interested in teaching the deaf. In the mid-1950s, we spent two years in New York and my mother got a master's at Columbia University's Teachers College and at the Lexington School for the Deaf. Back in Israel in 1959, she joined the first preschool age center for deaf children and became the head of the organization a few years after that.

Do you still remember why you chose to study psychology and sociology at Hebrew University?

Of course I do. As far as I can remember, I was always interested in the media. I was also interested in social issues. In Israel, we had a dual major system; we still do in most institutions. I actually started in sociology and political science, but I didn't like political science. So I switched to psychology. After the army, my wife and I went to the States for graduate school. I was married when I was 24. People got married younger in those days.

Why did you change both subject and university for your graduate studies?

I really didn't change much, but decided to specialize in communication. During my military service, I worked in the research unit of the manpower division and gained much experience. The army gave people like me a day off each week to continue studies. I took several courses at the communication institute that Elihu Katz founded. They had a post-BA program, but only awarded a certificate at the time. One of the courses I took was with Michael Gurevitch. The other people you probably never heard of. So I started

Back to Table of Contents

early in communication. Sociology and psychology were, of course, an excellent background for this, but I never felt that I wanted to be a sociologist or a psychologist.

What about your wife?

Esther did an undergraduate degree in psychology and was going to continue in it. One psychologist in the family would be enough. We applied to several U.S. universities and ended up going to Michigan State, which was one of the best schools at the time. Ev Rogers was still there. He was on my doctoral committee. Chuck Atkin had just arrived and began teaching there. The Annenberg School in Philadelphia, where I am currently on sabbatical, also accepted me, but at the time, they awarded financial assistance only after you were there for a semester and could prove yourself, whereas Michigan State offered me support for the entire period right off the bat. So we went to Michigan. Now, being at Annenberg is like closing a circle. Esther and I defended our dissertations on the same day. Both of us considered staying and doing post-doctoral work.

Who was your adviser at Michigan State?

My dissertation had to do with public opinion and the 1972 election. My adviser, Verling Troldahl, died of a heart attack in July 1973 while I was writing. He was a young man; I think he was 43 at the time (Rogers, 2001). For me, this was traumatic. Bradley Greenberg took over being chair of my committee. The title of my thesis was "Coping with Uncertainty, Information Usage and Split Ticket Voting." Troldahl was the consultant to the Republican Party in the Midwest. He did the polling for them and put a "coping with uncertainty" scale in one of the surveys that were done. I had access to all the panel data. Coping with uncertainty was the psychological element in my dissertation. I wanted to do a postdoc year in public opinion, but Elihu had a position available at Hebrew University just then. My wife also had a postdoc lined up. We debated and debated and gave up the postdoc idea. We arrived back in Israel on October 1, 1973. On the 6th of October, the Yom Kippur War broke out. Elihu was right, and I was lucky. The following year there were no new positions at all.

How would you compare the student Akiba Cohen with today's students?

When I tell my students that I would go to the library and go through index cards looking for something or use one of the tremendously thick volumes of either the psychological or sociological abstracts, they don't know what I'm talking about. They have access to electronic databases. I think that we were much more serious, even though many students are very serious today, too. I hope I'm not saying something unfair. Many try to do as much as they can with less effort. Our first-year undergraduates are typically older because they have served in the army and travelled around the world. These are mature people. They need to get on quickly. The field of communication has been growing vastly in Israel. There is a tremendous demand. Sometimes I wonder why, but there is. As a result, they all have to take the psychometric exam, which is weighted with their high school grades. Some years, we had 1200 or 1400 applicants for about 150 or so places. The cut-off gives us really bright students, but again, some of them try to do shortcuts.

Back to Table of Contents

Dafna Lemish told me that it was seen as a big thing in Israel when you moved from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. Did you expect such emotional reactions?
You discussed me with her? We go a long way back together. She was my student in Jerusalem and years later, I invited her to join the faculty at Tel Aviv University.

She told me that story.
Well, I put it this way. Tel Aviv University decided rather late to set up a Department of Communication. They were looking for someone to be the founding chair. At some point, I was approached. I know that Dafna was asked and she recommended me. It took me several months to decide. I was about 50 and had no [mid-life] crisis at 40, so I thought to myself that this would be quite a challenge. I would not be changing my profession, but doing something different. Some of my Jerusalem colleagues were very understanding, but some thought that I was betraying them. When I wrote my letter of resignation, my hand was trembling a bit. At that time, there was relatively little mobility among Israeli universities. Now it's much more common.

How much more did you get for that?
Not a penny. We are unionized in all the seven research universities in Israel. We get the same salaries. So moving didn't give me anything. The only thing they did give me was a travel supplement for a while because I was commuting. The president of Tel Aviv University at that time made a promise, which he and his successors didn't keep. He promised that we would have 10 lines. We never had 10 lines. He also said, "I want you to hire quality people." Dafna was the first person I approached. We decided to begin with an undergraduate program. It was I who brought up this subject in Jerusalem around 1985 or so, which was very controversial at the time.

What was the rationale behind your idea?
It was twofold. First, the market did not really require people with a master's degree. The profession needed a good basic education. No such thing was available in the field of communication. Up until then, Jerusalem only offered a master's to people from various backgrounds. Secondly, this would force the MA program to improve its quality. We had a big debate within the department. It ultimately was approved. Once that happened, other universities began to think about undergraduate programs. Haifa came in number two, and Tel Aviv was number three.

How would you rate the position of scholars who are interested in news within communication?
It's hard for me to judge people interested in the other areas. I think that the field of studying news has made some significant strides over the years. We know much more today than we knew before. For me personally, two points are very important. One is the multiple method approach. You don't just look at content, at audiences, at production, or whatever. You try to do what Sandra Braman and I once called "research from start to finish" (Braman & Cohen, 1990). Most scholars don't have the energy to spend the time needed to do longer projects. One example is our study of the Eurovision news exchange (Cohen et al., 1996).

Back to Table of Contents

What about the second point?

It's the cross-national context. I would almost say it is an imperative. *Social Conflict and Television News* was a five-nation study (Cohen et al., 1990). The Eurovision news exchange was 11 countries. I worked with Pamela Shoemaker on *News around the World* (Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006). News has so much to do with domestic and foreign involvement. Looking only at the news for a national audience is not enough in order to understand the concept. I would argue that one better understands one's own by comparing it to others. That's what I've been doing. I suppose that I also have the needed managerial skills to run those projects. The current study on the perception of foreign news that I'm coordinating has 17 countries. This study, like some others, began at ICA, because that's where you can get together and talk to people.

How did you feel when you were asked to run for ICA President?

I was quite overwhelmed. I believe it was Ellen Wartella who asked me if I'd run. I was a member of the board before that, but the first candidate from a non-English-speaking country. The mass communication division was my home at the time. There was no journalism studies division. Maybe some Europeans helped. Anyway, I was elected. I don't know by what margin. They never tell you.

Did you succeed in meeting the goals of your presidential agenda?

One of my goals was to more internationalize the association. It's still going on, but it's doing much better today. You are president for one year only. That doesn't give you much of an opportunity to change anything, although you are involved in the leadership for quite a long time. It's almost a "punishment." You are involved somehow, but the real opportunity to do things is a very short time.

You are one of the few non-Americans in ICA's leadership. Was Israel too small for Akiba Cohen?

I never sought the position. Given the small group of communication scholars in Israel, we do tend to excel. This is also true in other academic areas. The academy in Israel is very good. Sometimes I wonder how we are able to do that with the limited resources that we have. Our criteria for hiring and promoting are very tough, especially in the three largest research universities. Our reference group are mostly the top U.S. schools.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?

That was the biggest shock of my life. I was sitting in the general business meeting. Jim Carey was chair of the fellow's committee that year. He got up to announce the new fellows and my name was read. I began to tremble. I had no idea. Being president probably gives you about 30% credit to becoming a fellow, but only that much. The rest of it is presumably scholarship. Some people run for it. I nominated two persons for ICA Fellow in the past. One failed, the other was successful. Some people have approached me and some asked me more than once: "Please, nominate me! I want to be a fellow!" I think that those things should come from the outside. America is an awards culture. They give out awards for everything, but being elected fellow is clearly the most distinguished award that the organization has to offer.

Back to Table of Contents

Who is Akiba Cohen: a researcher, a teacher, the founding father of communication at Tel Aviv, the chairman of scientific associations? What is the most important part of your academic life?

Let me start by eliminating some things. Being the founding chair at Tel Aviv was not the most important thing. I also don't think that being ICA President was the most important. It's probably the research. We all have to teach. I'll be very frank. We have mandatory retirement in Israel at age 68. After this sabbatical, I have one more year to go. We have a nice retirement system. First of all, we have a good pension. Also we get to keep our office. We can continue applying for grants through the university and continue advising students. And you can volunteer to teach. I will not volunteer to teach. I will do all the other things. After 36 years of teaching, I've had it.

Why did you not enjoy setting up the department at Tel Aviv?

I did enjoy it in a way, but I became very frustrated because the promises that were made were never kept. We have some wonderful faculty members, but not enough. During the first few years, the School of Economics objected to our department. The economists didn't think that communication is a worthy academic discipline. Some of the people in other departments were also not very happy with that idea.

Are there any scholars whom you regard as role models?

You really want names? There are various aspects of life. Intellectually, Elihu Katz is a leader of unquestionable stature. He is incredible, and I say so despite the fact that we had disagreements over the years. We were very fortunate to have that kind of person around. Another great person is Jay Blumler.

No other role models?

I prefer to keep it to these two who are in their ripe old age.

Looking back on 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

It's not a question of pride but of satisfaction. Despite my frustrations, I am happy with the fact that I established the department in Tel Aviv. Also, the decision to begin undergraduate studies in communication was important. I fought hard for that. I also have some wonderful relations with great colleagues from abroad whom I enjoy interacting with, such as Jürgen Wilke from Mainz (Cohen et al., 2002). I also think that I've done some fairly relevant work in the area of TV news.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

Sure. Now the question is what? My wife says that I'm a frustrated lawyer. If I had chosen a different career altogether, maybe I would have gone to study law. Overall, I'm fairly happy with what I've done. There was a time that I regretted moving to Tel Aviv University because the situation there became so bad, both in terms of finances and attitudes toward our field by some important people. I don't want to say that I regret having made the move; there were some wonderful things that we did, but I would have wanted things to work out better. I still hope they will.

Could you name those things, please?

My colleagues in Tel Aviv may not like this. When I moved there, I told the dean, "In five years, this will be the best department of communication in Israel." I had two reasons for optimism: Tel Aviv is the cultural and media center of Israel, and we could build this department from scratch. The department in

Back to Table of Contents

Jerusalem was never planned. It evolved. Unfortunately, I cannot say today that Tel Aviv is the best department in the country. That's my biggest disappointment.

What will remain when Akiba Cohen is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
What should be written on my epitaph [laughing]? Come on. "Here lies . . ."

I can also ask for your legacy.
I think that I did make some contribution to the development of the field in Israel. I was the first editor of the Hebrew-language journal *Media Frames: The Israeli Journal of Communication.* As I said, I contributed to the concept of teaching communication at the undergraduate level, and I think I also contributed something to ICA. I hope to go on for a few more years before all this becomes irrelevant.

References

Braman, S., & Cohen, A. A. (1990). Research from start to finish. *Mass Communication Yearbook*, *13*, 511–518.

Cohen, A. A., Adoni H., & Bantz, C. (1990). *Social conflict and television news*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications.

Cohen, A. A., Levy, M. R., Gurevitch, M., & Roeh, I. (1996). *Global newsrooms, local audiences: A study of the Eurovision news exchange*. London: John Libbey.

Cohen, A. A., Zemach, T., Wilke, J., & Schenk, B. (2002). *The Holocaust and the press: Nazi war-crimes trials in Germany and Israel*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Rogers, E. M. (2001). The department of communication at Michigan State as a seed institution for communication study. *Communication Studies*, *52*, 234–248.

Shoemaker, P., & Cohen, A. A. (2006). *News around the world: Content, practitioners, and the public*. New York: Routledge.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1544–1550 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

ROBERT CRAIG

"An insider-outsider relationship with communication science."

Robert Craig, March 28, 2011.
University of Colorado at Boulder. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1947 in Rochester, New York
Education:	1969 B.A. in speech, Wisconsin
	1970 M.A. in communication, Michigan State
	1976 Ph.D. in communication, Michigan State
Career:	1975 Assistant Professor, Penn State
	1979 University of Illinois at Chicago
	1981 Temple University
	1984 Associate Professor
	1990 University of Colorado at Boulder
	2001 Full Professor
	1991 Founding Editor of *Communication Theory*
	2003 ICA President
	2009 ICA Fellow
Personal:	Married to Karen Tracy (2010 Distinguished Scholar, NCA), one daughter

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Robert Craig

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?
I grew up in a lower-middle class family. Both of my parents came from poor rural backgrounds, but my father got some technical training and developed a career in electronics, and later on in sales. I was the oldest of five children and the first one in the family who attended a college. I thought about law as a possible career, but at the university, my interests eventually turned in a more academic direction.

What did your mother do for a living?
When she was employed outside the home, she worked as a telephone operator and later as a waitress and nursing home aide, but she did not always work.

Did religion play any role in your childhood?
It did. We were Roman Catholic and not highly present all the time, but I did attend Catholic schools all the way through high school.

Do you still remember why you chose to study at Wisconsin?
It had to do with personal networks. I was involved in a debate team. The coach who I was working with had quit coaching and decided to go to graduate school. He was going to Wisconsin, and I think that he influenced me and some others to go with him. I had started at Canisius College, a Catholic school in Buffalo. This was not a place that I was interested in academically. I had simply gone there because I would have been a competitive debater.

So you majored in speech because of debating.
Ultimately, yes. I learned about speech through the debate experience, but did not participate in debate at Wisconsin.

How did your parents react?
They didn't really understand much of what I was doing, so they were fine [laughing]. I had a scholarship to fund my education.

How would you compare the student Bob Craig with your students today?
I was not too much different from some of them when I started out. I was smart, but not particularly hard working. About halfway through my undergraduate studies, I became very serious about school. At that point, I became what now would be my ideal student [laughing]: somebody who was totally dedicated to the work, far beyond what was required.

Can you tell me something about your main academic teachers?
As an undergraduate, I was in the Department of Speech, focusing on communication theory and public address. This is essentially the study of rhetoric. The debate coach who got me interested in the field was Donald Cushman (Cappella et al., 1986).

Back to Table of Contents

I've heard this name from Scott Poole.

When I was a grad student at Michigan State (where Cushman had joined the faculty, initially as a debate coach), Scott came as an undergraduate in Cushman's debate team. Cushman had influenced a lot of people in my cohort. Another important influence on me was Lloyd Bitzer. He was a rhetorician at Wisconsin and my undergraduate mentor. I also had courses with Lawrence Rosenfield and Edwin Black, another rhetorician. These were probably my main teachers at Wisconsin, especially Bitzer and Black.

What about Michigan State?

Cushman was there on the faculty at that time and again an important mentor, although he wasn't my adviser. I did my master's with Brad Greenberg. My dissertation adviser was Joseph Woelfel, and Gerald Miller was on the committee. I also had several courses with Everett Rogers.

When did you know that you wanted to become a communication scientist?

It depends on how you use the term "communication scientist." In a general sense, it refers to anyone in the field, or more narrow, to a quantitative social science approach. My relation to communication science had a funny kind of uncommitted quality. As an undergraduate, I was very interested in rhetoric and in the humanities, but I was also taking courses around the university. I was really interested in understanding the social science approach. That's what brought me to Michigan State. This program was very strong in that. By the time I had finished my PhD, I was pretty well socialized into that way of thinking, but I always had an insider-outsider relationship with communication science. Almost immediately after graduate school, I went back to the questions that I had before. I'm very much an insider because I was trained in one of the premier institutions of the field, but I'm also an outsider because I was a critic of it.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to communication theory?

I can't describe a particular moment, but what I've been describing in the last few minutes reflects the process that got me interested. My first communication theory course at Wisconsin was with Gordon Whiting. He was a student of Everett Rogers, a young assistant professor at that point, and very much a missionary for the social science perspective in a department that was dominated by humanists and rhetoricians. In my perception, the most interesting parts of many courses in other fields were incorporated in Whiting's course. Communication was being studied all over the university. I became very intrigued by it as a sort of interdisciplinary field that seemed very forward-looking and exciting to me. At the same time, I worked with Bitzer and Black. Again, it was the contrast between those courses that really got me thinking about the field.

How would you rate the academic position of theoreticians within our discipline?

In one sense, they have a very high status because they are acknowledged as the creative people in the field, but in another sense they are sort of marginal because there really aren't very many of them. I think of people who would say, "I'm a theorist. That's what I'm specialized in." That's why I don't think they have a particularly influential place.

Back to Table of Contents

Jennings Bryant told me he founded the journal* Media Psychology *because it was impossible to get published with entertainment stuff back then. Could you tell me the story of* Communication Theory*?

As long as the field has existed, it has always been possible to publish communication theory, at least in the *Journal of Communication* and increasingly in the speech journals. *Communication Theory* was intended to provide a dedicated place for theory, and to create a flagship journal for the field. The *Journal of Communication* had become specialized in mass communication and *Human Communication Research* was specialized in interpersonal communication. The rationale was that *Communication Theory* would be a central journal and equally orientated to all parts of the field with a focus on general theory development.

Is this the way it has actually evolved?

It is a matter of fact that the *Journal of Communication* is still the flagship journal of ICA. Its focus has been contested: Should it be a media studies journal or more broad? *Communication Theory* found a different niche which has to do with conceptual innovation.

Could you put your main criteria of manuscript evaluation in some keywords?

It actually depends a lot on the venue I'm reviewing for. I try to be sensitive to the standards of whatever journal or series. I put a very high weight on conception. There needs to be something like an idea in the work. It needs to be sound in regard to whatever sort of methodology it's using. If it is a theoretical piece, then the coherence and logic of the argument is the key. I try to be quite catholic and broad in my acceptance of different approaches, rather than evaluating something negatively because it isn't approaching the subject in the way that I would approach it.

While some academics stay almost their whole career at the same university, you took a long ride from Penn State to Boulder, and a while to get the full professor. Was it so difficult to find a home?

My moves were largely for personal reasons. I left Penn State after four years to go to Chicago because I got married and my wife was in grad school at Wisconsin. When she had finished her PhD, we found jobs at Temple. This was a good place to go because Philadelphia is my wife's home city. She had family there, and so we could raise our child ourselves. The department at Colorado was, at that point, growing very rapidly, and they recruited us. It wasn't so much about finding a home as it was just about life circumstances and opportunities.

What about the time to full professor?

It was a result of my academic ambivalence. After completing my doctorate, I spent a number of years searching around for something else, rather than go full-steam ahead doing what I had been trained in the PhD program to do. This was not the ideal way to pursue a career. You should be producing what you are trained to produce, but I found that I really couldn't do that much. I had to forge a new path. That's why my rate of publications was not particularly high. I don't think I was fully aware of it at the time. Some of that moving around gave me the additional years that I needed in order to accomplish that kind of self-transformation. I would not have achieved tenure in six years at Penn State. The two years at Illinois-Chicago and another three at Temple gave me the space for a publication record with which I could be tenured there. Similarly, the work that would earn promotion to full professor was slow in coming.

Back to Table of Contents

How did you feel when you were asked to run for ICA President?
I was excited and a bit ambivalent because I knew it was a huge time commitment. I actually had been approached about it a year or two before, but at that time, I had not yet been promoted. First, I thought it's just premature. An associate professor would probably not be elected. Then, I was very concerned to be promoted [laughing]. I didn't want to distract myself from the work that I needed to do to make that happen. So I was elected as president almost immediately after I became a full professor.

Did you have a presidential agenda?
I did. At that time, we had radical changes in the structure of the organization to promote internationalization. I was very much a part of those discussions and a supporter of that. I also wanted to develop an ethics code, which I did.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?
It was very nice and felt like a kind of vindication of my career.

You got awards and honors, both from ICA and NCA. Which one is your favorite?
They play very different roles. I've been more involved in ICA over the years and find it to be a very congenial environment. NCA is big and very diverse, but it is my national professional organization and the job market for the field in America. I always attend it.

Who is Bob Craig: a researcher, a teacher, the chairman of scientific associations, the founder of* Communication Theory*? What is the most important part of your academic life?
I would say I'm a scholar, which combines some of those things. I've always been most interested in my own learning. That has taken place through all of those activities. I'm a person who is still learning.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?
Conceptualizing the field is something I write about. I think of it as an institution that needs to be understood from at least three points of view. Number one is the intellectual: the theories, the ideas, and the traditions of thoughts and research that have converged to bring this field about. Number two is the institutional structure, and number three is its relationship to communication as a cultural category and as an idea that is present in society. My theory is that the field exists because that idea exists. It is not something that has been generated autonomously out of academic thought, and it is not something that was discovered intellectually. It was something that became important in the world and academic thought; and organizations have responded to that. Thinking of it in this way, our understanding of the field is very much bound up with our relation to communication as a cultural phenomenon.

Sonia Livingstone told me about the discipline in the UK—about missing respect from old-established subjects, about the preconception that communication is about the training of students first and only secondly about research. How is the situation here at Boulder?
Sonia is describing a situation that still exists, especially in the more elite and more traditional institutions in this country. Here at Colorado and in universities like this, many of the faculty, after all, were trained in the Ivy League, where communication still wasn't recognized as a discipline. They brought those

Back to Table of Contents

assumptions with them, but there is also more openness here to less traditional fields. In this university, we are regarded as a pretty strong department. I don't frequently experience that sense of not being accepted as a discipline.

Where does the respect come from? Is it all about research or more about students?
We are a productive unit, and we have a number of people who are prominent in the field. When somebody is elected an ICA Fellow, receives an award, or publishes something major, that becomes known. The respect is primarily built on that. Student demand doesn't hurt. There are lots of students who want to take our courses.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?
Quantitatively, the U.S. still dominates the field in terms of professors, degrees, and publications. It has clearly developed rapidly in Europe over the last decade or two. I think of Germany, for example, or of ECREA. There are at least good size buildings. East Asia seems to be an area where the field is also growing. There is a lot of excitement about it. I was in Jakarta a couple of months ago when they had their first international conference on communication. It was quite remarkable how the field is developing in that region. The growth in China is also very rapid. This would be a construction site, as well as to some extent Latin America, but not as rapid as in parts of Asia.

Where do you see the field in 2030?
It will be more international than it is now. I'm not sure what that means for the academic organization. In America, the trend has been creating integrated communication schools that bring together media studies and interpersonal. On this campus, we have been divided between the School of Journalism and Mass Communication and the Department of Communication. I don't know what's happening in Europe in that regard. Communication there still tends to be media studies and oriented to media professions, but there are people in business who are interested in organizational communication, and people in linguistics who do media studies as well as interpersonal. In America, these people would largely be in communication departments. What does this mean for the field in Europe? I don't know where it's going, but it is very interesting.

Are there any scientists whom you regard as role models?
Some of the mentors I mentioned were certainly very important to me. I admired people like Cushman, Bitzer, Rogers, or Greenberg a great deal. Klaus Krippendorff was not exactly a mentor, but somebody for whom I have very high regard.

What did you learn from him for your own work?
He was a theorist. Who were the theorists in the field? Krippendorff was one in a time when there weren't that many. He did content analysis, too, but he also did theory of content analysis.

Looking back on 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?
I'm proud of my role in shaping *Communication Theory*. I'm proud of some of the things that I've written

Back to Table of Contents

and that have made a difference. Having served as an ICA President was also very much a high point for me.

Could you name the written pieces you are most proud of?
There are a series of pieces that have developed this idea that I was talking about: the relationship between the academic study of communication and the social and cultural practice of communication. The most prominent piece in that line would probably be the essay on "Communication as a practical discipline" (Craig, 1989) as part of the series *Rethinking Communication*. The second important piece is certainly "Communication Theory as a Field" (Craig, 1999).

Is there anything that you would do differently today?
I don't know. The way my early career developed was less than ideal, but I'm not sure what I really should have done differently. Maintaining the multiplicity of perspectives and that sort of insider-outsider status made it ultimately possible for me to think creatively about the field in ways that I would not have been able to do if I had found a comfortable home in one of these traditions. It carried a cost, but I'm not unhappy about the way that it has been turning out. Even at this point of my career, I still have the feeling that I have a lot left to do. I'm not nearly done.

What will remain when Bob Craig is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
I would hope that my thinking about the field of communication will continue to influence the way the field thinks about it. Having participated in that discourse in a formative moment, I hope that influence will be lasting.

References

Cappella, J. N., Cegala, D. J., Farrell, T. B., McPhee, R. D., Monge, P. R., Poole, M. S., et al. (1986). Donald Cushman: Larger than life. *Communication Quarterly*, *34*, 379–388.

Craig, R. T. (1989). Communication as a practical discipline. In B. Dervin, L. Grossberg, B. O'Keefe, & E. Wartella (Eds.), *Rethinking communication. Volume 1: Paradigm issues* (pp. 97–122). Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications.

Craig, R. T. (1999). Communication theory as a field. *Communication Theory*, *9*, 119–161.

Craig, R. T. (2005). How we talk about how we talk: Communication theory in the public interest. 2004 ICA presidential address. *Journal of Communication*, *44*, 659–667.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1551–1557 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

JOHN DALY

"Advocating for the discipline out there."

John Daly, March 24, 2011.
University of Texas, Austin. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1952 in Camp Atterbury, Indiana
Education:	1973 B.A. University of Maryland
	1974 M.A. West Virginia
	1977 Ph.D. Purdue
Career:	1977 Assistant Professor at University of Texas, Austin
	1982 Associate Professor at University of Texas, Austin
	1987 Full Professor at University of Texas, Austin
	1983–1989 Co-Editor, *Written Communication*
	1985–1987 Editor, *Communication Education*
	1997 NCA President
	2007 ICA Fellow
	2010 Distinguished Scholar, NCA
Personal:	Married, four children

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews John Daly

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

My father was in the military. I was made in Japan, born in Indiana, and baptized in Germany. I lived in Washington, DC, and Germany until I was nine years old. We moved back to Washington after that. I don't think I had any professional aspirations as a child.

What about the army?

That was not a part of my dreams. Maybe I wanted to be Superman at one point, or an armored knight—little kid's things. As I got older, I worked on Capitol Hill and produced music concerts. I thought I wanted to do both of those things, but once I started doing them, I didn't want it anymore.

How did you get the job on Capitol Hill?

My neighbor was a congressman. In high school and in college, I worked there a lot. The music business started because a friend and I wanted to do something about the bad concerts at my university. We began running parties where you paid $5, could drink beer, and listen to a little band. This grew quickly into mega concerts in big coliseums.

How did you get in the academy?

I went to graduate school not planning to stay there very long, but then I absolutely loved the research. I loved the sense of knowing something before anyone else. I also liked testing my assumptions. I said I am sure this is the way people are. I would then collect data and discover they weren't always that way. I liked the surprise. I also enjoyed teaching a lot more than I thought I would. So I went to a PhD program mostly because I liked the master's program. Some people in the academy were always academics. However, I never was. At a high school reunion after 40 years, everybody was flabbergasted that I was a professor. It made no sense to them. They would have bet I would have become a lawyer or something like that. I had a lot of fun in high school.

Were there any university graduates in your family?

Both of my parents were university-educated. My father was a colonel in military intelligence, and my mother was one of the first women going to Japan after the Second World War. They met there. He was in Japan for seven years, and she for six.

Do you still remember why you chose to study at Maryland?

It was pure chance. I had been accepted by the Naval Academy, but I didn't go. After this decision, I drove back with my father and saw the sign "University of Maryland." So we took the exit, walked in, and asked, "How do I register?" They said, "Just give us a check for $25 and you are in."

How would you compare the student John Daly with your students today?

They are much smarter than I was. I have a lot of empathy for them because I was not a good student most of the time. I did a lot of drinking, a lot of partying, and a lot of everything you are not supposed to do, but I did it well. When kids come [to class] with a hangover or when they fall asleep in class, I don't get mad because I did the same things. In some ways, this makes me more effective as a teacher.

Back to Table of Contents

Can you tell me something about your main academic teachers?

In communication, I remember best Ray Falcione, who became a friend at the same time as being a teacher. He was a young faculty member. Young faculty are good because they can inspire students much more than the older guys. They can talk to you as a peer sometimes. Kathleen Jamieson was the one who recommended West Virginia University to me. In my first college semester, I took a history course with a brilliant lecturer. I don't remember his name, but he was the first exposure I had to extraordinary teaching. I wanted to go to class, and I wanted to hear him talk. That's what teaching really is: making people want to come to class when they don't have to.

When did you know that you wanted to become a scientist?

I didn't know it before graduate school. In the master's program at West Virginia, I had Jim McCroskey, Michael Burgoon, and Brad Lashbrook. They were all extraordinarily good teachers. Judee Burgoon, Mary Ann Fitzpatrick, and I were in the program at the same time. Both are also ICA Fellows. In my PhD program at Purdue, I had Mark Knapp as my adviser and Rod Hart, who was a young faculty member there.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to the communication skills of individuals?

Not really. I think it was a function of who I worked with. West Virginia was a straight quantitative program and my introduction to interpersonal communication. I started studying shyness and became interested in advocacy over the years, which is how people sell ideas within organizations. I teach a lot of adults now.

How would you rate the academic position of interpersonal scholars within communication?

In the 1980s and 1990s, interpersonal communication scholars were probably dominant. This has changed, partly because of new interests. Interpersonal people became interested in small groups, in organizational communication, or in new technologies. *Human Communication Research* was the voice of interpersonal communication until recently. Now, every issue is probably half new technologies. That does not represent the entire field, but ICA's Board of Directors decided they wanted to go in that direction. Interpersonal scholars have created their own journal and hold separate conferences now. So the ICA dimension isn't as strong as it was before.

Then again: How would you rate the academic position of OrgComm scholars within our discipline?

About the same. OrgComm has done other turns. Interpersonal is still primarily quantitative. OrgComm has become much more ethnographic, qualitative, and critical. There are more and more interpersonal people doing what was traditional organizational communication research. People in OrgComm are not as interested anymore in applied topics like supervising or the skills you need to get a message across your organization very quickly.

Does a university teacher need scientific knowledge about leadership and personal influence?

I need it because I have a joined appointment with the business school, where I teach leadership classes. Organizations are clusters of people who have to work together. So it's all about interpersonal

Back to Table of Contents

communication. Everything I do in this department applies directly to what goes on in business schools and in companies.

Do you like the role of an academic expert?
I love it. I can give advice to people, and they take it seriously sometimes. It's no better life than being an academic. You get to study what you are interested in, you get to teach what you are interested in, and you get to read broadly if you want.

Could you understand colleagues criticizing academics who work as consultants?
Yes, I could. Thirty years ago, I probably would have criticized it by myself. Now, I think consulting is a very important part of the academics. Rather than critiquing like public intellectuals, you are helping people use your knowledge. We may not know everything, but we certainly know more about effective communication than the average person does. In my case, at least, it's not my intuition. Anything I teach, I can show you a study which demonstrates that.

Where does one of the world's leading researchers get the time to prepare outstanding classroom courses?
Time management is an important skill. You become practical very quickly. So you learn to prepare a couple of classes and teach them well. My major undergraduate class is called "Interpersonal Communication." It's a class of 500 people. I have 26 days of class, 26 different lectures, and 26 folders where I can add copies of new research. Every semester, I update five of the lectures. So every two-and-a-half years, it's a new course.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?
Honored. Happy.

You have served both for ICA and NCA. If you had to choose: Which one is your favorite?
That's an unfair choice. They are very different. NCA is a big trade show and a chance to meet up with friends. ICA is smaller and has, over time, become a bit less relevant than NCA to me, mostly because interpersonal communication is not a global area of study, by and large. It's more U.S.-centered. As ICA has worked hard to become more international, far fewer interpersonal people are attending the meetings. If I had a tight budget, I would probably choose NCA, although ICA would have more academic value.

Who is John Daly: a researcher, a teacher, the chairman of scientific associations, the commuter between university and business? What is the most important part of your academic life?
All of them; I can't separate them. When I started out, I was much more a researcher than anything else. Now, I'm more a teacher and a translator. That's why the book on advocacy I have coming up with next summer is basically history of innovations (Daly, 2011).

So you are the empirical researcher who became a historian?
We have a lot of good academic research on persuasion, but most of it doesn't make much sense to people who have to sell their own ideas in organizations. There, you have to come up with good stories.

Back to Table of Contents

One is about Ludwig Erhard, who was incredibly successful as finance minister in the 1940s and 1950s, but not very popular as chancellor in the 1960s. I use his example when I say: To be effective, you have to manage people's expectations. His incredible success in postwar Germany set up expectations that he wasn't able to meet as chancellor. I cannot show you 50 empirical studies on presidents who have been finance ministers before, but it works as an excellent example. In the same way, I talk about German scientist Felix Hoffmann and his discovery of aspirin. Innovators have to create new categories if they want to be highly successful in a business. It's the same with undergraduates. You have to translate your research.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?
It's about what makes humans human. So it's the most central of all disciplines. We study something that is more vital than anything else because everything else depends upon it. We probably don't have as many founding fathers as some other fields, and we come from a teaching profession. Speech started in the land-grant schools with the idea that farm kids deserve a chance to compete with the rich kids from Harvard or Yale. Standing up and effectively talking to a group of people could really make a difference in your life. Most of the first ICA people came from this empowering background. I have great love and great respect for this discipline.

Most of my interviewees told me about the preconception that communication is about the training of students first and only secondly about research. How is the situation here at Texas?
We are still a teaching program, although the research emphasis is probably 50/50 now. Faculty on U.S. campuses are supposed to teach.

What about the missing respect from the established subjects?
I think there are three reasons. Number one: We don't respect ourselves. We have faculty who are almost embarrassed to say they are a communication person. Number two: The more we talk about being cross-disciplinary, the more we loose the sense for our boundaries. While most disciplines have a list of A-journals and say you should publish first and foremost within the discipline, most communication people don't like this idea. The focus on interdisciplinarity actually defeats the notion of disciplinary respect.

What about reason number three?
For communication, the move to postmodern criticism came in exactly the wrong time. It was at the point when we were getting a literature of our own. Other fields established their bodies of knowledge in the 1950s or 1960s. If you can't agree on what you know, you can't describe what you do to other people.

A lot of ICA Fellows created journals for their subfields.
That's good, because it creates more outlets, but I don't know if we have enough scholars to fill all the journals we have. As an editor, I know it is tough getting good articles. We have so many subfields that are not really fields.

Back to Table of Contents

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?

The skyscraper for interpersonal is the U.S. No question about it. The construction sites are probably European. If you went to Asia, there are not so many of them. In South America, it's almost all mass communication and some technology stuff. In Africa, there is very, very little stuff at all.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

As we become global, we will be much more mass communication- and technology-orientated than right now. In the U.S., we'll probably face pressure toward social scientific methods, because the government is not going to fund anything but that. We are much more focused on grants than we used to be. If you get funding, they want numbers because they can't justify funding otherwise. The whole world is becoming more applied.

What about interpersonal communication research?

It will always be there as an area, but it will have more people focused on relationships.

Are there any scientists whom you regard as role models?

I've had so many of them for different things at every stage of my career. Everett Rogers, for example, was a friend and a fun guy to be around. When I got interested in advocacy and selling of ideas about 10 years ago, his work on innovation and diffusion became very important to me (Rogers, 1962).

Looking back on 40 years in communication: Is there anything you are especially proud of?

I'm proud of some of the students I've worked with and some of the research I've done. I'm proud of my teaching record. I like the fact that, wherever I go, I seem to meet somebody who was in my class and who remembers me. That's amazing. I'm proud that I do seem to have some effect on people, and I'm actually very proud of representing the field in a way many people don't. I'm probably one of the few people in the field who worked in the White House. Some big company executives know about the field of communication because of me. I think I've done a good job of advocating for the discipline out there.

Then again: Is there anything that you would do differently today?

If I had more time, I would do more research. But then, I should be happy because what you spend your time on tells you what is important to you.

What will remain when John Daly is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

Social science research is an incredible good repository for historians. Twenty years from now, they will learn about American culture from our journals because of all the data that lies within them. Most of our research will not be remembered. Every generation has different issues. Thirty years ago, no one did physiology studies or all this brain and neuron research. Ideas don't last by themselves. You have to be a good academic politician to create a legacy of ideas. My legacy will be different—more about my teaching. You can't sit on a plane and say you study communication without people asking you about it. That's why I disagree with people who say we are not useful. People found our knowledge amazingly interesting and helpful.

Back to Table of Contents

References

Daly, J. (2011). *Advocacy: Championing ideas and influencing others*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Rogers, E. M. (1962). *Diffusion of innovations*. New York: The Free Press.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1558–1563 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

FRANK DANCE

"We had a lot more fun than they do now."

Frank Dance, March 29, 2011.
Denver, Colorado. Photo by M. Meyen

Born:	1929 in Brooklyn, New York
Education:	1951 B.S. in speech and philosophy, Fordham University
	1953 M.S. in speech, Northwestern University
	1959 Ph.D. in speech, Northwestern University
Career:	1954–1957 active army duty
	1958 Assistant Professor, St. Joseph's College
	1960 University of Kansas
	1963 Associate Professor, University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee
	1966 Full Professor, University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee
	1971 University of Denver
	1962–1964 Editor, *Journal of Communication*
	1966 ICA President
	1970–1972 Editor, *Communication Education*
	1979 ICA Fellow
	1982 NCA President
Personal:	Married to Carol Zak-Dance, 10 children

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Frank Dance

Can you tell me something about your parents?

My mother held the highest rank of an enlisted woman in the United States Navy in the First World War, where she met my father. He was a naval surgeon at that time. I have not one bad memory of my parents. They were totally supportive of me. I have two brothers. The oldest was also a physician. He died in 1983. My second brother is an attorney. He works as an immigration lawyer in Detroit. He is 89 now. Growing up in Brooklyn was wonderful. I loved it. We were a Catholic family. I went to a Catholic elementary school and then to a Jesuit high school.

Do you still remember why you chose to study speech at Fordham?

I was a performer. I did children's magic shows when I was in high school and in college. So I had an impetus toward performance, and speech was a performative art. At that time, one part of me wanted to be a priest. That's why I double-majored in speech and philosophy. By the time I was finishing my junior year, I decided to go into the priesthood. I went to the Capuchin Order postulancy. The Capuchins consider themselves as the most rigorous of the Franciscan orders. After a very short time there, I went back to Fordham and got my bachelor's degree. Philosophy, in those times, was only Thomistic Philosophy for me.

Finally, you got into speech.

I liked it as an undergraduate. It was interesting and fun, so I went to Northwestern while I was still in seminary school. This cemented my decision to leave the seminary. I had a wonderful time with my master's. I loved, got married the first time, was in the army as a translator, and came back to Northwestern for the PhD. We are talking about speech. There was no discipline entitled "communication."

How would you compare the student Frank Dance with today's students?

We worked hard, but I loved what I did. So it didn't seem like hard work. Today's students are not bad. When I finished teaching in 2005, I had mostly grad students who were good. I went through the times when undergraduates brought their dogs to class. Do you know about that time?

In Germany, students used to smoke in class or knit—at least the women.

The dogs were wet. In Denver, the heat made it to a very odoriferous classroom. So I was happy when the dogs vanished and things became more scholastic, even though I like dogs.

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers?

In Fordham, I remember the philosopher Joseph Probst and my German teacher, Herr Offermann. Both of them were committed and dedicated teachers. As an undergraduate, my speech teacher was George M. Glasgow. He was a strange character, but he seemed to like me. I was in the theater group and got along with him. At Northwestern, I studied with Karl F. Robinson. He was in speech education and a fatherly man who was very gentle and easy to work with. He and his wife, Francis Knight, were very accepting of my interests. I was afraid of rhetoric because Ernest J. Wrage had a reputation for being unbending. I liked to bend a little. I had good faculty at Northwestern, including Clarence Simon, who was

Back to Table of Contents

psychologically trained, and Irving J. Lee, who taught general semantics. Charlotte Lee (no relation to Irving) was also on my doctoral committee. Wallace Bacon, who taught oral interpretation of literature, was another inspiring teacher.

What did you do at St. Joseph's College?
This was a small Catholic school when I was teaching there. This was an education onto itself. I grew up in Brooklyn and used to work as a magician in New York City. Rensselaer in Indiana was truly a very small town, but a good place to be. I had two children by that time.

When did you know that you wanted to become a communication scientist?
Again, there was no communication scientist. I knew that I was interested in communication as a title for a discipline when the National Society for the Study of Communication was founded. One of the founders was Elwood Murray, who taught here at DU. He got his PhD in the mid-1930s at Iowa and held one of the very first doctorates in the field. I joined the NSSC within the SAA. That was a very interesting group. I volunteered to be the group's secretary. That was a great position to hold because you got to know everybody.

Could you understand colleagues who would never leave Kansas for Milwaukee?
Yes. I taught at KU and loved it. I had as students Mark Knapp and Carl Larson, with whom I co-authored a number of books (Dance & Larson, 1972, 1976) and some very good faculty colleagues. There, for example, was the classical rhetorician A. C. Buehler. When I got the very lucrative offer from UWM, Karl Robinson suggested I should not take it. At KU, he suggested, I was swimming with the big fish, whereas at Milwaukee, I would be in a small pond. By that time, I had four children, and I needed the money. At Milwaukee, I met Carol, who was one of my students and became my second wife. I also had great graduate students. They brought me in to start the master's program. Wisconsin's weather was much colder than Kansas, but I found a very nice and congenial faculty. This is the only faculty I had been in where you circulated your papers first among your colleagues and enjoyed their critique of it.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to spoken language?
Pavlov. I met him, through his writings, as a psychological mentor when I was in the army. I went to psychology classes and became a great admirer of Pavlov. I read all of his books. Later, I taught psychology of spoken language at KU and at UWM, and it was then that I found the question, which directed my studies: "What difference does it make to the human condition that human beings speak?" That's what I've tried to answer in my theoretical research all my life. It was also fun to teach public speaking. I liked to meet students facing the class with trepidation and leave them enjoying the experience to get up and talk to others.

How would you rate the academic position of our discipline?
It seems to me that speech and communication have always been dismissed as lightweight courses. That's why Harvard or Princeton didn't offer such courses. But those who believe this are wrong. Speech and spoken language are anything but trivial. Speech is at the center of humanity. I tended to go on the attack. If anybody critiqued speech, I just explained why they are wrong. Speech was there long before them. It's there when you are first born.

Back to Table of Contents

Did it make you a better teacher to have scientific knowledge about speech?
I really loved what I did. I think that's what made me a better teacher. Good teachers are filled with their subject and like talking about it to others. If they can have a captive audience of kids it's just wonderful.

How did you feel when you were asked to run for ICA President?
I was pleased. By that time, I had been editor of the *Journal of Communication*, and they didn't have a huge pool to pick from. The association was small enough that we met at university campuses.

Did you have anything like a presidential agenda?
I wanted to expand the membership, although the people were very interesting when I joined. Louise Treadwell, the wife of Spencer Tracy, was among them [laughing]. I never knew why she was a member or paying. We didn't have a paid secretary at that time. You donated your time and tried to push the organization. As president, I issued the first monthly newsletter which said what we were doing.

How did you organize the journal? Which were your main criteria of evaluation?
I had to work with the submitted manuscripts. They had to go through me first. Then I sent them to the editorial board and took their advice. At that time, everyone in NSSC-ICA was very ambitious. Everyone wanted to be it an important organization, but we had a lot more fun than they do now.

Can you give me an example?
We had a Golden Ear trophy, which was a huge plaster reproduction of an ear painted gold. These were fun things. At the same time, Mark Knapp and I were publishing. When Joe Cappella was president, the convention was in Acapulco. He wanted me on the program to talk about the early days. They were amazed that we had fun, but we did.

You have served as president both for ICA and NCA. Which association is your favorite?
In the 1970s, ICA was such a small group of people that it didn't hurt to be active in both. Most of the people were members of both groups. In recent years, I have not gone often to the ICA conventions. I became more identified with NCA. ICA has become a much broader communicative umbrella than it was earlier.

You did a lot of work as consultant. Did you like the role of an academic expert?
I viewed it as a chance to test my theories. I would tell them what I was working on. Sometimes they didn't like it. Consulting was also a source of funds. Given the academic salaries, some extra money was needed.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?
I didn't know I would be and hoped I would be. I was in the first group. When they announced the Charter Fellows, I was extraordinarily pleased. I still am.

Back to Table of Contents

Who is Frank Dance: a researcher, a teacher, the chairman of scientific associations, the commuter between university and business? What is the most important part of your academic life?

It's teaching. All of my research was an aid to my teaching. One tested the other. When I was doing research, I got a chance to talk about it to students and to see if it worked. That's what I also did in business.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

When I joined the University of Denver, there was a speech communication department. Most often, the department names follow the name of the national organization. When they wanted to change it and to drop speech, I fought against that. If you really were a communication theorist and scientist, it had to include a lot more than human beings. The ICA does not have anyone studying animals. Animals communicate. Communication is not restricted to human beings. Speech is. I have a specific interest in human communication.

You have lost the battle.

I've lost it twice. When the Speech Communication Association changed to NCA, I fought that, too, and lost again. NCA is now about everything. There is no real focus anymore.

Most of my interviewees told me about the preconception that communication is about the training of students first and only secondly about research. How was the situation here at Denver?

When they brought me in, they knew there would be a research component. They wanted me to strengthen their doctoral program. The department was more research- than teaching-oriented, but to keep a place in the university, you had to teach. "Public Speaking" was often the only required course in the whole discipline.

Are there any scientists whom you regard as role models?

Pavlov was one, absolutely. He was not only a scientist, but also a physical man.

Looking back on 60 years in speech: Is there anything you are especially proud of?

I'm especially proud of some of the theoretical articles I've published and some of the students I had; both of them together.

Could you name one or two of those articles?

"The Functions of Speech Communication as an Integrative Concept in the Field of Communication" (Dance, 1967). And when I finished "The Acoustic Trigger" (Dance, 1979), I felt it was a very important article, too.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

I wouldn't be in speech, because it was too hard to fight against the other academic forces which dismissed it. I would have gone into developmental psychology.

Back to Table of Contents

What will remain when Frank Dance is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

My students will remain, and their work will be here. I left an imprint on Mark Knapp. I have letters from people who I taught and have now retired who told me that their course with me was the most important course they took. That's a pretty good heritage. Some of my research has been dismissed by many because it wasn't experimental, but I don't care because I know that there is a great deal of superb research that is other than experimental.

References

Dance, F. E. (1967). The functions of speech communication as an integrative concept in the field of communication. *Proceedings of the XVth International Congress of Communications*. Genoa, Italy: The International Institute of Communications.

Dance, F. E. (1978). The acoustic trigger to conceptualization: An hypothesis concerning the role of the spoken word in the development of higher mental processes. *Health Communication and Informatics*, *5*, 203–213.

Dance, F. E., & Larson, C. E. (1972). *Speech communication: Concepts and behaviors*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Dance, F. E., & Larson, C. E. (1976). *The functions of human communication: A theoretical approach*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1564–1571 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

STANLEY DEETZ

"The collaborative move is our moment in time."

Stanley Deetz, March 28, 2011.
University of Colorado at Boulder. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1948 in Garrrett, Indiana
Education:	1970 B.S. in economics and speech, Manchester College
	1972 M.A. in communication, Ohio University
	1973 Ph.D. in communication, Ohio University
Career:	1973 Assistant Professor, Bridgewater State College
	1977 Associate Professor, Southern Illinois University
	1984 Full Professor, Southern Illinois University
	1984 Rutgers University
	1985–1988 Department Chair
	1997 University of Colorado at Boulder
	1996 ICA President
	1999 ICA Fellow
	2004 Distinguished Scholar, NCA
Personal:	Divorced, three children

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Stanley Deetz

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

I grew up on a family dairy farm in Indiana. Professional dreams were not much of our world. My father was a very innovative farmer. He was one of the very first in the community to do artificial insemination with cows, or to do embryo transplants. It was both a creative and an economically poor situation. I had a sister that passed away when I was 23. Since we didn't have a medical insurance, and her illness required long and painful hospitalizations, we were mostly trying to figure out how to get by. In an odd way, we were both leaders in the community and struggling to make ends meet. You grow up fast in this kind of environment; there was not a lot of time to be a kid. I went to very small schools—seven students in my class for my first eight grades. I don't think I read a book until I went to college. If there was any aspiration at all, I was always going to be a lawyer, partly because that was the only profession that I knew. Unlike my brothers, I never thought about farming. I was always leaving.

Did religion play any role at the farm?

Yes, we were very religious, but it was more about community than anything else. The church was there for our family through hard times, and we were there for them. We were Methodists, but my parents would have been more like the conservative religious groups that we have today, though with more religion and less politics. Those groups didn't exist back then for us. My grandfather was an active Roosevelt Democrat in the region, my grandmother on the other side was head of the county Republicans the next county over. So we were fairly familiar with the outside political world, but community and religion was our grounding; politics were about other things. We were an isolated community in Indiana where we just hated anything that was big. Governments, corporations, unions. From our view, they all just messed up our lives.

Were there any university graduates in your environment?

Not many. My mother's brothers had some schooling, but mostly, education was not part of my world. My teachers were mostly all that had an education.

Do you still remember why you chose to study economics and speech at Manchester College?

It was a strange process. I started out in chemistry because I was good in the sciences. When I got to college, they gave me a speech therapist and a writing coach because I couldn't handle the language. I came from a fairly German community. We had a garbaged version of English. Some people still spoke German in their homes, at that time. And, I was highly dyslectic. So I had a lot of wrong grammar, and my pronunciations were pretty bad. I first changed to political science and sociology. Basically, I did a sampling of almost everything and ended up with a primary degree in economics. It was a place where I could use my math and still get out of the lab.

Where did the speech part come from?

I was a debater. You will find many leaders in our field who were on a debate team. At that time, speech was a combination of drama, public speaking, and speech pathology. I intersected with each in different ways.

Back to Table of Contents

How would you compare the student Stanley Deetz with your students today?

There aren't many like me today. They all have more experience, sophistication, and background. The equivalents to me today are some of the immigrant populations without professional backgrounds. College was a candy shop for me, the whole world opening up. I don't think the students feel that much today. For me, it was important to go to a small school with professors who were very dedicated and involved. In those days at Manchester, we still had Sunday night dinners with faculty members. This was my opening to the world. If I had gone to a state university, I would have been lost right out.

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers?

My major professor as an undergraduate was Paul Keller. In a junior-level course in 1968, he assigned two books to us: *The Social Construction of Reality* (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and *Pragmatics of Human Communication* (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967). These were two absolutely mind-blowing books. In my senior year, I had decided against law school. And my lottery number was high, so I was not going to Vietnam. So I asked Keller what I should do. He suggested graduate work in communication and called the department chair at Ohio University, his former college roommate. My future was set. I went there to work with Bob Goyer, and to merge my econometrics with information science. Goyer was working on a NASA information system project at that time. At that time, Ohio University served as a bit of a home for ICA; the Executive Director was there.

Is this the place where the philosopher Stan Deetz was born?

One day, I ran into Algis Mickunas, a Lithuanian trained in Europe who came over here doing contemporary philosophy. Most of what he was working from hadn't been translated. I got caught on this stuff and was suddenly doing Husserl, Heidegger, Habermas, Levinas, and Gadamer. Mickunas would just come in with translations. Our small interdisciplinary group spent day and night with him, drinking, reading, talking—very much an old style apprenticeship. Only two in my group were in communication. Now, I was doing philosophy more than communication, and they let me. My adviser Kenneth Williams said, "Just do it."

When did you know that you wanted to become a communication scientist?

I was in grad school like I was as an undergraduate: a little kid in a candy shop who didn't make many decisions. I didn't know what I wanted to do. Teaching gave me an outlet. The real commitment to the field came at Southern Illinois, because I suddenly had a bunch of philosophers around me who connected with communication. That's where I met Mark Johnson, Richard Lanigan, and Charles Lemert. We talked through Foucault and all the continental language stuff and did the metaphor stuff. I was trained as a phenomenologist and mostly influenced by Heidegger. This allowed me to put it into practice. In the 1970s, it was hard to find anybody in the field who had a clue what the people who were having effect on me were doing. When I said I was doing hermeneutics, they would ask, "Herman who?" Several of the most important works to me were sometimes not translated and certainly not taught. Things began to change in the early 1980s. Larry Grossberg and I met about that time. He just began as a grad student at Illinois. He was also getting into all these new things. With our students and others, he, Lanigan, and I, in some ways, started the notion of philosophy that finally became an ICA division.

Back to Table of Contents

Beyond philosophy, power in organizations seems to be the topic of your life. Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to that topic?

My career is an accident [laughing]. I do what people ask me to do. A lot of people have visions. I don't. Everything that I was teaching at SIU was in interpersonal communication. What got me to organizations and power was my work both in metaphors and in the German tradition of hermeneutics, from Dilthey through Weber to contemporary approaches. A lot of people in OrgComm were looking for a philosophically-defined approach to social science research because of the growth of the study of culture in organizations. That's what I brought there. I was trying to provide a ground for qualitative work for the simple sake to help them get it published.

How did the people in interpersonal communication react?

Mostly, there had been a pretty negative reaction to my work there. Barnett Pearce and I often stood alone in contrast to the mainstream interpersonal researchers. In the 1970s, almost all of them were quantitative. We got nailed at every conference, and the letters of rejection were just amazing. My career would have died in interpersonal. The people in OrgComm were very embracing, and the people who did cultural studies found this interesting, too. All of a sudden, there was a space for me. At that time my world was simple: "If all is socially constructed, then it is always constructed under the conditions of inequity. Therefore social construction implies concern with power." That's what I brought to the game.

How would you rate the academic position of OrgComm scholars within our discipline?

There are some funny little stories. When I first started the organization stuff, the rhetoric people thought I was one of theirs. He does philosophy and must be a rhetorician. OrgComm was clearly a deficient area to them. In the 1980s, even the interpersonal people saw OrgComm as an applied area. Many of them still do. There was a certain kind of intellectual disregard of studies in organizations.

Sounds like there was an improvement since then.

Through the 1990s, all the more social science-related interesting theoretical work done in the field was done by OrgComm people. We were becoming international in ways that nobody else in the field was. Even the rhetoricians would have to understand that our use of Foucault and others was superior to theirs. With that came leadership positions. There was a period of time when ICA just went from one OrgComm person to another. Cultural studies and OrgComm are the two places were real serious communication theories have been done in the last 20 years. OrgComm has jobs for its grad students, and cultural studies is a bigger international issue. People know what you do when you do that.

How would you rate the academic position of critical scholars within our discipline?

It has changed. We had our moments of influence and brilliance probably in the mid-1990s to the early 2000s. At that moment, mostly everybody respected the critical scholars in the field. Everyone saw them as fresh and doing interesting things. Now it's sort of played out. For many scholars, it's a little hard to know what you do after you have written your theoretical pieces. It hasn't quite turned out as empirical as ideal. Part of it is my fault. I didn't push my students to do empirical work in my line. I let them do what they wanted to do—while empirical, it was not always philosophically informed and critical. Unlike some in cultural studies, nobody in OrgComm doing critical theory cares about critical theory as a theory itself. We

Back to Table of Contents

care about what we should do with it. I think there will be a comeback. The relationship between construction and power is one of the most basic issues in society.

Hanno Hardt complained that he was marginalized at Iowa because of his Marxist orientation (Meyen & Löblich, 2007, p. 107). What about your experiences as an academic with a critical perspective?

There is certainly a marginalization that takes place with that. I haven't suffered as much as others, because I'm a deeply pragmatic person and I've always made critical theory do work. I don't like philosophy for itself. I like it because it helps to solve problems. I'm still a farm kid from Indiana who wants these works to make sense in my world and to my people. But certainly as a scholar, I got a lot of bad reviews for my work. If you are critical, don't do ideological critique; people don't know what you are doing. I've often been put in a critical box—filled with actually quite incompatible thinkers—where people think they know what I think, but it does not match well what I do. I would have liked to have been taken more seriously, for others to see the implications of this. But I am certainly happy that they let me do it at all; many have been stifled more directly.

Is it pure chance that a critical scholar like you ended up at Colorado?

It's a mistake [laughing]. This was a spouse move. Rutgers was intellectually stimulating. For example, there were some of the top feminists in the world there. It was a good place to build conceptual ideas. The east coast is gritty and real. The faculty were at each other's throats all the time, but they learned from each other. The situation here at Boulder is different. I call it egocentric. Open and accepting at a very superficial level. You can't really engage as easily. In addition to some unethical behavior there, that's why I'm leaving the Department of Communication. Outside of the OrgComm area, it has become a fairly restrictive environment. Students do not get nearly enough background. I started the Center for the Study of Conflict, Collaboration and Creative Governance, and went back to my larger themes: real big powerful communication theories that make a difference in the world. Writing for our discipline doesn't often do that. Democracy is at a turning point. We have to reinvent a new form of governance. I want to be part of that.

How did you feel when you were asked to run for ICA President?

I did everything to avoid doing that. Those administrative jobs are time-consuming. I only did it because there were some people in the field who pushed me over the edge. They thought I was the only critical person that could win at that point. Larry Grossberg was better known, but I don't think that people felt he could win the election at that point of time, even if he had wanted to, which I don't believe he did.

Do you remember your presidential agenda?

I was highly committed to moving the headquarters from Austin into Washington, DC, and I was highly supportive of changing our executive director. ICA had to take the next step. Those are not agendas that you put on the table publicly. Both cases were critical for the association, and in both we were successful in the end.[2] It was not only myself, but Linda Putnam, Peter Monge, and Joe Cappella. We were like a

[2] ICA had been headquartered in Austin, Texas, since 1974. The staff moved to Washington, DC, in 2001—one year after Michael Haley became the new executive director. His predecessor was Robert Cox.

Back to Table of Contents

cluster. My presidential address was basically a statement of my feelings about the field (Deetz, 1997). I thought our field needed a significantly different approach to communication theory. I still believe that psychology was the discipline of the 20th century because they focused on the control problem. That is not our social problem today. Communication has the opportunity to be the discipline of the 21st century—not because of the information age, but because people finally have to figure out how to work with others who are different. This collaborative move is our moment in time.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?

When you've published a fair amount and you have been president of the association, you take it for granted. I never even thought about it that much. I was committed to break the Michigan State hold on this thing. So it wasn't a joy for me personally, but much more the start to open it up.

Who is Stan Deetz: a researcher, a teacher, the chairman of scientific associations, the hero of philosophy within communication? What is the most important part of your academic life?

When it finally comes down to it, I'm a teacher. I do my real scholarship in the classroom. The rest of it, I do because I'm asked to do it, and because it makes sense to do it. I've always taught big lectures, I've always had lots of students, and I do not write a book that I'm not teaching. That's why my writing is teacherish. It's about bringing something as an insight to others. I deeply hate writing; not everyone understands that about me. I only write to teach, to educate. Even my consulting is very much still training.

Reading all the presidential addresses at ICA's conferences, one gets a very ambivalent picture of the research field. What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

I've approached it more directly than any of the presidents. My piece on "The Future of the Discipline" was my statement (Deetz, 1994). Communication is a social constructive process and the most fundamental way that we make worlds. We should study those processes. Communication may or may not be the best word for that, because the term is linked to consensus or community. I don't see it that way. To me, communication is a struggle and about self-destruction. When it works well, it lets us no longer be who we are and pulls us into something that we are not yet. That has nothing to do with information transfer and any of those other things [laughing].

Sonia Livingstone told me about the discipline in the UK—about missing respect from old-established subjects, about the preconception that communication is about the training of students first and only secondly about research. How is the situation here at Colorado?

It's the same. Individually, I feel well-respected on the campus, but the discipline gets little respect. It's not just communication. At American universities, social sciences are not very respected, but partly it's us, too. Communication is often watered-down psychology, watered-down sociology, and so on. Even cultural studies gets its status from being attached to English departments. We have to show that a communication set of concepts allows us to do something in this community that others can't do. We haven't done that now. The idea of human collaboration is the limit of the social sciences today. It is the anomaly that nobody can deal with. This is not only about a paradigm shift. If we could ever articulate our way of dealing with that, then we'd get respect.

Back to Table of Contents

Can you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?

It's a complex field. So it's hard. In terms of mass communication, the Annenbergs are pillars. Annenberg East has incredible intellectual talent, and Annenberg West has connections to industry unlike anybody else has. In communication studies more broadly, you have to be impressed with the UC-Santa Barbara faculty—so much talent! As you know, Germany has its own pillars. They benefit from having Habermas and Luhmann. It's phenomenal to have two of the greatest communication theorists of all history at the same moment, but the U.S. wouldn't necessarily see those pillars. It's the same with cultural studies and Britain. It depends on how you define the field. When you look at collaborative relationships, which I think is more important than mass media: There are people in Switzerland doing this that are brilliant. There are pockets of people who don't know discipline structures.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

Futures are to be made, not predicted. I don't think the field will exist 20 years down the road, because the disciplinary structure is in trouble. An interdisciplinary center dealing with an issue has a better chance of surviving in the future than a department that reproduces itself and its journals.

Are there any scientists who you would call a role model?

My favorite person in the field is Barnett Pearce. I would argue he is the greatest communication theorist produced by our field. The field rejected his work and him as a person. He is doing community work and continuing to develop beautiful internationally respected theory. That's for me, a model. There are lots of individual things that I respect as individuals. I've incredible respect for Larry Grossberg's brains, for Linda Putnam's ability to connect with people, Cynthia Stohl's soul, for Joe Cappella's and Scott Poole's rigor, or for Kathleen Jamieson's ability to reach out to a wider world and to make her work relevant out there, and there are hundreds of unheard Paul Kellers, who are the life of the field in the hearts of students.

Looking back on 40 years in communication: Is there anything you are especially proud of?

The book I did on democracy will be my book (Deetz, 1992). I always wished that I had followed up on it better. The proudest thing is that I'm a really fine teacher. I've some of the greatest graduate students in the field. Dennis Mumby, of course, but he is not the only one. His contribution I put against anybody's anywhere (Mumby, 1988). Sarah Tracy, at her stage, is fantastic (Tracy, 2000). But each of the others, too, in their own ways. I'm really proud of the students I have out there. I'm still getting correspondence from people whom I had as undergraduates 20 or 25 years ago.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

It was an absolutely accidental career. In retrospect, I might have written a little less. I wrote a lot of stuff that people asked me to write. That wasn't the best way to develop conceptually the work I was doing. I certainly would have done a lot more out in the field, work in situated communities. A lot of that was a family situation. I had a third child late. He had a lot of needs, and I was the primary parent for most of his life. I don't regret that. I still would make the choice for him over any of those things.

Back to Table of Contents

What will remain when Stan Deetz is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

I dedicated the first book that I ever did to "each generation of new scholars with the hope that they might speak carefully in their turn." "Carefully" I mean in the Heideggerian sense: filled with care. If there is anything I would leave to the field, it would be this.

References

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge.* Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.

Deetz, S. (1992). *Democracy in an age of corporate colonization: Developments in communication and the politics of everyday life.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Deetz, S. (1994). The future of the discipline: The challenges, the research, and the social contribution. *Communication Yearbook*, *17*, 565–600.

Deetz, S. (1997). Communication in an age of negotiation: International Communication Association presidential address. *Journal of Communication*, *47*, 118–135.

Meyen, M., & Löblich, M. (2007). *Ich habe dieses Fach erfunden. Wie die Kommunikationswissenschaft an die deutschsprachigen Universitäten kam*. Köln: Halem.

Mumby, D. (1988). *Communication and power in organizations: Discourse, ideology and domination*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Tracy, S. J. (2000). *Emotional labor and correction officers: A study of emotion norms, performances and unintended consequences in a total institution*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Colorado.

Watzlawick**,** P., Beavin, J. H., & Jackson, D. D. (1967). *Pragmatics of human communication: A study of interactional patterns, pathologies, and paradoxes*. New York: Norton.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1572–1579 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

JESSE DELIA

"I'm a developmental contextualist."

Jesse Delia. March 10, 2011.
Urbana-Champaign. A coffee shop not far from the university. Photo: M. Meyen.

Born in 1944. 1966 B.A. in communication at the University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg. 1969 M.A. and 1970 Ph.D. at the University of Kansas, Lawrence. 1970 Professor of speech at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. 1973 Research Professor. 1978 Department Head. 1994 Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. 2004 Provost and Vice Chancellor. 1993 Distinguished Scholar, NCA. 2008 ICA Fellow. Married with Ruth Anne Clark.

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Jesse Delia

Could you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

I'm a classic product of white, middle class, post war, southern American culture, which is in general a disadvantaged region of the country. Mississippi was the richest state prior to the Civil War but afterwards, all of the U.S. south tended to lag in industrialization and education. People in the south cultivated oral tradition. My mother always said that I was born mouth first since I was always talking. I am one of those that fell into liking school. I was well rounded. The U.S. south is, on the whole, not a cultural context that cultivated high aspirations regarding education. A pretty small fraction of my classmates would have gone to university in that era. The tendency was just to go where it was convenient. I absorbed much of this, but later was among those who chose to leave the south.

That's why you went to Hattiesburg.

I was first generation college in my family and went literally right down the road a couple of miles. Probably, the most important thing in my early intellectual development was the discovery of debate as an extracurricular activity. I was a history and communication major and close to majors in politics and psychology. So it's all to the social science end of things. The vitality came out of competitive debate activities in which I had a really outstanding colleague, who also achieved considerable presence in the field. David Swanson became a lifelong friend.

What did you parents do for a living?

They were both small family business people. The family business was landscaping and my mother ran a florist. So for me at a certain point the thought was I would go in and take over. There was a lot of expectation in that direction, but I continued to go to school. At some point you figure out that people will pay for you to be in school. It's then a small step to the academic life.

You went on in communication because of the debate experience.

I had initially focused on doing history at Duke but I was more connected to the immediacy of life. At Kansas, I worked with a debate program early on but grew out of that. At that point of time the social science side was a rising element. The program there had absorbed what was called a human relations program, which was kind of a social development movement. It was in some ways less intellectual and academic than practitioner centered but it had the effect of bringing a lot of faculty lines into the communication sphere. They filled those with a mix of psychologists and communication people. So the American social psychological tradition came in which was represented by people like Theodore Newcomb.

But Newcomb was not at Kansas.

My adviser Hob Crockett was a Newcomb student. The big figure at K.U. was Fritz Heider. He was as important as any American psychologist at the intersection of social behavior and cognition. Fritz was a very humane gentleman, and the social psychological grounding was consolidated with Crockett. I had as good an education as you could have gotten anywhere even though it was sort of off the center for the field at that time, but off center didn't matter. It was a period in which there were lots of jobs. I had a lot of good job offers and ended up here at Illinois rather than in Madison. That was the last choice I made.

Back to Table of Contents

Did religion play any role in your childhood?
No. Not really. It was prominent culturally and in my family but not a strong motivational factor in my life.

How would you compare the student Jesse Delia with today's students?
We planned less. Life wasn't planned as much. You were much more compliant and there was motivation toward mastering and finding interest in the things that are in front of you. It was just a different era. The 1960s were the decade that will define the great transition of the second half of the twentieth century for America. It really changed the student culture to one of less compliance and estrangement to degrees. By the 1970s, the culture of universities was very, very different than just a few years before.

Did you experience the student's movement?
Yeah. I could show you pictures that would frighten a young child. I was a Rasputin-like looking creature. I was moderately radicalized for a time and certainly identified in those directions.

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers in Mississippi and Kansas?
Southern Mississippi was not so much a research university but they took the mission of university education and the role of the teacher very seriously. In history as well as in communication, there were some mediocre people but also some who were truly exceptional and able to inspire through teaching and cultivating a receptive student. I was very close to a young history professor named Ken McCarty. He went off to Duke to finish his PhD and I took over his house for the year. Ken was extremely smart. I got a deeply cultivated sense of an intellectual self and vistas opened up. Combined with debate, we traveled all over the country and competed with the very best schools. At K.U., I consolidated a deep respect for scholarship. Crockett, with whom I spent the last two years, has been a lifelong influence.

When did you know you wanted to become a scientist, a communication scientist?
I was pretty sure by the end of the third year of undergraduate school that I wanted to be an academic. Normally in America, you graduate with 120 credit hours. I graduated with way over 200. I liked to take courses, and I decided to stay for a fourth year, in part because of Swanson as a friend. By that third year, I was pretty sure I wanted to pursue an academic career, but I thought it would be as a historian. However, communication trumped that at everyday levels. I just liked the activity more. From there intellectual development unfolded out of connections made along the way to both ideas and thoughtful people. The committed turn to empirical research came with Crockett.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to constructivism and interpersonal communication?
It unfolded out of particular intellectual connections I made on the way. I was not driven to understand personal relationships. I was drawn toward conceptual systems and sets of ideas that presented a platform for pursuing interesting questions. Those were all contextually derived. You can find lots of linkages to the social, intellectual milieu for me, whereas you find more independence for others. The wedding of social psychological, cognitive and developmental themes that I got from Crockett became a principal source of the lasting turn, but a master's thesis on George Herbert Mead that I came to myself was also significant.

Back to Table of Contents

How would you rate the overall academic position of interpersonal within communication?

Communication is an unfolding and evolving enterprise. I was very active at that critical point of time when interpersonal was approaching its greatest influence. That sphere became, for a time, the area through which new sets of ideas, mostly sociological and psychological concepts, entered the field. If you look with a longer scope, the field is likely ultimately to be framed by societal-level questions. Interpersonal is less influential now than it was in the 1970s and in the 1980s.

How do you explain this loss?

The material realities of social and mass media are huge as cultural formation engines. They present themselves as sources of interesting problems and questions across the broad social and humanistic landscape and as particularly important loci of theoretical concern for our field. There were also certain aspects of interpersonal that took their own course. Ethnographic studies are an example. The interest in developing a general scientific base has lost some of its capacity to motivate and attract, and the subfield morphed into socially salient application domains. My colleagues in interpersonal tend to divide between the general theory builders like Chuck Berger and the now larger group who approach interpersonal issues within contexts like health or families. There also have been shifts toward case-focused qualitative methods.

Did you ever consider applying for a position outside Illinois?

Sure. I took the measure of other opportunities. At one time, I almost went back to Madison and toyed with the idea of the University of Washington after spending time there. The contingencies of history are in the end very local. Urbana-Champaign is a remarkable place. I had generations of wonderful students: Cheris Kramarae, Sidney Ribeau, Larry Grossberg, Dan and Barbara O'Keefe, Jim Applegate, Brant Burleson, Julie Burke, Susan Kline, Rebecca Rubin, Claudia Hale, Hui-Ching Chang among many, many more. In addition to exceptional strength in my areas, Illinois was also deep in humanistic studies, including being a U.S. center for cultivation and interdisciplinary coalescence of cultural studies. Talk to Larry and you'll get a version of this. I also stayed here because it worked for me as a place. You build a life. I met my wife who was already on the faculty when I arrived. She is among the field's most accomplished women and had her career established here. I also happen to have some talents for facilitating work toward collective aims, and so was pulled into a parallel administrative career.

What about the setting of Urbana-Champaign?

This place is the quintessential residential campus. You tend not to get this in an urban environment. There are famous and deep thinking people in all directions. All you have to do is walk across the quad and talk. That has changed some even with remaining a leading interdisciplinary campus. The pace of life now is more accelerated. Daily and nightly coffee klatches with colleagues and graduate students defined my early faculty career. Now, too many of us tend to sequester with doors shut. There has been a deep shift in American universities. The metrics for demonstrating achievement are higher than in my era. Teaching also is more focused. Where it was once possible to have several courses with a teacher and learn their ways of thinking, we have adjusted teaching loads and organized curricular to re-distribute demands. Opportunities for following an instructor over several courses are now much less common than when I was a student and beginning my academic career.

Back to Table of Contents

Did you like the role as a decision maker?

It's very different. In these roles in the academy, you have to take satisfaction in creating conditions for the careers of others to flourish. There are not a lot of people who understand this. Daily decisions usually only very partially and indirectly serve your institution building goals. Intellectual achievements have great separation between act and consequence. I've accepted being content with the long view.

When you became a dean in 1994, your predecessor praised you as 'a major contributor to the campus.' How would you describe your contribution?

People lead in different ways. I am a developmental contextualist. Part of what got me into administration was an ability to assess a particular context, to see pathways through it, and to evolve policies and processes for stable guidance. It's important to wed contextualism to stable constructs that can be applied flexibly and adaptively. For an academic administrator it is most important that policy and decision making support attracting and developing exceptionally talented people. I've played an active role in 500 or so faculty appointments, always with the goal of saturating the place with those positioned to use scholarship to make a difference. Illinois is one of the best at doing this across a wide sweep, the communication department included. This is always a collective effort, and I have had some role in that.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?

Honored and wondering why now? I was up for election about 20 years ago and have been told there was a bit of a political issue. There was a divide among those who developed their careers with more linkage to ICA versus NCA. I tended much more to the NCA side. I was grateful and honored in becoming a Fellow. It is a humbling punctuation point to say I am an ICA Fellow, too.

If you had to choose between both the associations, which one would be your favorite?

They are very different and they play different roles. ICA is positioned to have the needed influence right now in capturing the rise and consolidation of communication as a field globally with culture, media and communication systems at the heart. This was not the case for the ICA of my early or mid-career. By contrast, NCA is classically a disciplinary entity and in some ways still too much a hostage to its speech origins. To its credit it is a scholarly body that has been able to contextualize the needs of school teachers and community college groups, as well as university scholars across broad intellectual interests. It's now beginning to be "the" American communication association. It is still on the way, however, to becoming a society that can project its influence fully within the field and more generally. It remains very American in its constituencies and outlook as communication's cultural and societal roles shifted in focus from political discourse to media systems and as internationalization have come to the fore. NCA is thus not well positioned to lead either on global issues or the centrality of media, culture and society in the field.

Who is Jesse Delia: a researcher, a teacher, a university manager, the promoter of a special topic? What is the most important part of your intellectual life?

I am an academic and scholar. Not the person devoted to a particular strand and not the manager. For students I always tried to cultivate a sense of placement of work. If you want to write a good book review, you want to convey where this sits in relation to other things. We contribute within a process of knowledge formation. I have always said the highest rank in the university is full professor. That role is central to a cluster of related roles that have provided me with an extraordinary career. There are many

Back to Table of Contents

talented people who rise to high levels in the academy, but only a small fraction develop research students who prosper at the highest levels and so sustain the heart of the academy. I think this was maybe my greatest talent, and perhaps I should have played this role even more, but I love the whole of the academy. The academy's central roles of research and learning have been important to me, including cultivating in new generations of young scholars the capacities for academic success, but I also find great importance in our shared responsibility for the vitality of the academy itself. My great satisfaction has been in the opportunity to weave all these strands into a single career.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

How to best see communication hasn't been an area of consensus for the field, and I've not been overly concerned with the issue, though it has been a vexing one for many. I actually think the question will lessen in frequency and settle out for the field going forward because the systems and resources through which we do so much of the work of communication have become more and more visible within everyday life. The struggle for the field has been in arriving at understandings that make focal relevant aspects that aren't easily collapsed to the questions, concepts, and analytic methods of other fields. There are large and important domains of overlap with other fields, of course, reflecting the centrality and reach of communication into so many dimensions of human life. Communication is the distinctly human construct of meaning instantiation, transpersonal connection, social interpretation and mutual sense-making. My work reflects this in concern with individual differences formed out of socialization contexts and the personally developed stable constructs and processes that shape and guide situated goal pursuits like persuading. A multiplicity of fragmented, unevenly distributed communicative resources from neural to cultural levels become potentially relevant whether coded into a magazine advertisement, serving a viewer's interpretive understanding of a TV episode, or in the coordinated interaction of relational teasing. Concepts and methods that can illuminate analysis at neural, cognitive, linguistic, behavioral, interactional, technological, societal, cultural and perhaps other levels become relevant when communication is viewed through the lens of the resources and processes relevant to sense making. The bright future for the field, I think, is twofold: first, in the increasing proliferation of questions and associated relevant analytic methods regarding these resources and processes that don't reduce readily to those of other fields; and second, in the expanding frontiers for collaborative work within the field and across fields is coming as questions of interpenetration and interplay across levels become commonplace.

How was the reputation of the discipline at Illinois?

The field's scholarly standing was for a time an issue, though not at Illinois past the mid-1970s. The issue has receded nationally because of greater self-confidence and accomplishment. The change has a material base. The field's scholars write and publish tons more and we enjoy a huge student flow worldwide. The best thing that has happened for the field is the growing collective regard it has as a central discipline. This regard is one of the things woven into the Illinois fabric that kept me here. Only a few departments nationally have close to this. There were not a lot of really exceptional places where communication shared the high perch. Among the things we cultivated were finding worthy problems and executing consistent with the best scholarship. The field has matured generally in this direction just as it has experienced high demand. Some wonderful fields with deep intellectual traditions lost student flux, so we now share high scholarly standing along with contrast to areas like Slavic studies.

Back to Table of Contents

Are there any scientists whom you would call a role model?
So many. My role model is someone who does sustained work and doesn't just drop in. To me, the people I have learned most from are the ones who gave me that sense. Walter Crockett was always a great role model. That's also true for many of our students who have built great careers. Take Brant Burleson, for example; he built a career of major achievement through sustained attention to a set of focal concerns. I particularly admire scholars who open up understanding of areas through finding and developing concepts and relevant methods, because such exemplars can be particularly useful to others.

Looking back on 45 years of communication, is there anything that you are especially proud of?
Yes. I actually like that history chapter a lot (Delia, 1987) for the perspective it provides. I also like a couple of the developmental studies that really took things beyond the idea that there is perspective taking and showed how cognitive scaffolding is built into behavior. If there is a key contribution in my work, it is in how do deal with open-textured data, whether it is interaction, messages, or written protocols and to extract precise quantifiable constructs out of them using a concept of developmental ordering. That kind of quantification of qualitative data is actually what the group around me was more challenged and motivated by than the associated general theoretical constructs.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?
Oh yeah, though I must say that I have had a dream career, and its only hindsight that points me toward thoughts of adjustment. I have had the opportunity in the last years to be deeply involved on the global side. I spent a lot of time in China, in Singapore and other places in Asia, and in the Middle East. With the insights I have now, I would have moved earlier toward building on cultural concepts and connections. Some of my later students did really interesting work reflecting their interests in this direction.

What did you get from these connections to Asia?
I see a great rotation that I think is going to realign political economies, the face of advanced higher education and research, and our field and the things we will give greatest focus. Europe and the U.S. have to cope both with the rapid academic advance globally and other models that are coming out of other traditions. I find very many of my colleagues still to be sort of blissful in the view that the best students will always come here and that all we have to do is open the mail to have them join us. I don't think it's going to last. Give it another ten years. Asia right now is like the U.S. in the 1950's. They are making big infrastructure bets that emphasize higher education and research. NSF and NIH in the U.S. became the drivers connecting these to economic development and societal goals. In the U.S. we seem to be worrying much more about how to recover last year's funding rather than thinking about these big forces shaping higher education research and how we could ride that wave rather than be swamped by it.

What will remain if Jesse Delia is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
I am an existentialist in believing that what remains are our traces. Over time, your traces begin to thin and erode and to be disassociated from individual biographies. That is the way it should be. We can't leave fixed constructs that work outside time and culture. The essential social process is this using of multiple, fragmented resources in a culture to sustain collective understandings and actions. There is a powerful historical aspect in the continuity of potentially relevant fragments and developmental integrations that become resources for renewal, even if these are unlikely to be linked to individuals. I'm

Back to Table of Contents

confident and content that future scholars whose problems could connect to my research or whose challenges involve keeping vibrant the life of the academy will find the constructs needed to empower their communication and ingenuity for their circumstances just as was there for me.

Reference

Delia, J. G. (1987). Communication research: A history. In C. R. Berger & S. H. Chaffee (Eds.), *Handbook of communication science* (pp. 20-98). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1580–1587 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

WOLFGANG DONSBACH

"I'm going for relevant things."

Wolfgang Donsbach, December 9, 2010. Dresden, Germany.

Born:	1949 in Bad Kreuznach, Germany
Education:	1975 Magister in Publizistik, University of Mainz
	1978 University of Mainz
	1981 Dr. Phil.
	1989 Habilitation (postdoctoral dissertation)
Career:	1977 Assistant Professor, University of Dortmund
	1993 Professor at Dresden
	1995 WAPOR President
	2004 ICA President
	1988–1994 Managing Editor, *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*
	1999–2010 Editor, *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*; General Editor of the *International Encyclopedia of Communication*
	2010 ICA Fellow
Personal:	Married, one son

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Wolfgang Donsbach

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

I grew up in a lower-middle class family. My father worked for a car company, and my mother was a housewife. There was no higher education in the background. Not much input in terms of literature, music, or arts, and not any particular relationship to the media, despite the fact that my family had always subscribed to the local newspaper. When I was getting close to my high school exam, I looked into two possibilities: One was diplomacy, because I was rather good in foreign languages, and the other was journalism.

How did your parents react?

They didn't like either of these ideas and said I should do something which is more in the mainstream. That's why my first enrollment was in economics.

You changed your subject very quickly.

When I came to the university, a lot was happening on campus and on the streets. I'm a part of the 1968 generation. I still remember the gap between the abstract models we were talking about in economics and the reality in society and politics. That was frustrating. I was looking for something else and found in my university's class listings a lecture on mass media and elections and about being a foreign correspondent. This lecture was by Peter von Zahn, one of the most famous German journalists, who then had a regular TV show. All of this was much closer to what I was interested in. So, I switched to communication.

What about your parents?

My mother accepted almost everything that I proposed. My father was reluctant because he smelled the political impetus and was not sure how serious this was in terms of a professional career. On the other side, his son was able to debate with his friends. I don't think that my father agreed with all of my political thoughts, but he saw that I was good in rhetoric and could make a point here and there.

Was he a member of a political party?

No. My grandfather was a nominal member of the NSDAP. He worked for German customs. Later, he became the president of a pensioners association. As a schoolboy, I helped him to do the clerical work: writing letters to the members, printings, and so on. I had to become orderly because he was it.

How would you compare the student Wolfgang Donsbach with your students today?

Students, at that time, were much more political and much more outspoken than students today. The climate was completely different. To meet the expectations of your fellows, you had to be very critical, tough on the authorities, and almost against everything. There is a second point: We were much more committed to values and to political problems. When I look back, not everything was okay, but at least we had goals and were committed to them. This is something that I'm missing today.

Does the university teacher Wolfgang Donsbach combat this indifference?

My introductory lecture is four hours a week. I always invest some of my class time for what I would call an "indoctrination" for the public interest, particularly with the younger students. It is not indoctrination

Back to Table of Contents

for a particular value system, but to care about society and about the quality of the media. Just don't take everything for granted. Think about it and don't forget that somebody has to do something so that we achieve a certain quality.

All of us are idealizing the past.
Students today are much more independent than we were. I don't know what is more important, but in this one aspect, there are clear indicators. The biggest deterioration was in the 1980s. The new generation had enough of everything: welfare, cars, freedom, and no wars. Why should they care?

Manfred Rühl remembered discussions with students in Mainz, and especially with Wolfgang Donsbach, about the academic training of journalists (Meyen & Löblich, 2007, p. 93). Why were you interested in this special topic?
I'm still interested in it. Just today, I talked about this topic in my class. Journalism education is at least as important as medical education. We are very strict with our doctors. There are laws for that. Who has the right to cut your stomach and take out the appendix? But we care very, very little about those who tell us what is going on in politics and other parts of reality. Journalists not only influence media quality, but also the judgments and cognitions of citizens who run our society. You cannot just be aware of all studies that have been done on media effects, and then not care about those who produce the content.

Is communication able to train journalists?
It is, yes. Communication should be the center institution of this training, but communication research can't be the only content of the curricula. I did an expertise for Harvard together with Tom Fiedler. There we talked about the five competencies of journalists (Donsbach & Fiedler, 2008). What our discipline can offer is what we call the *process competence*. Journalists should be able to understand why they do certain things and how these things have an effect on the audience.

What about the other four competencies— general, practical, subject, professional ethics?
The question is, how do you organize that journalists get all this knowledge? In an ideal world, it is organized by one single institution. By nature, that institution would be a department of communication, which has to cooperate a lot across disciplines and schools. We should take that problem seriously and think about the identity of journalism in the first place. Many departments are going down dead-end streets now by saying there is no definition of professional journalism, and that in the age of [the] Internet, everybody is a journalist.

Did you ever consider working as a journalist?
Oh, yes. When I started communication, I wanted to become a journalist.

Why did you quit that goal?
The first hit against it was my own Magister thesis.

The one about the professional training in journalism?
Yes. It was an empirical study. I remember the Hollerith machine in the basement of the institute. We worked with punch cards. It was amazing to prove every hypothesis immediately. When you said it might

Back to Table of Contents

be a relationship between variable 8 and variable 12, you could test it. I started to think in falsifications, proves, and inferences. That sometimes drives people around me crazy. I'm so much trained in questioning claims about causality. This was triggered in me when I analyzed my little survey. When I was hired for my first full-time teaching position at Dortmund, I was lost for journalism, and I never regretted that—although this is a fascinating profession.

Who is more important for the birth of the scientist Wolfgang Donsbach, your teacher Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann or Hans Mathias Kepplinger, who claimed it was him getting you back to Mainz?

The two things have to be separated. You must know that I was one of the leaders of the student's movement in Mainz. We were giving Elisabeth hell with strikes and an occupation. Why should she ask somebody of this crew to become one of her assistants? Mathias knew me a little better and talked her into it. I was very surprised that Elisabeth had agreed to do that.

What about the intellectual influence of these two people?

I think it's almost equal. From Elisabeth, I got the general access to science, and from Mathias, the more detailed one. Elisabeth was a kind of generalist. She was convinced that she could tackle everything and was always ready to draw inferences from sometimes weaker data just to make the point. She was also more political in the application of her results, and Mathias more [anchored] in his methods, especially in research designs and indicators. I took him as a model. He was male and closer to my age. Elisabeth was in a different class.

How did this model serve?

Very well. I'm very grateful that I had this model of a researcher. Mathias is somebody who does not go with the climate of opinion. If you look for new and unexpected ideas, he is the one. I also admire his ability to combine theories and empirical research. He is much more theoretical than me. Everything he does is relevant, not just number crunching.

On your website, you call Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann a friend. What was the core of this friendship?

It's different from usual friendships. We had a lot of trouble and sometimes fun, but Elisabeth was a main part of my life. When I was a student, she was high-class with her Mercedes Benz and a personal driver. Later, we had a working relationship, and I became a colleague certainly with her support. After Simpson (1994) accused her, I organized a session at ICA, which helped her to overcome this situation, because people like Elihu Katz took sides with her. That session brought me closer to her. She became weaker and needed people around her. I visited her twice when she was already unable to leave the house. The last time, she didn't recognize me any more.

When you became a professor, where did you copy your teacher, and where did you differ from her?

The way I led the department was very much influenced by what I had seen in Mainz. I wanted to have an efficient organizational structure with clear responsibilities.

Back to Table of Contents

Like a business?

A little bit. Be efficient, be on time. I also copied the methodological practicum and the colloquium. These forms of classes create a cooperative mood. Like in Mainz, I started an association of the departments' friends with local institutions that supported us, and conducting socially relevant research, of course.

Being linked to the Mainz School: Is this more a burden, or more of a delight to you?

Mostly, it's delight, particularly when others talk negatively about us. Sometimes those arguments are very unsubtle if you think of all the people who are counted as Mainz School, like Hans-Bernd Brosius, Jürgen Wilke, or Klaus Schönbach. The common denominator of us is first empirical thinking and having proof to what you say. One cannot just make new books out of old ones, but rather bring new evidence. The second is being bold enough to go against PC and climates of opinion. That's what people like Hans-Bernd or Jürgen have always done. That's something that I hope to have learned. As we can all read in *The Spiral of Silence*, it is not easy to do that (Noelle-Neumann, 1993). The Mainz School may find that it's the opposite of common sense, maybe sometimes on the basis of weaker data, but go for the more provocative argument and not the one that's easy to digest.

Did you ever consider applying for a position in the U.S.?

Yes. I interviewed for one position. It would not have worked out if they picked me because of family reasons. Salary is also an issue. I have a professional woman, and I cannot just tell her to color her fingernails all day while I pursue my career. After retirement, maybe I will take a part-time position; it would be nice. I am going to a lot of places very often, and for the rest, I am happy to be here and to have this department. It's a small department, and it still depends very much on individual people.

What is the main goal of all your activities abroad?

The first goal is a very egoistic one. I want to encounter other cultures and meet other people. The second motivation is to do comparative research. If you do journalism research and you are restricted to what is going on in Germany, you just lack the criteria.

Do you like the role of a public speaker, a local celebrity?

Am I a local celebrity?

I think so.

Maybe I am. When I think of celebrities, I think of models. Yes, I like it. It's part of my personality—that I am outgoing—[it] is also a way to transfer our doing to the rest of society. When you look at the mission statement of our department, you'll find that we make a commitment to the region. I am involved with so many things, and people ask me to give a speech here and there. You are asked by journalists for interviews on current issues. I now have my own television show, a talk show on a small local channel. I also try to put in our research results.

Back to Table of Contents

Who is Wolfgang Donsbach: a scholar, a teacher, a research manager, a chairman of international organizations and meetings? What is the most important part of your academic life?

I hope it is research, but maybe communicating about research is the role that I can take the best. It was Elisabeth who once said to me, whether Mathias or I should give a talk somewhere: "You should do that. You are a popular speaker like me."

It's a gift.

Yes, it is a certain gift. I hope the second is the research. I like to sit with my assistants and my students and to talk about a content analysis and operationalizations. I like writing it up, and I am also quite good in organizing myself and others. The Encyclopedia was much more administration than intellectual work. It's about quality standards and routines, so that you get it done in time. It has 1,331 entries, and I had uploaded 1,330 on the day that was set three-and-half years before. There was only one which came late. I won't tell you who it was [laughing]. Sometimes, I am probably not very gentle to my collaborators; at least those who were in my closer environment. I can be very tough, very demanding, and probably not always fair. You know yourself in those stressful situations. But I get it done. At high costs, but I get it done.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

It is about what the particular researcher defines it. There is no global or national definition of communication. This makes us different from other disciplines. My access is very naïve. It is very taken from practice: What helps to solve the problems that communication research should solve? Why does society pay us? They want answers to certain problems. Should kids play with Nintendo? Do the media influence voting decisions? Is communication only concerned about public communication, or is it more practical to include interpersonal communication, or is it even more practical to include interpersonal communication in specific areas, like teacher-student or health? And then you have to see where the theories apply. I don't think we have done that task yet in our field. That's why we are still struggling. We also have different traditions. ICA is very broadly defined. I don't know what's going on in a lot of divisions, just because I have no expertise in those fields. I also have no expertise in 60% of the content in the *Encyclopedia*.

60%?

Let's go the other way round. I just could name my core areas: political communication, methods, media exposure, media effects, journalism, and a little bit of reality perception through the media. This is also what you find taught in our department, and probably in your department in Munich, or in Mainz. The way that we, in Germany, define the normal department is much narrower than in many other countries (Donsbach, 2006). Now, with the Internet, you don't have to reinvent communication research, but of course, you have to incorporate more theories and findings of interpersonal communication because the borders between mass and interpersonal communication are blurring. But there is still a line when I write an e-mail to you. I still say everything that's for the anonymous public is something we are dealing with, because there you have certain peculiarities that can be researched with the same theories. Sociologists, then, can deal much better with that purely interpersonal and private communication.

Back to Table of Contents

All your statements about the subject call for relevance. Who decides what is relevant?
I do [laughing]. I think it's possible to deduce criteria of relevance when you are living in the society. One of the sources is the democratic theory. We have ideas of what democracy looks like, and we have ideas of how we want people to interact with each other. I think everybody would agree that it is better to live with valid information than on false ones. It's better to make rational discussions, rather than emotional ones. So, I think everything that helps in this perspective is relevant. When I had the privilege to suggest the title for my ICA conference in New Orleans, I called it "Communication in the Public Interest." Particularly the mediated communication should put the recipient in the situation that she or he can make an independent reality perception. From there, you can deduce almost all ethical and quality norms that you find in literature. It's all about giving options to people. We need objectivity for all claims about reality, and we need plurality when it comes to values. Then you can decide for every study that you do: Does it help to pursue this goal?

Where do you see the field in 2030?
Disciplines are rather stable, slow, and lazy institutions. A lot will happen as a consequence of what is going on in the media. This has always been kind of a problem: Our field depends very much on the practical world. This is the strength and the weakness. When I started in 1969, there were four or five departments in Germany. Since then, the field has grown at an almost unbelievable pace. But it's also a weakness, because the field has to reinvent itself all the time. I think the relevance of our filed as we understand it will also depend on the development of people's "duty to keep informed." In our societies, the status and the quality of the public communication is one of the major indicators of the health of the society. That requires that enough people are interested in the news. Now, I see a decline there. Then, what we are doing here might become less interesting. That's something that I fear. Well, we have to fight against it with relevant research.

Are there any other scientists than Elisabeth and Mathias whom you would call a role model?
Yes, Thomas Patterson at Harvard. He is my closest male friend and a great researcher.

Apple strudel and Einstein, I read about it (Patterson, 2009).
Tom has a very rare combination of being just a normal man. I mean a male who is interested in sports and with whom you can have drinks and tease women, and at the same time, be a serious scholar who writes very well. The way he writes is something I fight to learn from him. He is just much better. He has a lot of influence through his writing. I sometimes think: How would he have behaved in this situation? Maybe it's particular when I am in English language environment that this happens to me, but he is that one. Of course, Jürgen Wilke and Winfried Schulz were important for me. I admire them for what they have done, but it was not as close as with these two or three people including Elisabeth. With Mathias, it was a friendship. We were about four or five times in Tunisia working for a project.

Looking back on 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?
I think others should talk about that. When I look at the *Encyclopedia*, I think that is an achievement as a German, and being in a rather small department. It makes you proud and a bit sentimental when you see the 12 volumes sit on a desk in the U.S. or in Munich. From this position here, having been asked to do that, it was even more important for me than the ICA Presidency.

Back to Table of Contents

Is there anything what you would do in a different way today?

First of all, I would publish the results of my habilitation in a different outlet. It was a big mistake to put it in the *European Journal of Communication* (Donsbach, 1991). Whenever I see something based on Cognitive Dissonance Theory, it's not cited. It should be, because I think it's still the most voluminous and serious communication study on it. It was just a wrong outlet. I don't think I could have done many things better. I should have learned how to lead a department and how to interact with colleagues earlier. This is typical to becoming a professor. Everybody expects you can do budgets, you can lead people, you can write applications, and that you can teach. Nobody really has all of these skills. What I would not do differently: I sometimes think I am much less an academic than many of my colleagues. My life is not centered only on academia. I have several feet that I am standing on. I like to play, to be social, to be a political head, and to drive my Porsche. There is a variance in my life that's really important to me. I sometimes think about, should I be more serious, more concentrated, and spend more of my time with research only? And then I say, "Thank God, I have done the other things."

What will remain when Wolfgang Donsbach is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

Academically? I hope that we have more people who become journalists, who think about what their purpose is, and what is the criteria that their work should be measured against. I hope that we have more young scholars who ask, "What is important for research? Who has a certain use from the work that I'm doing?" I'm going for relevant things.

References

Donsbach, W. (1991). Exposure to political content in newspapers: The impact of cognitive dissonance on readers' selectivity. *European Journal of Communication*, *6*, 155–186.

Donsbach, W. (2006). The identity of communication research. *Journal of Communication*, *53*, 437–448.

Donsbach, W., & Fiedler, T. (2008). *Journalism school curriculum enrichment: A midterm report of the Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the future of journalism education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, Joan Shorenstein Center for Press, Politics, and Public Policy.

Meyen, M., & Löblich, M. (2007).* Ich habe dieses Fach erfunden. Wie die Kommunikationswissenschaft an die deutschsprachigen Universitäten kam. *Köln: Halem.

Noelle-Neumann, E. (1993). *The spiral of silence: Public opinion – our social skin*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Patterson, T. E. (2009). Wolfgang Donsbach 60 Jahre. *Publizistik*, *54*, 558–559.

Simpson, C. (1994). *Science of coercion: Communication research and psychological warfare, 1945–1960*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1588–1594 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

STEVE DUCK

"Next time I would start sooner."

Steve Duck, March 2, 2011.
Iowa City, IA. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1946 in Keynsham, England
Education:	1958 Gloucestershire County Scholar at Bristol Grammar School
	1965 Pembroke College, Oxford (psychology, philosophy, and physiology)
	1968 B.A. University of Sheffield
	1971 Ph.D. University of Sheffield, Department of Psychology
Career:	1970–1985 Warden and lecturer in Sheffield, Glasgow, and Lancaster
	1982 Founding Editor, *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*
	1986 University of Iowa
	1992 ICA Fellow

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Steve Duck

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?
My father was a journalist. He started on newspapers and then moved to the BBC. One of the things that he basically taught me was editing and writing. My mother was a homemaker and pedagogue with ambitions for her sons, both of whom ended up as professors. Both of my parents wanted me to go into a classical school education.

The Bristol Grammar School.
Accordingly, I studied classics, which involved me studying ancient history and classical languages, again following the interest in language. In some ways, I had an atypical experience of English schools, because I actually encountered classical rhetoric. We also analyzed texts minutely, and I had to write poems in Latin and Greek.

What about your career goals and dreams?
Well, what will come out from this interview is a certain sense of randomness about how I went about life. I was able to pick up some opportunities that came in my way, but I didn't really have a plan. I was originally going to be a dentist. Then I went to college to read psychology.

Did you ever consider working as a journalist like your father?
No. He didn't like his job. His skills were obviously in language and editing. When he was writing news, he had to time things. He found the BBC too stressful because he was working on a live on-air program. Sometimes, he had to rewrite the same story within two or three minutes, and yet keep the delivery time for the newsreader at exactly the same number of seconds. He moved on to research for feature programs.

Do you still remember why you chose to study at Oxford?
Well, I didn't. Again, this was randomness. The school had placed me into a university somewhere else. In my A-level exam, I did better than they expected. They told me to pull out, take the next year back in school, and then apply for Oxford.

In the "brief educational history" on your website, you mention an early exam on animal behavior, logic, and statistics in Oxford. What makes this exam so special that it is still in your mind after more than 45 years?
It is probably because I got the highest score. It was a milestone where I realized that I might have some ability. It was also interesting because I was taught by some very distinguished people. The first lecturer I ever had was Niko Tinbergen, a Nobel Prize winner on animal behavior. I also had a lecture from Richard Dawkins when he was a trainee.

How would you compare the student Steve Duck with your students today?
That's a tricky question because of the cultural shift between Britain and the U.S. I was specialized from the age of 12, and leaning toward a particular style of expectation in the school from very early on. In America, the students tend not to specialize even till their third year of college.

Back to Table of Contents

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers?
The main ones from grammar school taught me to think about analyzing meaning. When I got on to university, one of my teachers was Michael Argyle, who is famous for his work on nonverbal communication. Brian Little was the one who introduced me to what I would now call interpersonal communication. That was what I wanted to do next, to work on that particular area at the PhD level.

When did you know that you wanted to become a scientist, maybe a communication scientist?
I didn't actually know that I wanted to become one until I did. There was again a random element. After my thesis, I wrote some papers and a book (Duck, 1973), which were read by Gerald Miller, who was one of the first ICA Fellows. Miller invited me to do a chapter for one of his books (Duck, 1976) and suggested that I come over to one of the ICA conferences.

Did you go?
Yes, in 1983. It was one of the first conferences I ever attended in America. I talked to Miller, went to lots of panels, and discovered that what I was doing was interpersonal communication, and that there was a whole range of stuff that I hadn't known about before because of the English system, which didn't formally teach rhetoric or debate. I reinterpreted some of my work along interpersonal lines. Then the job came up at Iowa.

How did your colleagues in the UK react when you emigrated to the U.S.?
I don't know. I just left them behind to face Mrs. Thatcher, and I'm sure they said many things after I had gone.

Did Iowa offer anything that was not achievable in Lancaster or Glasgow?
A much bigger range of very smart graduate students with whom I was able to work. In Lancaster, it was maybe once a year, whereas in Iowa, I'm involved with six, seven, or eight a year. Here were lots of stimulation and lots of people to write papers or share ideas with.

Have you ever regretted this decision?
No. I do go back to England very often, but I've never felt that I wanted to live there forever.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to personal relationships?
No. It was another example of randomness. When I was working with Brian Little on Kelly's personality theory, I was confronted with the need to do an undergraduate project. One day, I was walking back from the psychology department to have dinner with my friends and suddenly wondered if I could get my friends to be my subjects. I tried to work out a way in which Kelly's theory would predict who would be friends with one another. So it was pretty much coincidence that I did that. In my PhD, I followed up the same topic.

You are still in the same field.
Yes, in the same sense that I'm still a social scientist rather than a biologist. But I would say that I've changed the ways I think about it as I've been influenced by colleagues in rhetoric, and particularly in media studies.

Back to Table of Contents

How would you rate the academic position of relationship scholars within communication?
I think they have definitely improved it over the last 20 years. When I started, people doing relationship work were basically a minority—a fringe minority, as well. Now, it's more like a major airline. All four faculty members who teach interpersonal communication at Iowa are relationship people—and it's not just because I've been able to be on all the search committees! It's because that's the way the field is going. There are major journals now that publish only relationship work, and even journals like *Human Communication Research*, *Communication Monographs,* or *The Journal of Communication* publish such studies pretty often.

How would you rate the academic position of communication scholars within psychology?
To some extent, we feel like the poor cousin. Psychologists expect us to read their journals, but they never read ours. It's only when we get to conferences organized around specific themes that we feel more equal with psychologists or sociologists who might be there as well.

Is there anything one could do to improve this situation?
You might think we relationship scholars would know the answer, but I'm not sure that there is one. It also depends on political forces: which discipline has the most prestige. You are strong if you get grants. That's why social psychologists work on health or other fundable research. Grants are rare in interpersonal communication studies.

You got honors from both disciplines. If you had to choose between communication and psychology, which one is your favorite?
You are asking me to set myself up with that question! I've learned to be much more affiliated with communication studies. Today, I would see myself as a communication scholar and a recovering social psychologist.

You did everything one has to do in order to establish an academic topic. In the early 1980s, you launched a series of international conferences, you founded a journal and an international network, and you edited a handbook (Duck, 1988). Did you follow a master plan?
No. Each one followed on from the other. When I saw how many people showed up at the conferences and how many high quality papers we had, I couldn't stop wondering why people weren't publishing them. They told me that the journals of the day wouldn't accept them. So I said, "Well, let's start our own journal." A handbook is a sort of older sibling of a journal, because you have to accumulate all the knowledge. Part of my purpose was interdisciplinary. I wanted a handbook that had several disciplines. When people bought it for their discipline, they should see the other disciplines that are involved. There was no master plan except to get the field recognized. That was the driving force.

Is there anything from this experience that you'd share to advise junior scholars of about 30?
Don't do what I did. It would have been much more sensible if I had had a master plan. The lesson that I've learned is when you get handed a stack of cards, you have to play them the best way you can. You can't decide what cards you get. You just have to look at your hand and bluff your way through the bits when you can't play a good hand. For younger scholars, I would just try to make sure that they are able to recognize an opportunity when there is one, and to make the most of it.

Back to Table of Contents

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?
I was very proud. It was the first fellowship I was elected to, and it was a significant honor.

Who is Steve Duck: a researcher, the founding father of relationship research within communication, the promoter of junior scholars? What is the most important part of your academic life?
Supporting junior scholars. This is one of the things that get neglected in the great race that everybody is in to make their own career. It's not easy for young scholars to go up to the older ones. I think the seniors have a duty to make sure that such introductions get made and the networks get built.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?
My answer won't be a big surprise. Communication is all about relationship. It is cliché that one cannot not communicate, but I would say that "one cannot not relate." Relationships are prior to communication, not only in the sense of "before." They are also more significant. Relationships have to be created before communication becomes possible.

Sonia Livingstone told me about the UK—about the preconception that communication is about the training of students first and only secondly about research. How is the situation in the U.S.?
She is quite right about the English situation. There is a kind of double standard in the United States. When people go up for promotion and tenure, they have first to demonstrate that they are good teachers. But what really counts the most in the balance is the quality of research that they have done. In a research university like Iowa, there is a close connection between the scholarship and how the teaching gets done. People can feed their research back into the teaching, therefore, the students get some really hot stuff.

What about missing respect from older disciplines?
I don't think communication is a new science. Aristotle, Plato, and Cicero wrote both about persuasion and friendship. We trace the discipline at least back to Aristotle. The point is the grant money. That's probably how a discipline is rated in terms of respect. A second issue is that communication is very popular among undergraduates. That's why it tends to be suspected by administrators, even as they gloat over the tuition money that we bring in.

Suspected?
People think communication studies must not be difficult. The larger the number of students that want to take it, the easier it must be. If you only get 40 biologists who want to sign up and 2000 who want to do communication studies, administrators might think that biology is much more complex and difficult. You noticed that I avoided defining communication studies. I think it is probably a much more complicated subject than a biologist could manage to deal with. The nature of the beast we are chasing is morphing all the time, over a much shorter evolutionary cycle.

Back to Table of Contents

Could you please draw a landscape of communication studies worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?
That's very difficult. One of the strengths in the United States is an empirically-based approach to interpersonal communication. One of the strengths in Europe is a complicated theoretical approach to the nature of communication, particularly mass communication.

What about the gaps between different branches of the discipline?
This is a second place for development. For example, interpersonal and mass communication can talk to each other, because a lot of interpersonal communication is now done through social media. We haven't worked out yet how those two things play out with one another. There is a whole bunch of ways in which people could look at the fact that mediated messages get talked about between individuals in other means and contexts.

Where do you see the field in 2030?
This is entirely unpredictable. In 1990, people were just beginning to see the Internet on the horizon and were talking about it as a danger. The issues that are now coming up about Facebook and privacy will still be significant in 2030, just applied to objects and communicative forms of which we presently know nothing.

Are there any scientists whom you would call a role model?
Gerald Miller. A second one is George Kelly, outside the communication field, a personal construct theorist. He was a model of how people should go about approaching research questions.

What did you learn from Gerald Miller for your own work?
I learned a lot about interpersonal communication, the strategies people have, and the kinds of persuasive techniques they use. In fact, he was one of the people who first put me on to the idea about the rhetoric of everyday communication, which I've been working on ever since.

Looking back on 40 years in communication studies, is there anything you are especially proud of?
I'm proud of starting the relationship network, which managed to launch a lot of junior careers and made the field of relationship research respectable.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?
I would probably start sooner.

You did start soon.
Well, I didn't realize early enough how many people there were out there doing work that wasn't being read by other people. I was just looking around in the libraries and enjoying it myself. It wasn't really serving any purpose except for me. I could have helped people to interconnect with one another a lot earlier.

Back to Table of Contents

What will remain when Steve Duck is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

One thing that I would like to influence in ICA would be greater internationalization and greater recognition of multiple ways of doing things. Cultural diversity is not just a concept. It is something that really should be put into practice. Looking at the list of ICA Fellows, it's rather surprising to find how many there are from the United States and how few there are from abroad. That should be changed.

References

Duck, S. (1973). *Personal relationships and personal constructs: A study of friendship formation*. London: Wiley.

Duck, S. (1976). Interpersonal communication in developing acquaintance. In G. Miller (Ed.), *Explorations in interpersonal communication* (pp. 127-147). New York: SAGE Annual Reviews.

Duck, S. (1988). *Handbook of personal relationships: Theory, research and interventions.* London: Wiley.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1595–1600 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

GAIL FAIRHURST

"A social, cultural, and discursive lens toward leadership communication."

Gail Fairhurst, March 17, 2011.
University of Cincinnati. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1951 in Cleveland, Ohio
Education:	1973 B.A. in English, Bowling Green State University
	1975 M.A. in communication, Ohio State University
	1978 Ph.D., University of Oregon
Career:	2010 ICA Fellow
	2011 NCA Distinguished Scholar
Personal:	Married, three children

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Gail Fairhurst

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?
My father was German and my mother Slovenian. Neither of them had a university degree. I was first-generation college. I grew up in a very ethnic neighborhood, and I had a strong Catholic upbringing. I like to joke about my compulsive personality. That's because I have way too many nuns in my background. They are very good with discipline, may I just say, and knew how to instill it. In spite of this background—or maybe because of it—I've always leaned toward a career with a lot of writing involved.

What did your parents do for a living?
My mom was a housewife, and my dad bought and sold electrical equipment. He was also an electrician.

Do you still remember why you chose to study English at Bowling Green?
I wanted to be a copywriter for an advertising agency. So being an English major seemed to be a good way to go.

Why did you change your subject to communication?
After graduating, I worked for an advertising agency for a few months. However, it just didn't hold the charms that I thought it would. I was visiting a friend at Ohio State one weekend, and I met this really interesting, good-looking guy on High Street. For his PhD, he was studying the *Mr. Rogers* TV show for children. It was fascinating to hear him talk about his work evaluating the show's impact on kids. That following Monday, I went to the department office and started conversations to see what communication really was. I just didn't know its possibilities at the time. However, once I got into the program, I loved it and almost immediately gravitated toward organizational communication. I've been there ever since.

What happened with the good-looking boy?
Ah, well, he turned out to be gay!

How would you compare the student Gail Fairhurst with your students today?
I was both similar and different. The difference would be that, when I was in college, there was a bit more respect for authority than I see in today's students. Again, perhaps it was my Catholic upbringing and the authority that was drilled into us. Just this week, I taught a seniors-only class in communication theory. Two students had not turned in their required term paper, and I had not yet heard a word from them. There is just no reason for not communicating with the professor when assignments are missed. The young Gail Fairhurst would have been apologizing profusely for a missed assignment.

In which ways were you similar to them?
In college, I was searching for who I was and what life was going to be like.

Can you tell me something about your main academic teachers in communication?
Leonard Haas probably had the greatest impression on me as a teacher. He was an absolutely brilliant man who struck fear in everybody's heart just because he was so incredibly bright. However, I have to also credit Edna Rogers, who was not my teacher, per se, but someone with whom I collaborated early in

Back to Table of Contents

my career. She really became a wonderful mentor as well. The orientation toward the communication that she taught me back—the language of connectedness, temporalness, patternedness, and embeddedness—is the orientation I still hold onto today. While I'm at it, let me just also mention Linda Putnam, a colleague and dear friend who teaches me something about communication every time we collaborate.

Who was your academic adviser at Oregon?
William Elliott. He was very good as well. His whole approach to being a professor was instructive: keeping things calm and the work life in balance with other aspects of your life. He went on to become a dean of communication at Marquette.

When did you know that you wanted to become a scientist, maybe a communication scientist?
Interesting question. I think I knew for sure when I began interviewing for jobs after I got my PhD. I was offered a job by IBM, but I would have had to move every two years, and the job involved a number of very practical assignments that would expose me to a range of the company's operations. I began to realize that I wasn't so much interested in changing the world, as I was in studying it. The University of Cincinnati offered me a job, and I took it. I've been here for 30 years.

Are there things that you wished would have been different at UC?
Yes. We don't have a doctoral program, although I do work with PhD students in other departments and at other universities. There are four PhD programs in the state of Ohio. Even though we have a quality faculty, it would be nearly impossible for us to get such a program in the current climate.

Were you ever forced to think about gender questions during your academic career?
Not so much. I don't really feel like gender issues have held me back. I came into a department with a good gender balance. Historically, the university overall was male-dominated, but this has changed a lot. Two years ago, I had a female department head, a female dean, and a female university president. Within the communication discipline itself, we have folks like Edna Rogers, Juddi Trent, Mary Ann Fitzpatrick, Judee Burgoon, Linda Putnam, and others who have paved the way for people like me.

Leadership in organizations seems to be the topic of your life. Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to that topic?
There was a whole series of rather small experiences. With my background, I always had to work. In the summertime, I had two jobs because I had to pay for college. While the guys could get a lot of money in construction, young women like me had to work in offices. However, that was great exposure to a long string of really bad bosses and a few really good ones.

Why are you so strongly interested in actual talk?
Edna Rogers was the one who changed my paradigm from an individualistic, cognitive point of view to a relational and discourse-based view. She taught me how to study actual talk and code it, as well as the language of sequence and temporal form. Since the days of my early training with her, I've moved a bit from coding schemes to more naturalistic dialogue.

Back to Table of Contents

Could you put your approach in two or three keywords?
Discursive, social constructionist approaches to leadership.

With your books, you tried to reach out to practicing leaders and managers (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996; Fairhurst, 2010). Is it necessary to have an audience beyond the scientific community?
Yes, it is. When I was trying to get tenure, I was publishing both in communication and management journals and thought, that is it: I want to restrict my writing to publishing in A-journals. One day during this time period, Bob Sarr, my project liaison at Procter & Gamble, asked me when I was going to stop publishing for the 300 or so academics who read scholarly journals and start publishing for the people who could really use my work. I did not have a good answer to that question! After much thought, I decided to write a book about framing and a meaning-centered view of leadership. This was the one area that you could see throughout the journals in both psychology and communication, but was being overlooked in the practitioner literature.

Did you reach your aim?
Yes, but I didn't imagine how humbling it would be. I thought that a practitioner book would be easy to write—after all, I was going up against former debaters at conferences and really tough reviewers in the academic journals that I was publishing in. I thought, how tough could a practitioner book be? Boy, was I wrong! The first draft of the book was simply not readable. It was very scientific, very dry. You have to be a really good writer to pull of this genre, and you must have really rich examples. The stress of it all got to me. I was also department head at the time. One morning, I woke up and couldn't open my jaw because I was grinding my teeth so much.

How did you manage to finish the book?
The publisher hired a production manager who helped me to take apart my writing style sentence by sentence. It was painful, but the best thing I ever did. This process really freed me as a writer, ironically, for my scientific writing as well. I also gained a new respect for writing for practitioners. In fact, the older I get, the more I want to make my work relevant to multiple audiences. Too many practitioners devalue communication. I feel it is my mission to teach leaders and students of leadership as much about the complexity of the communication process as possible.

Do you like the role of a consultant?
Yes and no. I do it to get research clients these days. I also like to design training programs, but I don't like to do a lot of repetitive training. I very much enjoy one-on-one executive coaching, because this is a way to get inside the heads of leaders, help them, and learn from them. It helps to inform the research process, as well as my teaching.

How would you rate the academic position of scholars who study discourses within communication?
Since the linguistic turn in philosophy and in the social sciences, there is a greater value toward interpretive and critical work, especially in communication. This work also resonates with a lot of management scholars in Europe, Scandinavia, and Australia. However, U.S. business schools are still heavily oriented toward post-positivist research, so they are less enamored of discursive approaches.

Back to Table of Contents

How would you rate the position of OrgComm scholars?
It is strong, but perhaps not as strong as new information technologies. That's the 800-pound gorilla, it seems these days, because there is so much going on in this area.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?
It was very important to me and a very high honor. I was absolutely thrilled.

Who is Gail Fairhurst: a researcher, a teacher, the commuter between university and business, the icon of the discipline at Cincinnati? What is the most important part of your academic life?
I like the variety. It uses a lot of different parts of me. All of those things flow into one another. I'm very grateful that I wake up each morning and I'm still fascinated by the projects I get to work on. I continue to love writing, and I very much enjoy working with students, as well as with practitioners. Lately, I've been able to travel internationally. Two years ago, I was in Sweden on a Fulbright; last year in Denmark, and this year, I spent time in Australia and New Zealand that I thoroughly enjoyed. I'm thrilled that these folks are using my work and want me to lecture and work with their students and faculty. In many ways, this has re-invigorated me here, at my own university.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?
I still love the Miller and Steinberg definition (Miller & Steinberg, 1975): Communication is an intentional, transactional, symbolic, contextual process. All five of those words are really important, and I'm fascinated by their complex operations as I analyze talk. If I could add one word, I would probably take "dialogic," because so much of what I see in organizations today is the working out of tensions between individuals and the collective, public and private concerns, organizational change and stability. Tension, contradiction, and paradox are the new normal of complex organizational life.

Sonia Livingstone told me about missing respect from old-established subjects, and about the preconception that communication is about the training of students first and only secondly about research. How is the situation here at Cincinnati?
It used to be that way, because, in the academy, communication was undervalued as a phenomenon in its own right. In addition, there was a general devaluing of skills. Moreover, early on, what communication departments were teaching was little more than a derivative of psychology, sociology, and management. I don't think that's true anymore. There is overlap, certainly, but we're holding our own these days theoretically and in terms of our research, which has contributed to the legitimacy of our disciplinary status.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?
At this point, the skyscrapers are probably heavy in the U.S., but I see it coming more and more out of Europe, especially in the organizational arena. The construction sites are China, Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. I've been hearing that South America is also coming out very strongly, but I'm not as aware of this scholarship as I would like to be.

Back to Table of Contents

Where do you see the field in 2030?

Of course, technology is huge and will continue to be that way. I also see the organizational form continuing to morph. As OrgComm scholars, we have to understand how communication constitutes these morphing forms. And I see a continued strong interest in the intercultural, and in getting the Americans out of their comfort zones.

Are there any other scientists than Edna Rogers whom you regard as role models?

Linda Putnam, James Taylor, François Cooren, Scott Poole, Peter Monge, Bob McPhee, Dave Seibold, Vern Cronen, Barnett Pearce, Stan Deetz, Don Ellis. I could name a lot of people here.

What did you learn from Linda and James for your own work?

Linda is an accomplished scholar in so many areas of the discipline and just never fails to be insightful. However, I remember being horrified when she first started editing my work. Three words would describe it: slash and burn! But, at the time, this was really what was needed. I just learned so much about professionalism from her, too. James Taylor is so eclectic, so creative. He and his Montreal colleagues like my dear friend, François Cooren, are doing some of the original theorizing in organizational communication today. I just have tremendous respect for what they're doing and the risks they are taking.

Looking back on almost 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

I'm most proud of challenging the individual and cognitive lens of leadership psychology with a social and cultural lens that focuses on discourse at multiple levels, power, relationality, and framing among leadership actors.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

Probably, it would be to be in a department with a doctoral program. Overall, however, I'm grateful for my professional life.

What will remain when Gail Fairhurst is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

A social, cultural, and discursive lens toward leadership; the skill of framing; and the hope that I've left some really good research for future generations. I would also hope that those I have mentored feel the same level of gratitude I feel toward Edna and Linda.

References

Fairhurst, G. (2010). *The power of framing: Creating the language of leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Fairhurst, G., & Sarr, R. (1996). *The art of framing: Managing the language of leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Miller, G. R., & Steinberg, M. (1975). *Between people: A new analysis of interpersonal communication*. Chicago: Science Research Association.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1601–1608 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

CINDY GALLOIS

"I reflect the interdisciplinary roots of the discipline."

Cindy Gallois, May 30, 2011.
Boston, MA. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1945 in Washington, DC
Education:	1966 B.S.L., Georgetown University
	1973 M.A. in psychology and communication, Florida
	1976 Ph.D. in psychology and communication, Florida
Career:	1976 move to Australia
	1979 Lecturer at University of Queensland
	1996 Professor, University of Queensland
	1997–2009 management positions at UQ
	1995 to 1998 Editor, *Human Communication Research*
	2000 Fellow, Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia
	2001 ICA President
	2002 IALSP President
	2007 ICA Fellow
	2010 Emeritus Professor
Personal:	Married to Jeffery Pittam

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Cindy Gallois

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

I was brought up at a time of significant political ferment. It was the McCarthy period, and my parents were very involved in that. My mother was, particularly in U.S. terms, quite left-wing. My father was a journalist, but I had no interest at all in media or communication. I actually wanted to be a doctor.

What age are we talking about?

That aspiration stayed with me all the way through school. However, I started learning French and Russian, and eventually became completely bilingual in French.

In East Germany, I had to learn Russian, too.

It was the period of Sputnik. Russian is a fabulous language; I really liked it. Even though I was very small, the politics of that time, with the recent Second World War and the Iron Curtain, was formative for me. One of the things that I really took on was the strong 19th-century ethic of self-reliance—I really bought into that, and it helped me a lot. I was brought up in the South, which was traditional and politically conservative. So we were a minority within a minority. I went to university as quickly as I could. In fact, a lot of my early life was spent getting away from people and things I didn't like very much.

You ended up at Georgetown.

Yes, I did my first degree there, in languages. At the same time, I was doing science, which, in theory, I wasn't allowed to do as a woman at Georgetown. I would often be the only woman in my classes. This was all before the second wave of feminism, and I never thought about my situation in those terms. Oddly enough, in the end, [the] university convinced me that the medicine route was not for me. I wanted to do something I would be really good at, rather than something I would be just okay at. So I switched into psychology, and then went to Europe immediately after I finished my degree. I lived in France and Belgium. It was another time of huge political ferment: First, the 1968 revolution, and then the rise of Flemish nationalism, which I found fascinating. My politics took a huge turn to the left—I had had no idea how different the political frame was in Europe. I was still very young and impressionable.

How long did you stay in Europe?

Five years. Eventually, I went to England, where I got married. I did some study at Oxford and then went back to the U.S. with my husband, who was a philosopher. By then, I had focused on the psychology of language as an area for study. I had never heard of communication as a discipline at that point.

At Georgetown, they didn't have it.

They barely had psychology. It was part of philosophy there in those days. But there was a department of communication at Florida. I was lucky enough to end up with a supervisor who had an appointment in both social psychology and communication. So I discovered the part of the field that is closest to psychology. Today, we would call it interpersonal, intergroup, and language and social interaction. This was during the first half of the 1970s. I did my PhD on nonverbal communication, and my master's thesis on bilinguals' code switching among Cubans. I was very much a quantitative person at that point. My master's thesis came out of my own experience as a bilingual, where I felt many parts of my personality,

Back to Table of Contents

values, and attitudes change when I changed languages. My PhD thesis continued that theme on to the subtle changes in style that people make when they chat in same-sex or mixed-sex conversations.

After finishing your PhD, you left the academy.
No, but I went out to Australia. I spent some years in Melbourne, in an institute for allied health science training. My job was mainly in psychology, but I had a small part in speech therapy, so that my interest in language was strengthened. I also learned more about the health applications of communication. Then I went to UQ, which, at that time, was the only university in Australia where allied health was taught. I have been there ever since—so that's my life up to the present day [laughing].

Back to the very beginning: What paper did your father work for?
By the time I was born, he was working for magazines—for *Newsweek,* and then for *Business Week*. He would have called himself an economic journalist by then, but he started out in news, and then in sports.

What about your mother?
She was trained as a librarian. When I was young, she wasn't working. Eventually, she went back to library science and did a master's degree. My father was the first one in his family to graduate from a university; his family were farmers. My mother's parents were different; they were educated, professional people: doctors, lawyers, and things like that.

Did religion play any role in your childhood?
Yes. I was quite religious. I was an Anglican, and I went to a Catholic university. Studying at a Catholic university when you are not Catholic is one of the most interesting things you can do, especially at a Jesuit university. They took nothing for granted with us.

How would you compare the student Cindy Gallois with today's students?
It's hard to compare, because there are a lot of variables that have changed: time, culture, and place. I do think we problem-solved a bit better. Today, children in Anglo-Saxon countries are brought up very protected. When they come to us as students, they often don't know how to solve problems, because they have never been exposed to anything really difficult until that moment. They don't lack the capacity to solve problems, just the experience. You really have to challenge people. A cultural difference is that American students are good performers, whereas Australian students are very reticent. That was a big change for me, but I don't think it's a change over time.

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers?
My PhD supervisor was a huge influence. He was open to methodology, and it was really because of him that I became eclectic in my approach. He didn't do qualitative research as we think about it today, but I learned from him how to do close observation of language and communication. He was also very politically engaged and extremely left-wing. It was good for me, because it taught me never to accept things as they were, but always to imagine how things could be different. As an undergraduate, I had a teacher in history of ideas who was also very influential. He was a German guy who had an enormous sweep of scholarship. On a more distant level, I was very influenced by the ordinary language philosophers, who were still in

Back to Table of Contents

Oxford when I lived there. Finally, as a postgraduate student, I read the work of Edward T. Hall, and it completely changed the research frame for me.

Who was your adviser at Florida?
Norman Markel. Not a name that you probably know, but an early pioneer in language analysis.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to intergroup communication?
Yes, I was. At Queensland, I met Victor Callan. We started on the same day in the psychology department, and we started doing research on the impact of accent. One day, we got a letter from Howie Giles, who has been a great mentor for me. Howie wrote, "I really like your work. Here are a few papers of mine." This was embarrassing, because at the time we had never heard of his work on speech accommodation, or of social identity theory, or of any of the intergroup research being done in the UK. That was life-changing for me—probably more than for Victor, who kept a more cross-cultural perspective. I realized that social identity and speech accommodation theory encapsulated many of the intuitions that I had had. In 1987, I went to Bristol for study leave and spent some time with Howie. We have worked together, and he has been a big influence on my thinking, ever since.

What about methodology—how did your ideas change about that?
One of the things I realized even as a student is that, if you are trained quantitatively and do research in the process of communication, statistics never quite work for you. There are always problems with dependency in the data, with time sequencing, and with really doing justice to the data. A lot of people would tell you that—Joe Cappella, for example. As it happened, I had met and married Jeff Pittam, who is a linguist. We started working together, and Jeff taught me discourse analysis. As I began to look at discourse, I started to think about communication accommodation in a much more qualitative way. These days, everyone I work with has been trying to walk a middle way between a resolutely qualitative and critical approach to communication, and a resolutely quantitative and psychological one. So in that sense, we reflect the interdisciplinary roots of the discipline.

How would you rate the academic position of intergroup scholars within our discipline?
It's hard to say. It's a small select group. You have to be comfortable with complex theory and methodology, and there isn't a clear niche to fit into. Scholars doing critical research attack us because we are not critical enough, and experimental researchers criticize us for not being experimental enough.

Then again: How would you rate the position of communication scholars compared to psychology?
Not too high, although in the U.S., it's much better than in Australia. If I lived here, I would identify myself entirely as a communication person. Outside the U.S., though, the prestige of psychology is much higher. Psychologists have been good at promoting their approach to methodology and theory. In fact, people in the health sciences often approach me as a psychologist to help them with research on communication. One problem for communication is that our people spend too much time fighting with each other about directions for the field. If we can't figure out what we are doing, how on earth can we expect anyone else to understand? ICA has raised the prestige of communication, especially in the U.S.

Back to Table of Contents

Did you like the role of a university manager and decision maker?

I must like it, because I have done it for 15 years as my main job. Even so, I'm not comfortable with a lot of power. Because of that, I have tried to interpret my role as being in the service of academic research and teaching, rather than as being a person who tells other people what to do. In fact, I have often told people around me how best to break the rules [laughing]. I guess I enjoy the access to information and the capacity to see the whole picture. As a manager, you really learn how university runs, and how it interacts with the rest of society. It's a very privileged position.

Were you ever forced to think about gender questions during your academic career?

When I started in psychology at UQ, there were six women at junior levels in a school with maybe 30 full-time academics. By the time I became a professor, one-third of the female professors at UQ were in psychology. I didn't know that at the time, however. I only found out when I left the school and went into management. Psychologists tend to believe that if you have good data and are productive, everything will be fine. It's not that people are more or less sexist than in other disciplines—but because they value data so much, people tend to be judged much more on their track records. That's very good for women. In psychology, traditionally, if you have the best track record, you get the job. As a university manager, I realized that both in the humanities and in the sciences there was a very high level of subjectivity in judgments about selection and promotion; that was a bit of a shock to me. In communication at my university, life for women can be very tough. The more communication is represented as a discipline by journalism, media studies, and cultural studies, the harder it seems to be on women. I don't know how universal that is, but it's an empirical question.

I found a lot of strong women in ICA's leadership.

That's right, but if you look at the statistics for universities in general, right around the world, things don't look too good for women. There are still only about 20% of professors who are female. To be a successful academic, you need to be very resilient, and this is particularly true for women. You can't frame yourself as a victim.

You served as president of two international associations. If you had to choose between them, which one would be your favorite?

My head would certainly be with ICA, which is a big and prestigious association, the peak body in our discipline. ICA covers the whole field and can really make a difference to communication policy and practice. IALSP is a much smaller group of like-minded people. On the other hand, these people really reflect my own core interests, and they are wonderful colleagues.

How did you feel when you were asked to run for ICA President?

Of course, I was very honored, and I was really pleased to win. But ICA didn't have the cachet in Australia that it does in the U.S. I was just finishing my time as president of the academic board at UQ when I was elected. I happened to be at a selection committee meeting when I got the news. It was during the morning tea break. When I went back to the meeting, I told the committee that I had been elected president of ICA, and they said "Congratulations, that's fabulous. What is ICA?" I thought, okay, that grounds me, that's a reality check. I realized that there was a lot of work to do. I wanted to get this organization known.

Back to Table of Contents

Did you succeed in meeting your goals?

We haven't done too badly. I joined the Executive Board at a pivotal time, right at the beginning of Michael Haley's time as Executive Director.[3] ICA had been mainly U.S.-based, fairly conservative, and largely representing the quantitative side of the discipline. There were some critical scholars in ICA by then, but they were in a minority. The Executive Director has a huge impact on ICA, because his position continues on while the rest of the executive changes every year. Michael Haley wanted to take ICA to the next level. During this time, we changed the structure of the organization. Presidents since the 1980s had worked hard to internationalize ICA. Before I started, ICA had started to elect international at-large Board members. So the potential for real internationalisation was suddenly there. I was only the second non-U.S. president; Akiba Cohen had been the first. By coincidence, I had also been the first non-U.S. editor of *HCR*, which meant running the editorial process completely by e-mail—very new in those days. As President-Elect, I had to organize the conference from Australia, which we did. Now, you really see the transformation of the organization, in the executive, the membership, the divisions, the conference, everything.

Sounds like a fight you won.

I think everyone involved in the earlier days would say that it was very frustrating. There was an enormous wall of resistance. At the time, some of the ICA Fellows were the most resistant to change. Some of them were very influential on the board. That's not true anymore, and the fellows have changed along with the whole organization.

During your time as president, 9/11 happened.

At the time, people were very shocked and frightened. There was concern that no one would go to the Seoul conference, which Jennings Bryant was organizing. Both Jennings and I said, "If the conference goes back to the U.S., none of the international members would come." I thought it would set ICA back by ten years. In the end, good sense prevailed, and Seoul was wonderful. That conference was a very important step, as the first conference in Asia. Many ICA members probably wouldn't see it that way, but I think that most of the Asian members do. At that conference, people really understood what it meant for ICA to be international.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow yourself?

I was very pleased. It's a huge honor. I was the only one elected in my year, and I was a little bit disappointed about that. One of the problems with the fellows in the past is that they just wouldn't elect anybody. Therefore, there were simply too few fellows. Things have changed in the past few years, and the fellows are becoming a larger and more active group now.

Who is Cindy Gallois: a researcher, a teacher, the university manager at UQ? What is the most important part of your academic life?

It's very hard to describe, or indeed, to choose. In recent years, I've moved away from teaching in a formal sense, and from management, although I enjoyed both of them a great deal while I was doing

[3] ICA had been headquartered in Austin, Texas, since 1974. The staff moved to Washington, DC, in 2001—one year after Michael Haley became the new executive director. His predecessor was Robert Cox.

Back to Table of Contents

them. I have always wanted to do research that makes a difference. Part of that process is working with other academics and helping them to be better researchers. So I am spending my time these days doing research and helping younger colleagues with their research.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

It's easy to lose your anchor and your perspective in our field. The disciplinary roots came originally from rhetoric, but also from psychology and sociology. So the subject is inherently interdisciplinary, and we are all focussed on understanding the ways people behave in interactions, and the antecedents and consequences of communication. There is a positive side of that interdisciplinary nature. If you can keep your bearings, you can integrate many diverse traditions into a more sophisticated understanding of the process of communication.

What about the dark side?

People can get theoretically entrenched, and unfortunately, they do. This can lead to silly battles about what communication is and how it should be studied.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are the skyscrapers, where the construction sites, and where, maybe, the fire trenches?

Oh dear! There are certainly skyscrapers in the U.S., particularly in health, because that research is so impactful. I would love more other people to get involved in health communication research. In Europe, a lot has been done in media studies, as well as with critical approaches. The critique of the way we thought about media has been very helpful in enlarging our thinking. In the past, people often treated mediated communication as the same as interpersonal, but on a bigger scale. In Australia, we have been very eclectic; we draw from every tradition. Communication research in Asia is a strongly emerging area. They have been quite influenced by the U.S. in the past, but they are now finding their own voice. The trenches? I don't think postmodernism has served communication very well. People can too easily lose the point of research, and stop thinking about what kind of difference we are trying to make as researchers. To work through and develop theory is important, but not more important than anything else. For example, when managers read communication research they often say, "Just tell me what to do! I want to know how to run my organization." We need to be able to help them.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

It's either going to be a complete mess, or people will have realized that there is a point to doing communication research—I am optimistic for the latter outcome. The point of our research must be outside the field: to make a difference in society, in politics, and in how people communicate. This is a bad time for the mass media, and political debate is degraded everywhere. It is very important for us not to just to stand by and allow this state of affairs to continue.

Are there any scholars whom you would call a role model?

Howie Giles for certain. Linda Putnam as well—for me, because as a person and a leader she has taught me how to balance many different forces. And there are others—probably too many to mention here.

Back to Table of Contents

Looking back on a long career in academia, is there anything you are especially proud of?
I'm proud of some of the work we are doing at the moment in health communication. We have been able to build interdisciplinary teams with medical people and other health professionals. I'm also proud of the work we have done on communication accommodation theory.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?
I was a late-maturing scholar. Early on, I got distracted, and it took me a long time to get on top of what being an academic actually was. I was very lucky, because at the time we had the freedom to take time. In Australia, we weren't expected to get promoted quickly. Today, I would have to do that differently, and I guess I would. I would waste less time in not being productive.

What will remain when Cindy Gallois is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
A clear understanding of the impact our group memberships and allegiances have on everything we do, and what this means for our work as communication researchers.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1609–1616 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

HOWARD GILES

"I'm a theoretician and a cop academic."

Howard Giles, April 7, 2011.
University of California, Santa Barbara. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	Cardiff, Wales
Education:	1968 B.A. in psychology, Bangor University
	1971 Ph.D. in social psychology, University of Bristol
	1996 D.Sc., University of Bristol
Career:	Several Positions as lecturer and reader in Cardiff and Bristol
	1982 Fellow of the British Psychological Society
	1982 Founding Co-Editor, *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*
	1984 Professor of social psychology at Bristol
	1989 UCSB
	1993 ICA Fellow
	1998 ICA President
	2000 Steven H. Chaffee Career Productivity Award
	2000 President of the International Association for the Study of Language & Social Psychology
	2007 Distinguished Scholar, NCA
Personal:	Married, one son

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Howard Giles

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

My mother was very ambitious for me, as well as for my father. There was a constant push. I don't think I had any specific career dreams, although I do think in Britain, being a lecturer was a good thing. My mother never allowed me to have more information than I needed. I was never allowed to have a bicycle. I had to run to school and used to have many fights on the way. Because of that experience, I got to the university.

Because there are no street fights at all.

[Laughing] I was very fit and athletic, but not an academic. In fact, there was a thing in Britain called the Eleven Plus. My parents had me coached to pass that. I was number 33 in the class, and even the coaches didn't think I had that much potential, but I made it. Because of that, I started to take myself seriously and got the ambition my mother was talking about. I did well in high school.

What did your parents do for a living?

My mother was unemployed. She wanted to be a nurse, but the family couldn't afford for her to have the education. My uncle got educated. She was always bitter about it. My father was a hospital worker and had the chance of commission in the army. He was a sergeant in the war. My mother didn't want him to do that. So he worked in the hospital for 48 years and was in charge of stores. Very humble beginnings.

Did religion play any role in your childhood?

Yes. My parents didn't want to go to church. They weren't very religious, but my grandparents were. So I went to church with my grandmother leading the way and my grandfather behind. When my voice broke at 18, I decided that this was stupid. I was a good soprano singer and [was] in the choir. My mother also put me to the piano. I resented it very much, but now I love it. They thought I went to church, but I was walking around in parks. So, religion did fascinate me. I even wrote a paper on the social psychology of religion (Giles et al., 1975). I was also interested in lifespan and death. So it was a part of my life, but I kind of rejected it.

Do you still remember why you chose to study psychology at Bangor?

Yes. You specialize early in Britain. At 16, I took Welsh, music, and history. My parents asked why I took Welsh. Their idea was Spanish, French, or German. Certainly, my grandparents didn't pass down Welsh, even though my grandfather was Welsh. There was a stigma about it. I did not have great aural facilities. If you give me a piano piece to play, there is no one who can play it better—after six months. I got a D in music. My instructor in Welsh retired with us. He wanted us to be the best five boys he ever had and to make a contribution to literature. I couldn't have had a better mentor, but in the A-levels I got an F. I was his first and last failure and felt almost as bad for him as for me. I thought "College, goodbye." Anyway, we had a good relationship. I was one of the few old boys who actually visited him regularly. So I got interested in dialects and language in order to pay him back. I guess I'm the only scholar who studied bilingualism that doesn't speak another language.

Back to Table of Contents

What about psychology?

Let's see. Because of my music, I was made head boy and had to organize the track and field events. I couldn't get anyone for the mile, but I was still fit. So I did it myself. I had seen it on TV. It seemed to be simple, but I keeled over after one lap. A rugby player said, "Giles, you should stick to music." I joined the local athletic club and used to train with the Olympic gold medalists in the long jump.

Lynn Davies?

Yes. It was Tokyo Olympics. Gorgeous guy, he was. One of the greatest moments that I had in my life at that time was when I overtook this rugby player in the first bend. So, I got to college because of my running. I couldn't do Welsh, I couldn't do music. Actually, I tried music. I took one class with John Bennett who later composed the music for Diana's wedding. I remember [in] one class thinking, this is not for me. I can't do this. So what could I do? Psychology! I took six weeks of social psychology. That intrigued me with my interest in bilingualism and in accents. At graduate school, I tried to find someone who was interested in people who spoke in different accents. At Bristol, there was Henri Tajfel, who was the founder of intergroup relations study. Is this too much?

No. Just go ahead.

One day, my adviser said, "You got to meet the big man." He came from Oxford and had a huge office. Brits have huge offices. He had an interesting Polish-French-Jewish accent, wagged his fingers and asked, "What is your theoretical framework?" Eventually, I won him with the work I was doing. I was very lucky to be within the forming days of intergroup relations. Eventually, I became a part of it as a post doc. I come from Tajfel's stable. Only the Europeans were doing this stuff. Now, it is central in American psychology. Along with Scott Reid, I tried to establish an ICA interest group on intergroup communication with the aspiration of it becoming a division, which we did in 1996 or something. So my topic is intergroup in all different kinds of areas. It covers many fields. The development of intergroup within communication is an exciting place to be at. It's also true for feeding it back into psychology.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to that topic?

Yes. Ultimately, the failure in Welsh, my heritage language. I started to search around for why I failed, and I came upon the idea of intergroup reasons. To be honest, I didn't see myself as a Welsh. I felt they deserved the situation they were in. I didn't identify myself with them. To learn a modern language was instrumental for me. I lived that integrative motivation. There was a second thing that hit me. In one of my jobs, I was a hospital porter. There, I was in charge of casualty. One woman I signed in was having back complaints. She said, "Doctor, doctor, I have a terrible pain." She spoke the Queen's English. We spent time with her and he talked to her about life. Another woman came in, the same age, dressed the same and saying exactly the same. He wrote a prescription immediately and didn't ask her any questions. I later on suggested in my research that middle-class doctors do not like to associate themselves with other ethnicities or lower social brackets. He categorized her immediately. That was the start of it. I realized that accent could be a matter of life and death.

How would you rate the academic position of language scholars within communication?

I think that accents took a heyday in the 1980s, got really theoretical in the 1990s, and then there was a lack of interest. All of a sudden, it has now become important in social psychology. People figure out that

Back to Table of Contents

the way you communicate is actually more important than how you look. Maybe I was ahead of my time. The intergroup area is growing exponentially and crisscrossing a lot of other areas. I am very disappointed that the interest group that we started is still an interest group. I'm going to push that to a real division. There is a long road to go, but there are a lot of people referring to intergroup issues in the journals.

How would you rate the position of communication scholars within psychology?
Better than it was. Not great. Other facets of communication have come to the core of social psychology. It's not just accents. So they don't need us. They don't refer to us or cite us. That worries me most of all. We cite them, but they don't cite us. We are still second cousin. Psychology has moved into the physical sciences now. We have come up the hierarchy of the social sciences. We are acknowledged to be the most productive, prolific, student-friendly discipline. In many places, our senior people have taken administrative positions: deans, vice-chancellors and so on. That didn't occur when I first came here. They have had some influence on people. They are communication people. So you have to find out about it. Some of them still think it is speech and debate.

Jennings Bryant founded* Media Psychology *because it was impossible to publish entertainment stuff back then. Could you tell me the story of the* Journal of Language and Social Psychology*?
Yes. At the time, the *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* had just started in Bristol. The owner married a Finn and brought his children up bilingually. I got to know him and the editor personally. They were open to suggestions of other journals. I thought this was a good time to bring people together across the disciplines interested in communication and language. I could see a niche internationally and multidisciplinary. We were peripheral. So it was difficult to publish. Unfortunately, I misnamed the journal. Bryant incidentally used the notion *Media Psychology*. That is an interesting choice. Mine should have had a broader title.

How would you name it now?
Language and Communication is another title out there. With all of these impact factors that people are coming up with, our journal has taken a little dive recently in citations. It is not up there in a way I would want it to be. However, we have a large submission. We got an 86% rejection rate. I'm using various strategies to make sure that people get papers that will be cited. We are still alive and kicking.

On your website you describe the very gratifying move to the U.S. Could you put those gratifications in some keywords?
Keywords? That's all you want? Betrayal; cultural traitor. That was attributed to me. Moving from the center to the periphery, meeting a new community I didn't know existed. It didn't exist in Britain at the time. I disliked Bristol. It was worse than Cambridge and Oxford. Bristol was too snooty.

How did your colleagues in the UK react when you left?
Not very well. I was the rat leaving the sinking ship. It was a very good move. I never thought of myself as English. I was Welsh of course. I married an English woman.

Back to Table of Contents

Did Santa Barbara offer anything that was not achievable at Bristol?
A better lifestyle? In Bristol, I took Henri Tajfel's chair. As a social scientist, he was the lowest-paid professor in the university. I would have to go through no reviews and thought that was weird. I expected some kind of reward structure. I didn't need it, but it just didn't feel right. Now, it is completely the opposite. We get reviewed every two or three years and you can't take risks because you have to pay Santa Barbara. So it was a big cultural move. I was assuming it would be easy. To this day, people ask, "How long have you been here, professor?" They still think I'm not a citizen. I drove my wife away from her growing career. For my parents, it was a bit of a problem, too.

Have you ever regretted this decision?
At one point, I did. After three or four years, I was ready to go back. I couldn't identify with the students. Some of them got up and booed me because of their grades when I entered the room. My wife said, "You aren't going back. You dragged me here, and you are chair of the department." They waited for me two years before I came here. So I found I should do it for a couple of years. I did it for eight. But then, I invested in another kind of career in the community and began to understand undergraduates and formed relationships with them like I had in Britain. I don't think I will go back when I retire unless we get too many of these tsunamis coming over. I have become too American in many ways. I left because of the weather. It sounds pathetic, but people communicate differently in a gray climate. British people look gray, they have gray attitudes, no work ethic, and just different values.

Crossing the borders seems to be your passion. Between countries, between academic disciplines, between university and community, where is the home of Howard Giles?
I was comfortable in straddling all of these. I am an interfacer. I believe the future of our discipline is in the interfaces. Some of the most exciting work is there. The most exciting thing that I've been involved in was being a police officer. I was bringing academics into police work and making them aware of research. At the same time, I tried to bring low enforcement awareness to the community as well as to the students who have real problems with cops. That has been draining and exhausting, but that boundary I like to milk. You are absolutely right, I am a border man. When I was ICA President and I had to set up the conference, communication across boundaries was my theme.

How did you feel when you were asked to run for ICA President?
Honored. I had the Israel conference. I think they saw my expertise in intergroup. I might be the one interested in forging relationships between Palestinians and Jews. It was not the most popular conference at the time. I wondered whether I was up to it, because I didn't have that much of a history. I had an encounter at an ICA meeting with people who called themselves the Michigan Mafia and were discussing the next president. These politics fascinated me. Those people would tell me, "You haven't experienced enough pain." I went to a valued colleague who was looking the worse for wear at the bar. He hit me and gave me a black eye. It became infamous. Next day, I was giving a talk and the room was packed. As I walked down to that lecture, a guy from the Michigan Mafia said, "Looks like you got enough pain now."

Presidency on high cost.
I knew it was going to be a five-year commitment. It was much more of a commitment than I thought.

Back to Table of Contents

Do you remember your presidential agenda?
I can only retrospectively think what it was. I don't know what I ran on and whether it had any impact. I guess the people didn't read it in those days. They voted for where you are from or who you are. I remember one thing that I wanted to do, but I didn't succeed very well. I wanted to increase graduate involvement. I was the one who started the graduate welcoming party. I wanted more of a community and I was also interested in internationalization. Now, it has blossomed in many good ways.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?
Not much, because that was the same time when that conflagration happened. Everybody knew about it. For many years, I didn't want to go to ICA conferences. I was honored. I have been very blessed for achieving things early in life. There is that hypothesis: The quicker you get things in life, the earlier you die. I have always felt it's fairly easy to get to the top if you have certain skills, but it's harder to stay there—way harder. I have seen people end their careers with regrets, but I am blessed.

Who is Howard Giles: a researcher, a teacher, the promoter of the intergroup topic within communication? What is the most important part of your academic life*?*
I would have to answer: At this moment. It has changed in the last few weeks. Now it's "teacher."

A few weeks before?
A "cop academic." In police training, you have to constantly train yourself and each other. We had a whole day on ground fighting. I got severely knocked in the head. A few weeks after that, I nearly went blind. I have had surgery for the last seven months. I have not been able to work as a reserve police officer, which was a passion of mine. I spent way too many hours doing it. I got through it and have now even more passion for academics. Now I enjoy teaching more than producing books that gather dust. Another intergroup domain: I teach sports communications and aging. The lifespan is a set of cultures that you go through. I love teaching students who have to communicate with their parents and grandparents and to anticipate their own aging process. That, I get the most pleasure from.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?
The classic answer is the exchange of messages, isn't it? For me, it is the way we socially construct life in its many forms: intergroup, personally, lifespan. While I am a quantitative neopositivist, I am also a social constructionist. I get engaged with how we communicate and deal with humor and jokes, how we form and sustain messages that socially construct who we are as individuals. Communication and identity is very important to me.

What about the preconception that communication is about the training of students first and only secondly about research?
I think we do both training the students and publishing. We encourage students to cross those boundaries. We make sure that their portfolio when they leave here is as strong as possible. We are beginning to get a reputation not only for our productivity, but also for where our students get placed. So we are very involved in publishing with them, often giving them status credits that they don't deserve. Some people leave here and are ready for tenure. I try to be a lifetime mentor. Our relationship with them is almost a family one.

Back to Table of Contents

How is the reputation of the discipline here in Santa Barbara?

I don't think it's something that we are bothered with anymore. We have a lot of adjunct faculty from other disciplines. If they ignore us, they ignore us. We move on.

Could you draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?

Certain skyscrapers are the Annenbergs—in terms of the money they can attract and in terms of their history. It's also true for Michigan State. That comes up as a part of disciplinary discourse. People make these comparisons. Once, we had a faculty meeting and tried to figure out where we were. We thought number three, four or five. We wanted to figure out how we could become number one. After an hour, we realized it was a damn silly question. We want to enjoy what we are doing. We do have to keep ourselves on the radar, but it shouldn't be an overwhelming passion. I think some of the skyscrapers do that. We don't.

What about topics?

Social networking became a skyscraper. Just yesterday, we introduced a social networking course, and it seems to be a big topic. New technologies were not important when I got here, but now it is a skyscraper, as such. Interpersonal has slightly faded. I see intercultural getting up, which was often seen as low in terms of status and a-theoretical. With globalization, it's a big issue.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

Who knows? It is good to crystal ball, but sometimes you go to worlds that would never happen. I never imagined that the Berlin Wall would fall down, and maybe it hasn't completely fallen down. Or take the expansion of social networks. I remember walking down campus one day and saw at least 30 people on their cell phones. I am not convinced that this technology has helped too much. What is it going to look like in 2030? I think people are concerned about the proliferation of divisions in ICA and arguably worse in NCA. Sports communication is becoming really big, especially in our culture. It has not been allowed to be a division yet. People are concerned about their own identities. When intergroup started, intercultural was getting concerned. It makes sense at some level, but at some point, the discipline has to confront this. Should we have separate conferences for specialties? The way in which we cut the cake and what the cake will look like will obviously be different. What it will be? I don't know.

Are there any scientists whom you would call a role model?

Yeah. Academically, but maybe not personally. Henri Tajfal was one for me, of course. Do I see other role models? It has always interested me that Americans say, "I am an expert in this and that." Coming from England, the meaning of expert was so sacrosanct for me. Freud was a role model for me. That would be provocative in some circles, but he is. He was a giant in his time. There are new models like Habermas and Bourdieu. I can see what they have achieved. Chomsky is another one. Those, to me, are huge thinkers that are not contained in a box. They made large-scale changes in civilization.

Back to Table of Contents

Looking back on almost 40 years in academia, is there anything you are especially proud of?

I am particularly proud of the cop academic thing because it was incredibly difficult to get into that sphere. Only 3% of people get selected to be a cop in any way. I haven't done as much as I wanted to do in it. I am also proud and sometimes surprised of the way in which accommodation theory is taking over now (Giles & Smith, 1979; Giles, 1980). I have seen it used as a satellite theory for others. I take some pride in being a theoretician and forging the influence of intergroup.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

I would be less productive and spend more time on other aspects of life. I am exhausted and not sure if it was very healthy physically or psychologically. Would I've read more novels? Would I've been more engaged by other things? Even in the novel, I see a lot of things about communication. There are so many things in life that are interesting, but as an academic, you go through a tunnel. I have reaped so many rewards for being productive that I probably don't regret anything.

What will remain when Howard Giles is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

I would hope that my influence in the intergroup area will continue. I hope that some of the stuff that I am not well-known for will become appreciated. I have had some impact and been relevant a little bit. Would I want memorials or an intergroup award to last? That would be nice.

References

Giles, H., & Smith, P. M. (1979). Accommodation theory: Optimal levels of convergence. In H. Giles & R. S. Clair (Eds.), *Language and social psychology* (pp. 45–65). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Giles, H. (1980). Accommodation theory: Some new directions. In S. De Silva (Ed.), *Aspects of linguistic behaviour: A festschrift in honour of Robert Le Page* (pp. 105–136). York, UK: University of York Press.

Giles, H., Jones, S., Horton, M., & Lay, J. (1975). Towards a more dynamic social psychology of religion. *Bulletin of the British Psychological Society*, *28*, 47–50.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1617–1622 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

DORIS GRABER

"Dissemination of knowledge."

Doris Graber, March 15, 2011.
University of Illinois at Chicago. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1923 in St. Louis, Missouri
Education:	1941 B.A. Washington University
	1942 M.A. in political science, Washington University
	Ph.D. in international law and relations, Columbia University
Career:	Work for several newspapers in St. Louis
	Several academic and editorial appointments
	1970 Professor, University of Illinois, Chicago
	1992 First Editor of **Political Communication**
	1995 President, International Society for Political Psychology
	1992 Goodnow Distinguished Service Award, APSA
	1996 ICA Fellow
	2006 Distinguished Scholar, NCA
Personal:	Married to Thomas Graber (1917–2007), five children

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Doris Graber

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?
My first dream was to explore the moon. That was the first essay I wrote in school. I always loved to travel, but I never have been to the moon.

What did your parents do for a living?
My mother was a very accomplished painter. She sold some paintings and could have lived on it, but she always loved her paintings too much to sell them. Some were exhibited in museums. My father was a high school teacher. He taught philosophy, economics, and some mathematics.

You once said, "Our home was full of books and paintings, even when the icebox was near-empty" (McLeod, 1996, p. 162).
Yes, we lived very modestly. My mother always saved so that we could go on trips. When my sister and I were old enough, they took us to different parts of the country and even abroad. We saw a lot and always had good conversations and family meals together. I grew up [in a] loving home and had much fun. It was definitely an intellectually stimulating environment with a lot of friends who came in and talked about different things. I have not inherited any of my mother's painting talents, but I have certainly inherited the love for the arts. I spend a lot of time going to exhibitions, musicals, and concerts. Chicago is a good place for that.

Do you still remember why you chose to study political science at Washington University?
I do. When you look at the picture over there you see Arnold J. Lien. He was my first professor in political science. Actually, I was interested in a number of things. Anthropology really attracted me, for example. After taking his course, I was sold on political science. Lien was a very gifted and a very unusual teacher. He had speech impediment. When he talked, it seemed like he was pushing out the words with effort. It was a very low volume. The students used to be very, very quiet and hung on every word. His thinking was so clear and perfect. He made it come to life and showed how the different parts of the government fit together. So I fell in love with political science.

Was there a link between your subject at university and your work as a journalist?
As a student, I was working for two papers. At the *St. Louis County Observer,* they let me pick the features I wanted to do. So I did a lot of things that interested me. I think, when you are really interested in what you are doing, you'll do a pretty good job. I also worked for the *University City Tribune*. This paper came out once a week and covered everything going on locally. At that time, I learned to use language because I also had to put headlines in the empty spaces we had once all the texts were set. It had to be done fast. It's a very useful skill.

How would you compare the student Doris Appel with your students today?
Students are students. One of my real gifts is that I love to learn. At Washington University, I took the regular work and three or four extra courses because I was just fascinated by a lot of different fields. This gift was partly stimulated by my parents. I adored my dad. He was very disappointed that he didn't have

Back to Table of Contents

a boy. First my sister came, and then another girl, just a girl. What do girls do? They get married and have kids. In a way, I wanted my dad to be proud of me.

You just mentioned Arnold J. Lien. Were there other main academic teachers?
I actually did not have a high school degree. I went there for one year and decided it wasn't stimulating enough. I got to Washington University through my exams. So I was somewhat younger than my cohorts and very hungry to learn all those different things. Between having jobs at newspapers, the academic stuff, and a little bit of social life, there was no space. I didn't interact very much with other teachers.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to the power of media in politics?
Actually, I did some other things. I wrote books on intervention policies (Graber, 1959) and on foreign policy (Graber, 1968), but I was always interested in conveying political information to people (Graber, 1988). I found politics interesting, but it used to be thought of as institutions. This can get pretty dull. I thank Arnold J. Lien for showing me the human side of it. He showed that interaction and personalities determine in many ways what passes and what is really carried out. I thought people had to understand this in democratic societies. The media often weren't telling interesting stories. They just presented a sort of facts without making the connection. Politics didn't come to life. I wanted to do that. As a woman, I had some extra credentials.

What kind of extra credentials?
I was a woman with a degree in international law and international relations. That stood out a bit and got me into good jobs. I probably would have proceeded in that, but I fell in love, got married early in life, and wasn't as mobile as before. I wanted to be a foreign correspondent. I felt that I could bring things to life that people had no experience with. There are wonderful stories out there not being told. People should know them. When you are young, you have this mission. You want to do something good. Leave the world a better place.

Did you ever regret that you abandoned this mission?
Outside academia and newspapers, I worked for the Commerce Clearing House, which was again spreading information. I would have liked to have a career in journalism, but I was really happy with my career in academia. Everything that I have done has involved the dissemination of knowledge. Telling stories is one of the things I can do well. My mother was a wonderful storyteller. Every night I went to bed with one of her stories.

Does a political communication scholar need inside knowledge about journalism?
I think it helps. It's good to know how the world really works. One of the jobs that I've done was to publish a digest of all the important North American law journals. It was at Commerce Clearing House. That was a good way to disseminate knowledge because other people wouldn't read the whole thing. I had a similar job at *Harper and Row* where I was in charge for the manuscripts in anthropology, social psychology, sociology, economics, history, and political science. This job gave me the chance to see the literature in those fields, and to get a holistic view on social sciences.

Back to Table of Contents

How would you rate the position of political communication scholars within communication?
I really don't know how they are regarded. I've always been a person that bridges into some other fields like cultural or interpersonal communication. I never felt that there was a hierarchy, and I've never been much concerned about ratings, as long as I know that I'm doing well.

How would you rate the position of communication scholars within political science?
We are not mainstream. Anything that is not mainstream is not the most highly regarded. There are a lot of people doing political communication without thinking that they are doing it. International relations scholars, for example, deal with negotiations or bargaining. You are much more within the mainstream of the field if you do Congress, Federalism, or U.S. Supreme Court. That's why we created the journal *Political Communication*. The main journals did publish some political communication, but it was not their favorite. So the chances for people in that field to have respectable outlets for their work were not as good as for other sub-disciplines.

Were you ever forced to think about gender questions during your long academic career?
As a matter of fact, for some of my earliest work, I just used my initials. I have run up against gender issues. I wanted my Bachelor's degree under my maiden name, but they wouldn't give it to me. They said, "You are a married woman. That's the way it has to be." Then I got a fellowship for my master's. Meanwhile, the mother of my husband put some notice in the paper that we are engaged to each other. The next thing I knew, they took the fellowship away from me because it was for a promising young scholar. No woman engaged to be married could be a promising young scholar. Out of nowhere, another fellowship with exactly the same financial benefits materialized, and they gave that to me. I told that story when Washington University made me a Distinguished Alumna.

Is there anything that a single professor could do in order to improve the situation for women?
I've done a lot of professional things because I wanted to show that women can do it, especially women with a large family. I felt we needed role models at that time. I wanted to show that a woman could have a successful family life and still be a good academic. Many women do it on a different schedule. They have a period of low production when their children are small and are picking up afterwards.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?
I was very proud about it. I think I was one of the first members who was not a communication scholar and maybe the first political scientist. *Political Communication* is a joined journal between ICA and APSA. Of course, there was the question of editorial control. The idea was that one association would elect the first editor, and then the other would get the next term. First was the ICA round, and they elected me. Then the political scientists elected me, too. So I got two terms. I was proud that I could bridge the disciplines. I always tried to get political communication people to use citations of both fields. Communication scholars tend to use communication sources and political scientists use political science sources. It should be cross-fertilization.

Back to Table of Contents

Douglas McLeod (1996) wrote that you have established the agenda for political communication research. Could you put this agenda in two or three keywords?

I probably get more credit for things I really haven't done. In political science, they sometimes say I founded the political communication field. I didn't. It's an old field. It has been around since Aristotle. At the time when I got into this business, it was a kind of revival. In the Klapper period, people went away from it (Klapper, 1960). Nobody wanted to look at something that seemed to have no influence. Our mantra was: communication, frames, and verbal actions in negotiations are real important. With that in mind, I wrote my book *Verbal Behavior and Politics* (Graber, 1976).

If you had to choose between ICA and APSA, which one is your favorite?

APSA, there is no question. I'm a political scientist. I like the other associations. They are my home as well, but I look at communication from a political science perspective.

Who is Doris Graber: a researcher, a teacher, the fist editor of* Political Communication*? What is the most important part of your academic life?

I think my research. I love to do that. I don't like the fraction in different fields. Communication by itself is too narrow, and political science by itself is also too narrow. We have to use tools from all of these fields.

Are there any scientists who you would call a role model?

Arnold J. Lien was my role model. I have an unusual career which is two-poled. One pole is my family. My five children are very close together in age. When my oldest was seven, the next was five, and then we had three-year-old twins and a one-year-old girl. They have all turned out wonderfully. I loved both my family and my work. I was split, and there aren't so many role models that do that sort of thing.

Even today, not many academics have such a big family.

We had two boys and wanted a girl. So we said: Let's try it one more time, but it turned out to be twin boys. We still needed a girl. And I'm glad we have one. A family takes time, and I wanted to spend the time with them. We travelled all through Africa and Europe with the children. Both my husband and I loved travelling to places nobody else goes to.

Looking back on 70 years in communication research, is there anything you are especially proud of?

I'm just proud that I could achieve all the things that I did. I was blessed. There are so many people who are really good but don't have much luck. You have to be good, and you have to produce, but it takes a certain amount of luck. Certainly, when I started out as a woman, you had to produce a little bit more than somebody else.

What keeps you going?

I love what I'm doing. I love to teach, especially at a place like this. The kids come from homes where nobody ever went to college. They really need the teaching. It's wonderful when you see them doing well and you had the opportunity to help them.

Back to Table of Contents

Is there anything that you would do differently today?
My husband and I had a wonderful life together. We were there for each other and for each other's careers. If we had decided we wouldn't have children, he would have supported that because children set limits to your career. Maybe in the next life I decide to become a journalist and a foreign correspondent.

Perhaps you'll go to the moon then.
I get motion sickness, but I could get over it.

What will remain when Doris Graber is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
I hope that the work I have done will still benefit people. That's not only my publications, but also all the people I have taught. So the world should be a little bit better.

References

Graber, D. (1959). *Crisis diplomacy: U.S. intervention policies and practices.* Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press.

Graber, D. (1968). *Public opinion, the president and foreign policy: Four case studies from the formative years*. New York: Holt.

Graber, D. (1976). *Verbal behavior and politics*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Graber, D. (1988). *Processing the news: How people tame the information tide*. New York: Longman.

Klapper, J. (1960). *The effects of mass communication*. New York: Free Press.

McLeod, D. (1996). Doris Appel Graber (1923–). In N. D. Signorielli (Ed.), *Women in communication: A biographical sourcebook* (pp. 162–172). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1623–1629 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

BRADLEY S. GREENBERG

"The initial examination of significant questions."

Bradley S. Greenberg, March 21, 2011. Dunwoody, GA. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1934 in Toledo, Ohio
Education:	1956 B.S. in journalism, Bowling Green State University
	1957 M.S. in journalism, Wisconsin
	1961 Ph.D. in mass communication, Wisconsin. Postdoctoral work at Stanford.
Career:	1964 Assistant Professor, Michigan State University
	1971 Full Professor, Michigan State University
	1978–1983 Chair of the Department of Communication
	1984–1990 Chair of the Department of Telecommunication
	1990 University Distinguished Professor
	1983 ICA Fellow
	1994 ICA President
	1998 B. Aubrey Fisher Mentorship Award
	2003 Steven H. Chaffee Career Productivity Award
	2004 Retired in May 2004
Personal:	Married, three daughters

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Bradley S. Greenberg

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

I'm a first generation in this country. My mother was born in England, and my father in a border city between Russia and Poland. They met each other in Ohio. My father brought his siblings to the country as a group. His father came a few years earlier to find a job. As a teenager, my father was responsible for his five brothers and sisters, as well as for his mother. I'm the first from this large family who completed college. Subsequently, both my older brother and my younger sister did, as well as several cousins. Both our parents had a high value for education, although one didn't finish elementary school and the other high school. In my high school, I developed my passion for writing. I wrote for the paper and was managing editor. The dream to become a journalist continued throughout my entire undergraduate career. I edited the college paper, worked one summer for a daily, and had an internship with another daily newspaper.

What did your parents do for a living?

My father was originally a baker, but I knew him as the owner of a grocery store. On Saturdays, I worked for one of his brothers in another grocery store. I worked from the time I was in 5th or 6th grade. When I came home from college in summers, I worked in a women's shoe store. My mother stopped working after marriage and raised the three of us, but she went into the grocery every Saturday to help out.

Did religion play any role in your childhood?

Yes. My father's wish would have been that he could be orthodox, but on Sabbath he had to keep the store open. The synagogue that the family attended was orthodox. Did it have an impact on me? Yes. I'm proud to be Jewish and feel strongly about that. It certainly played a role in terms of family values and of what was expected of me, as well as in terms of obedience to my parents and my conduct in public. Those values persist; one of those was certainly hard work. My father was gone in the morning before I went to school, and he came back long after I was home again. The standard was a 12-hour day, six days a week. It was much later that I discovered that it was not the norm.

So you became a workaholic.

It certainly spilled over on me. You work until it's done, and you don't live by a clock.

Do you still remember why you chose to study at Bowling Green?

For an immigrant family, the college that could be afforded was 35 miles from our home. That was Bowling Green—and there was a journalism school.

How would you compare the student Brad Greenberg with today's students?

My first reference is obviously a graduate student. Anybody who asked me to work with them knew what to expect if I said yes. So students without the same work ethic never worked with me. We found each other. They wanted to be stretched, and I'm very proud of them.

Back to Table of Contents

When did you know that you wanted to become a communication scientist?

I went to Wisconsin still with the intention to be a professional journalist, but I discovered a new passion there. In my first year, I took a course on research from Wayne Danielson and a course on theory from Bruce Westley, and that began my interest in research. After this first year, I wanted to pursue a PhD. I missed one semester because I was obligated to go into military service. When I came back, they had a new faculty member: Percy Tannenbaum. He totally changed my direction. After his first course, I wanted to be a researcher and study the effects of mass media. Percy created a mass communication research center; he took me on as his research assistant, and I couldn't get enough of him. I was still writing, but on things I had created.

Could you tell me something about your main academic teacher?

Percy was orthodox Jewish and originally from Montreal, and essentially a Renaissance social scientist. He moved across psychology, social psychology, sociology, public police, and communication with ease. We became fast friends—after I finished my studies. I visited him when he was at Penn and when he was at Berkeley. My sabbatical there was to replace him for a semester. I spoke at his funeral a year ago. His ideas came forward so easily and so rapidly that I walked away with new things to think about after any conversation I had with him. In many areas, he was ahead of others. I sorely miss those give-and-takes with him.

How did you get from Wisconsin to Stanford and Michigan State?

Stanford offered me a postdoctoral assistantship. Funded projects were a relatively new thing at the time. Stanford was certainly the leader in this area. My mentor there was Dick Carter. My first job offer would have taken me to Alaska. Then Michigan State invited me for an interview. Back in the 1960s, job interviewing was much different than it is now. I was there for two or three days, and by the time I left, I had an offer. During the 1960s and 1970s, Wisconsin, Stanford, and Michigan State were the leading institutions in mass communication. These were the three places for major developments of research in the field, and they still are among the most active.

Are there any universities you would add to those founding places today?

I would certainly add Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Northwestern for different areas. Ohio State has also had a strong program. There are half a dozen more.

Minorities are one of your lifetime topics (Greenberg et al., 2002). Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to that topic?

My orientation toward minorities stems from my being a minority. Having personal experiences with prejudice, I wanted to begin to examine how the portrayal of race or gender might look like within the media. It also has to do with time and space. We are talking about the Civil Rights Movement and the Johnson Administration. There were riots in Detroit 80 miles from East Lansing. I focused heavily on racial minorities. So, it's my personal history plus the confluence of historical events.

Back to Table of Contents

Right after your retirement, two of your academic descendants wrote that Brad Greenberg had "changed the way we think about mass media." How would you, yourself, describe your "wide-reaching" impact on the field (Gantz & Bradley, 2005, pp. 135–136)?

I tried to study areas that had not been well-studied before and not studied at all. My goal was the initial examination of significant questions in different areas. If it were going to be important, others would follow and pick up on those ideas. My motive was to sow the seeds for the next generation of research questions. If I were doing, for example, my work on news dissemination today, I would want to see a reasonable, solid study on the impact of the Internet on news flow. I probably would be out there right now studying what's going on in Japan or in the Arab world, and would be as much interested in the effects of that diffusion as in the diffusion process itself (Greenberg, 1964).

Did you like the role of being a department head?

Some days, yes, and some days, no. For 10 years, I was the chair of two different departments and tried to be an effective administrator. If I had a goal, it was to add significant intellectual knowledge to the department from the faculty that we hired. In the same way that I'm particularly proud of my student advisees, I could identify faculty hires that satisfied me. Rather than focusing on curriculum or on budget, which I also had to do, my joy came from hiring winners.

Could you name your greatest success?

I pass.

Did you ever consider applying for a position outside Michigan State?

Yes. I was offered several positions that I had actively sought. The places are not publishable, but I can tell you the way it psychologically worked. Typically, I was on a sabbatical every seven years and left the country. Coming back, I found myself most interested in going to some place again. Inevitably, MSU won out in the long run. It has been a great place to work and to raise a family.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?

At that point in time, the roster of ICA Fellows was very small and consisted of people whom I greatly admired. It flattered me a great deal that those people thought I was strong enough to get that designation. There was nothing that could bring me greater recognition nationally or internationally. ICA Fellows are recognized for their research with no exceptions. There are no criteria in regard to teaching or administration. I did want to say something about your choice of the fellows as your sample, just historically.

Go ahead, please.

In the beginning, the idea was to identify those people at a young age and to give them the designation that they deserved. That has disappeared over time. I'm afraid that most of those who enter now are quite senior. Now they have to have had a very strong career already and not be a star on the rise. Perhaps we should re-visit when we wish to honor our colleagues.

Back to Table of Contents

About 10 years after becoming a fellow, you ran for ICA President. Was there a special reason or a special agenda that brought you back in the ring?

You are being too kind to me. I ran three times for president. The first time I tried, we had a three-way vote, and elected the first female president of ICA. I don't remember what happened the second time. The third time was the lucky one. I was asked to run because a core leadership group thought that I had the management and administrative skills to organize the conference in Australia and to make friends that far away. We had an excellent conference in Sydney. One major role of a president typically has been to organize a conference the year before becoming president.

What about your presidential agenda?

We called ourselves the International Communication Association, but did very little to facilitate international membership. If we went to a foreign country, we got lots of people coming from that country to that conference, but not to become members. I worked toward that goal. Many years later, we have a fine international representation. If I contributed to that in any way, I would be happy.

Who is Brad Greenberg: a researcher, a teacher, a university manager, the icon of communication at Michigan State? What is the most important part of your academic life?

It has always been the research, but that research has always involved graduate students. My teaching skills have largely focused on the mentor-mentee relationship. So I'm happy to be called a researcher and I'm equally happy to be called an adviser. The other positions you described are a kind of default. If you are good in one thing, people assume you are good in something else and try to get you to do it. Two years ago they called me out of retirement to be the dean for a semester. That was fun, but cannot compare to the thrills of doing research.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

Communication can be defined in so many different ways. For me, it has always been the process of the dissemination and the reception of messages. That's it. I can subsume the field under that rather simple rubric and carve it into empirical issues.

Sonia Livingstone told me about the preconception that communication is about the training of students first and only secondly about research. How is the situation in the U.S.?

Certainly, the university is there for students, but it is also there for faculty. The question is: What is the reward process? That process is vastly different at different institutions. Public universities depend on students and the state itself. The state expects that programs be provided for students. The resources for research are increasingly stretched. That's why, at research universities like Michigan State, the demand for external funds is mandated.

You are talking about alumni and private contributions, foundations and government organizations.

Yes. At all the best institutions and most of the better ones, it has become imperative that faculty members support their research, or they will not be tenured. I think there will be a movement to privatize some of the better state universities. That will increase the pressure. What gets supported with external funds? Typically not the arts programs and typically not the humanities, but rather the quantitative social

Back to Table of Contents

sciences and the physical sciences. It's the same with courses and programs that could also be supported, for example by survey firms or communication institutions. We have to do research that somebody supports. Research output and obtaining outside funding are the major reward criteria.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?
I'm not familiar enough with programs outside the United States to evaluate their quality. I wish I were.

Where do you see the field in 2030?
I think the answer to that is more topical for people in communication than for people in other areas. Just look at the changes in the last decade produced by new technologies. If you had interviewed me a decade ago, I would not even know the term "social media" or how to integrate that into our research and curriculum. TV is available in half a dozen formats today. So, what does watching TV mean? It likely means alternative effects are available. Those accelerated changes in technology inhibit me from talking about 2030. What will the typical university be like 20 years from now? What will faculty look like? I back off the question by saying we are in the midst of another communication revolution.

Are there any scientists whom you would call a role model?
I've already described Tannenbaum as my particular role model. Wilbur Schramm was another; I had the privilege of listening to him at the East-West Center.

Are there any other persons who you would characterize in that fashion?
Everett Rogers and Gerald Miller. Rogers was a great teacher, a great adviser, and a great developer of research. Miller was a personal friend and generated a legion of successful careers. I admire Elihu Katz for his work and his humanity. I'm also a great admirer of Joanne Cantor, who significantly increased the influence of female faculty in the area of communication. I tried to hire her twice, but all I succeeded in doing was getting her promoted twice at Wisconsin. That's okay. Ellen Wartella had been a role model and is one again. She was excellent as dean at Texas and is a first-rate researcher and spokesperson for this discipline.

Looking back on 50 years in communication: Is there anything you are especially proud of?
I'm proud I lived this long [laughing]. I'm proud that I was able to raise a functional family at the same time while I was doing this work. It took me some time away from the family, but my work ethic seems to be a value to them as well. I'm proud of any recognition I've received, not just from the ICA. I do want to especially say that Michigan State has consistently supported my work and me.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?
I think I was a little too hard on some people. I might have a bit more compassion with age. As a young rebel, I was not always as kind as I might have been. That's part of growing up. I hope that those who received less than my kindest side will have forgiven me.

Back to Table of Contents

What will remain when Bradley Greenberg is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

The passion for creating important questions, generating innovative ideas, and pursuing answers to those questions with the strongest social scientific methods available.

References

Gantz, W., & Bradley, S. D. (2005). Bradley S. Greenberg: Advancing mass communication and making a difference. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *49*, 135–146.

Greenberg, B. S. (1964). Diffusion of news of the Kennedy assassination. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *28*, 225–232.

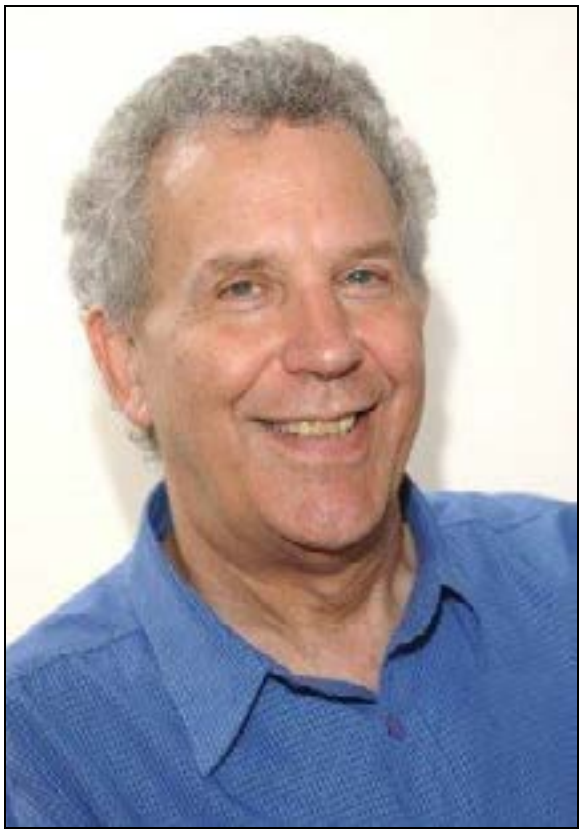
Greenberg, B. S., Mastro, D., & Brand, J. E. (2002). Minorities and the mass media: Television into the 21st century. In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (2nd ed., pp. 333–351). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1630–1637 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

LARRY GROSS

"We have a responsibility to contribute."



Larry Gross, 2009.

Born:	1942 in Washington, DC.
Education:	1964 B.A. in psychology, Brandeis University
	1968 Ph.D. in social psychology, Columbia University
Career:	1968 Assistant Professor, University of Pennsylvania
	1972 Associate Professor, University of Pennsylvania
	1982 Professor, University of Pennsylvania
	1999–2000 Guggenheim Fellow
	2001 B. Aubrey Fisher Mentorship Award
	2003 Professor and Director, University of Southern California, Communication
	2006 ICA Fellow
	2011 ICA President

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Larry Gross

Could you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

My father worked in the government, and my mother didn't work at that point. Ultimately, she had four children. That was a full-time job. I would say my parents were intellectuals. They had both been to college and were both "premature anti-fascists." That term—actually an official U.S. government term—meant that you were involved in left politics before December 7, 1941, when it became okay. So they were always under a certain amount of strain at that point. They had been members of the Communist Party until 1939, but it was still part of their identity.

How could a communist work for the government?

You lied. I have my father's FBI files. So I know that he lied. He worked for the Truman administration and then for the Democratic National Committee. As was the case for many Truman administration people, he became unemployed in 1953 when the government changed. We moved to Jerusalem when I was 10 and a half. My father worked there as an adviser to the Israeli government and taught public administration at the university.[4] My parents came back in 1960, and I did, too, after finishing high school in Jerusalem.

Did religion play any role in your childhood?

It did, but only when my father was looking at various possibilities of working abroad. In the early 1950s, lots of American experts were being hired by agencies or governments to be advisers. People went to Pakistan, to Indonesia, or to Japan. My mother refused to go to a place where she would have her children brought up in a "foreign bubble." She said Israel would be interesting if that happened.

Do you still remember why you chose to study psychology at Brandeis?

Yes. I had read a lot, and it seemed a field that appealed to me. I was interested in art and culture. That also seemed relevant to psychology. While I was in Jerusalem, I knew nothing about American universities. One of the books that my father had was *Motivation and Personality* by Abraham Maslow (1954). Maslow was at Brandeis, so I applied there. All I knew was I wanted to go to a small college. I was coming from Israel and from a high school that had 30 students in a class. I didn't need a big American college.

Brandeis was a good choice.

It was a very interesting place to be. Abe Maslow was my adviser and mentor. It was an unusual situation where you read someone's work and think you go and study with him, and you actually end up getting very close to him. I don't think that happens very often.

---

[4] From 1946 to 1952, Bertram Gross (1912–1997) was the first executive secretary of the President's Council of Economic Advisers. In Israel, he worked as an economic adviser in the Prime Minister's Office and as visiting professor at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he created the program in public administration. Back in the United States, he taught at Syracuse and Hunter College. His best known book is *Friendly Fascism: The New Face of Power in America* (New York: Evans 1980). Larry Gross' older brother David (born in 1941) was awarded the 2004 Nobel Prize in physics.

Back to Table of Contents

How would you compare the student Larry Gross with your students today?

The 1960s were a very different period, and Brandeis was a very special place back then. It's no longer the same, and it can't be reproduced. Brandeis had been founded in 1948. By the time I got there, it was already quite substantial. Abram Sachar, the founding president, quickly raised a lot of money from self-made Jewish millionaires who couldn't give it to Harvard and Columbia because they wouldn't take it. Sachar also hired faculty, many of whom were some combination of refugees from Europe, Jewish and leftist. All three of those were handicaps in terms of working at an Ivy League university. This was during the McCarthy period. Sachar built an amazing faculty. There were people that you not would expect to find at a small and new university.

What about the students?

It was taken for granted that they were intellectuals, and it was an assumption that you would go to graduate school, whereas I don't find that among students today—either at Penn or here at USC. They are pretty ready to say they are going into business.

Can you tell me something about your other main academic teachers?

Maslow was one of the main ones in psychology. Also, there was Ulric Neisser, who was iconoclastic as a founder of cognitive psychology (Neisser, 1967). It was still the period in which behaviorism dominated American psychology. So I was alerted early on to the cognitive turn. Among the most influential teachers I had were an art historian and theorist, Leo Bronstein, and Herbert Marcuse. I got to know Marcuse through his family, as well. He lived nearby, and his son was in the class of my younger brother. Bronstein is not well known, but he shaped a lot of my thinking about art and society. His writing was obscure. It is poetic and hard to follow, but very interesting. There were also people in sociology and in literature who were influential. It was a small school, and you could take classes in different fields.

When did you know that you wanted to become a scientist, maybe a communication scientist?

I certainly didn't think about communication, and I wouldn't say the word "scientist." I wanted to become an academic. What I was doing just seemed to be fun, and my father had become an academic by that point. So it was an obvious choice. That's what my friends at Brandeis wanted to do. I didn't have a clue about communication. When I was finishing college, I applied to graduate schools in social psychology at Columbia and at Harvard.

Your choice was Columbia.

I actually didn't like the people at Harvard and their whole self-image. Only one example: The department chair told me that they weren't going admit women any more because this would be just wasting their time. You train them and then they go off and get married. Columbia seemed interesting because of New York and because Meyer Schapiro was there. He was a good friend of Leo Bronstein. When I got there, I discovered that there was no overlap between what I'd done as an undergraduate and what I was now doing in social psychology. It was an experimental field, which is kind of fun, but not my real interest. I worked there with Stanley Schachter. He was interested in eating behavior at the time. I did a dissertation on eating behavior in rats. I spent nine months weighing rats, feeding them, and observing their responses to different food situations. Not too much fun, but it actually was an early example of

Back to Table of Contents

evolutionary psychology—applying to rats an insight articulated by Aristotle: A rich man eats when he's hungry, a poor man eats when he can.

Why did you choose social psychology?

I was interested in art and in psychology. My senior thesis at Brandeis was a case study of creativity in psychology. Through a variety of connections, I got six famous professors to be interviewed pretty intensively. Herbert Simon, who my father knew, Abe Maslow himself, Jerome Bruner, David McClelland, B. F. Skinner, and Milton Rokeach. A publisher was actually interested in my thesis, but several of the interviewees didn't agree. Skinner, for example, wanted to write his own autobiography (Skinner, 1976, 1979, 1983).

How did you end up in communication?

As I was finishing my dissertation at Columbia, a faculty member from Penn told me that the Annenberg School was looking for a social psychologist and that I would fit there. I drove down to talk about my interests in art, culture, and symbolic processes. They took me to a room where 10 or 12 faculty were sitting around a table and I just started talking about the stuff I've been thinking about. Then I had lunch with George Gerbner and Sol Worth and spent the afternoon meeting with different faculty. Later, I realized that I gave a job talk without knowing it. Had I known it, it would probably have been a disaster, because I would have been nervous. I left that day with a job offer, which is, again, not how things work today.

All the biographical notes about you name four research areas: media and culture, art and communication, visual communication, and media portrayals of minorities. Is there any link between those areas, or a hidden agenda?

They are all linked. How the arts are ways in which culture is transmitted was the one that brought me to Penn. At some point in the 19th century, the role of the arts as the central vehicle for cultural transmission is gradually replaced by the mass media. There is continuity between art, culture, and religion in the past and the mass media today. Rather early in my time there, I had conversations with George Gerbner, who was particularly interested in TV as the shaper of culture. It was a pretty easy connection with my interest in art and society. George was interested in working with somebody who had skills in testing these theories empirically. His prior research had all been in content analysis, but not on the effect side which we called cultivation. This was a word that George liked to use to characterize the way media shape culture. I worked with George and several students-turned-colleagues on cultivation studies for 20-something years.

Next would be your interest in visual culture.

It rose again out of the interest in art and my collaborations with Sol Worth (Gross, 1981). He and I were interested in questioning how people interpreted visual narratives, and in developing the field of visual communication. We started the journal *Studies in Visual Communication* and the Society for the Anthropology of Visual Communication within the AAA.

Back to Table of Contents

What about the minorities' part?

It came out as a combination of my work on media and my engagement as an activist in the 1970s and 1980s. It seemed logical to bring those together. As long as I was doing the research, it would feed the activism.

Do you like to be named as a co-founder of gay and lesbian studies?

I don't mind being called that, but the only context in which I would take credit would be in our field (Gross, 2001). I was one of the very first people to address these issues within communication, especially on the more social science end of it. I was certainly the first to push the ICA to develop a group that dealt with this issue. In the larger field of gay and lesbian studies, there were plenty of people who were doing that work before I was. They were mostly non-academics. This was a field that largely grew up through the work of community-based independent scholars. The academic world wasn't particularly welcoming back then.

How would you compare the Annenberg School you joined in 1968 and the one that you left in 2003?

It was different, but not that much different. It was a small social science-oriented communications graduate school, and it still is. In the mid-1970s, Sol Worth and I introduced an undergraduate program within the College of Arts and Sciences with about 200 majors. It's unlike here at USC, where the Annenberg School has its own undergraduates, with around 800 communication majors. The faculty at Penn is small. When I left there, we had 15 or 16.

Have you ever considered applying for a position outside the Annenberg School?

I've never applied for a position. I've always had them offered to me. Here, they came asking me. It's a very supportive and congenial environment. I've liked both schools. Even academic administration is rewarding and enjoyable when you have resources. We would propose a project, and the Annenberg Foundation would say yes and give us the money. I'm well aware that I had never had to administer under conditions of scarcity and making cuts.

From Wikipedia, I learned that USC Annenberg scholars are defining communication and journalism for the 21st century and beyond.

I wonder who wrote that [laughing].

Is this more an ad or reality?

We are certainly engaged in a very transformative moment of communication, but I wouldn't say exclusively here. The body of knowledge in media studies was accumulated in the second half of the 20th century—in the TV era. Now the Internet revolution is opening all the closed books. Everything that we claimed we knew has to be re-examined. The work we did on cultivation was in an era of massive audiences for a small number of broadcasters. That was very different than what happened with cable, and even more different than what is happening right now. The field has to be reopened, which is pretty exciting.

Back to Table of Contents

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?
I felt pleased. I can't say it was the most important thing that happened to me, but it is always nice to be recognized by your colleagues. In some ways, it's more notable to be recognized by your students. I've received mentorship awards a few times, and that was really nice.

Who is Larry Gross: a teacher, a researcher, the icon of the Annenberg School, the co-founder of gay and lesbian studies—at least in communication? What is the most important part of your academic life?
When I'm asked what I do, I say I'm a teacher. Or I say I'm an academic, depending on who is asking. Most of what I do, I would put under the umbrella of teaching, even if it's in writing.

Reading all the presidential addresses at ICA conferences, one gets a very ambivalent picture of the research field. What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?
My presidential address will probably deal with public engagement. Communication has failed to become an active player in policy and public discourse. This is a world that is being transformed by communication technology. Communication, as a field, should be a central player in that. And they are not. They have yielded the field to economists and lawyers. There is a lot that communication scholarship has to contribute that you are not going to hear from those professions.

That's speaking to the discipline.
Communication is the central human attribute. Human beings live in a symbolic, as well as in a physical environment. Other species don't. The symbolic environment is as much at risk of pollution as is the physical one. In both environments, there are dangerous by-products of industrial capitalism, and we have a responsibility to be environmentalists in both contexts.

Some of my interviewees told me about missing respect from old-established subjects.
That's boring.

How is the situation here at USC?
We do pretty well. The Annenberg brand has been stronger than the university brand. The school was at the top of its field at a time when USC was still climbing. At Penn, the school was a suspect when it first started in the 1950s and 1960s. At that time, the field was too contaminated by the popular and not really taken seriously. That has changed over the time. It has become recognized as a valuable part of the university at both schools, but if anything, more at USC. Annenberg is seen as among the most important components of the university.

Can you give me proof?
In the last few years, two of the three major academic committees were chaired by Annenberg faculty: the Committee on Appointments, Promotions, and Tenure and the Committee on Academic Review. That tells you that the school is taken seriously.

Back to Table of Contents

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?

I don't know. Maybe in my current ICA role, I'm too close to it. We have 26 divisions, and I'm sure each one of them sees themselves at least as one of the skyscrapers. Everything is impacted now by these changes I was talking about. These changes are happening one after another without much time for things to settle down. The second challenge to the field is not to be caught up too much in the excitement of the present. It's one of the major responsibilities of universities to look back, as well as forward, and to be aware of cultural variation.

Where do you see our field in 2030?

I wish I could see the world in 2030. Almost everything I see leads to being pessimistic. Assuming that we don't fall apart more radically than we have already, I think that communication will have become more central to the academic world than it is today. When we deal with people in other parts of the world, and particularly in Asia, communication is at the top of the list of topics they want to pursue, along with some biotechnology. When Chinese delegates come here, they want to talk about communication and not about history.

Are there any scholars whom you regard as role models?

Certainly I have been influenced by people. Sol Worth was one of them. We were very close. I was influenced by some of my teachers and by a number of anthropologists. They help us understand that culture is real and makes a difference. Howard Becker is a friend and colleague whom I encountered early on in my career, and who influenced me a lot.

What did you learn from him for your own work?

He was a student of Everett Hughes from the Chicago School. Becker has an unsentimental approach to the arts that asks: How does that work, and what is the social structure you need for something to happen? It was an influence on my thinking, along with Bourdieu, or Erving Goffman, who was a colleague at Penn.

Looking back on more than 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

I'm proud of my role as a teacher. I've supervised around 50 dissertations and a lot more master's theses. I found it a way to satisfy my curiosity about things to get students to go out and to do research. Teaching keeps me thinking about things.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

I don't think about things that way.

What will remain when Larry Gross is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

Given that I've spent so much time in administration, I hope it will remain a stronger institution with a socially responsive outlook and structure. I often think that academics are luckier than they think they are. These are people who are supported to do things they are interested in, on their own schedule. That is just not the way it is for most people. There is a responsibility to contribute.

Back to Table of Contents

References

Gross, L. (2001). *Up from invisibility: Lesbians, gay men and the media in America*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Gross, L. (Ed.) (1981). *Studying visual communication: Papers by Sol Worth*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Maslow, A. H. (1954). *Motivation and personality*. New York: Harper & Row.

Neisser, U. (1967). *Cognitive psychology*. New York: Appleton.

Skinner, B. F. (1976). *Particulars of my life: Part one of an autobiography*. New York: Random House.

Skinner, B. F. (1979). *The shaping of a behaviorist: Part two of an autobiography*. New York: Random House.

Skinner, B. F. (1983.) *Matter of consequences: Part three of an autobiography*. New York: Random House.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1638–1647 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

LAWRENCE GROSSBERG

"Communication gave me a home."

Larry Grossberg, March 22, 2011.
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1947 in Brooklyn, New York
Education:	Stuyvesant High School
	1968 M.A. in history and philosophy at University of Rochester
	Academic training at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham
	1976 Ph.D. in Communication Research, Illinois
Career:	1975 teaching appointment, Purdue University
	1976 Assistant Professor of Speech Communication, Illinois
	1982 Associate Professor, Illinois
	1990 Professor
	1994 Distinguished Professor of Communication Studies, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
	1990 Co-Editor, *Cultural Studies*
	1995 B. Aubrey Fisher Mentorship Award
	1997 Distinguished Scholar, NCA
	1998 ICA Fellow

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Lawrence Grossberg

Could you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

I was raised in Brooklyn. My parents were first-generation children of immigrants from Poland and Russia who came to the U.S. just before the rise of fascism in Europe. My father was a policeman. This was a way to stay home rather than joining the army, and a path for social mobility. My mother didn't work until my parents were divorced. I have two older brothers. The household was not unusual in the rising middle-class Jewish culture. We were driven by intellectual and academic values and dreams of rising up the social ladder. My parents demanded that my immediately older brother and I read a book a week and write a report on it for them.

Were there any university graduates in your family?

No. My father attended a university for a year, but did not continue. Some of his brothers went to night school, but in our family, my oldest brother was the first one to graduate. As a child, I was very sick. An orthopedic problem. Between two and six, I was largely immobilized. So I could never do sports. That culture of the book that I was raised in became my life. Everything I dreamed about had to do with intellectual work. I thought about being a lawyer, a writer, and at one point even about being a rabbi, but then I discovered you have to believe in God. The career path I put myself on was to be a scientist.

Who was more proud when you got the place at Stuyvesant High School, you or your parents?

Probably my parents. It took me about two hours one way. That wasn't something that I really wanted. Stuyvesant was an all-boys school. That also wasn't exciting. Still, it was one of the two leading high schools in New York. We had great teachers. And except for foreign languages, I was good in every subject, but especially in sciences. I assumed I would become a biochemist.

Biochemist? I have history and philosophy as your majors on my list.

When I was in high school, I won an NSF award and spent a summer doing research at Yale on messenger RNA. I think they assumed I would come back, but it was also all-boys at the time, and I had no desire to spend four more years with only boys. Not a chance in hell. So I went to Rochester and started to work with some of the people who were on NASA projects about life in the universe. Biochemistry was still a relatively new field, and there were some leading figures there.

Why did you leave them?

I discovered two things about myself. I didn't really like memorization, and I was looking for professors who were engaged with the universe of ideas and the real world of politics. When I went to college, things were happening in the world and in universities. I read Marx or Nietzsche, but my professors said, "You are wasting your time. You should be reading *The Journal of Biochemistry*. The new issue is out." I was a fan of Arthur Koestler (1959) and had an image of what a great scientist would be. In the end, I realize it was chance. I know scientists now who are amazing intellectuals, but my professors did not live up to my expectations. So I began to look for other professors who I could talk to. I found a number of them at Rochester, including Richard Taylor and Hayden White. It was an exciting place at the time in the humanities and social sciences.

Back to Table of Contents

How would you compare the student Larry Grossberg with your students today?
It's not exactly fair. I was a peculiar student because the life of books was all I knew. I didn't care about sports or about the business world, although I was part of a special effort by the Harvard Business School to recruit young humanities students. I wanted a career where I could read and talk about ideas. But the context was also unique. In the 1960s, we were not worried about getting jobs. We went to the university to learn and to have fun; we saw it as a unique time where you could experience things and then decide what role they would play in your life. Today, students view college differently, and maybe they have to. They are coming to college thinking it's both the last party of their life and the vital preparation for a job. This makes it difficult to deal with them, but there are always some who still believe in the world of ideas and are politically involved. Those remind me of why I love teaching undergrads.

In the Wikipedia entry for "Lawrence Grossberg," there is a long list of academic teachers, from Hayden White and James Carey to Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall. Who of these great scholars influenced you most?
That's the kind of question I would rather not answer. There is a phrase in Buddhism: "When the time is right, the guru will come." I've been very fortunate. At each time in my life when I needed a teacher who would take me up, I found them. I guess the two most profound intellectual influences on me are Stuart Hall and James Carey, but I would not have found Stuart without Richard Taylor, Hayden White, Loren Baritz and so many other wonderful teachers. But Stuart and Jim have really shaped me, and define what I wish I could be.

The American and the British version of cultural studies.
They taught me what it meant to be an academic. I have spent my life trying to live up to the example that they set.

Also from Wikipedia, I learned about your time with the theatre company* Les Treteaux Libres *in Europe. Have you ever considered working as an actor or as an artist?
I work as an actor all the time when I teach. In that company, I spent a year-and-a-half learning all the skills and thinking about the power of performance. It was an itinerant anarchist community. I don't think I was very good as an actor. I always found it too terrifying. I still get very nervous whenever I have to speak in public, even when I go to a lecture. At least, when I do it as an intellectual, I have some self-confidence in the ideas I'm presenting. I never had that confidence in acting.

Why did you return to the U.S.?
A lot of my life back then was a result of the Vietnam War. I went to England, left England and joined this theatre group because of the draft. When that issue was resolved, I could think about going home. So in part, I came home because I could, and in part because the group split up after our biggest victory. We won the Theatre Festival of Avignon and didn't know how to deal with success. Half of the group wanted to make money finally and the other half said that would be selling out our values.

What started the historian and philosopher Grossberg to deal with communication?
After returning, I did various jobs in New York. I was driving a cab or writing a column for an underground paper, and then decided I wanted to go back to school. I asked Stuart Hall where to go to continue

Back to Table of Contents

sultural studies and researching rock music, which had also been the topic of my undergraduate honors thesis. He said there was only one person who seemed to be trying something similar in the U.S.: Jim Carey. So I wrote him and he wrote back, "You know, there are application deadlines here and they are long past." I wrote back again: "But Stuart Hall said you are the only one I can work with." Then Jim called me, listened to my story and said, "Okay, give me a couple of days." He even got me a fellowship. He was excited to have someone who had been at Birmingham. When I arrived and went to his office, I discovered I was in communication. I had never heard of it. It hadn't existed in Rochester and it didn't exist in England.

When did you know that you wanted to become a communication scientist?

In one sense, I never wanted to become a communication scientist. I wanted to study popular culture, social change, and philosophy. Communication was the place that gave me a home and the literature on mass media seemed to have some relevance to my work, even when I didn't agree with it. I discovered that communication itself emerged out of a kind of interdisciplinary project. And most importantly, the discipline was, with lots of resistance, to give cultural studies and all my other interests a home when no where else in the American universities seemed to be.

Where did you differ from your teachers at Birmingham?

I think in three ways. First, around Marxism. I did not have the same loyalty coming in, although I think people misunderstand the way Birmingham dealt with Marxism. They were not true believers. As Stuart says at one point, they wrestled with it, like an angel. Second, I was always less enamored of structuralism and post-structuralism, for all sorts of reasons. I didn't spend years grappling, for example, with Althusser and Derrida, or at least, I did it only after I had come to terms with Gramsci and Foucault. So I had a different history because I was here in the States. You know, Jim Carey's attack on cultural studies that turns to post-structuralism was not aimed at me or Stuart, but at those who use it to reduce reality to discourse and uncertainty. At least that is what he told me.

What about difference number three?

I always loved philosophy and theory. So I helped inaugurate this subarea in the field, together with Richard Lanigan, Stan Deetz, and a few other people. Part of my work is still about the philosophy of communication and culture. The Birmingham tradition assumes that it is necessary to understand theory in order to do the work, but the sheer pleasure of philosophy as language games, was never a part of their universe. Even to this day, Stuart and I have these conversations.

What did you take from the British school and bring to Carey's project?

Well, above all else, I took cultural studies as I understand it: radical contextuality, interdisciplinarity, complexity. I think Jim shared the same understanding, but given the context he worked in, and whom he was fighting, his work emphasized the "cultural approach to communication." And given his roots in pragmatism, he argued that the cultural constitutes the social. The forms of communication constitute the forms of social life. The British school put more investment in the social as separate from the cultural—as interrelated areas that one has to theorize and research. That's partly because of the Marxist influence. I took that model and brought it into the Illinois discussion. Toward the end of his career, Jim was more aware of the contradictions between the culture and the political economic. People forget that he was

Back to Table of Contents

always thinking about the economic. I also brought with me a more sympathetic reading and embrace of structuralism and post-structuralism, which Jim always resisted. He helped to reinforce my own doubts about such work.

Is this more of a burden or more of a delight for you to be linked to cultural studies?
It is a delight, although I do tire of fighting the battles over and over again. I did fall in love with the project. It spoke to me as a 1960s radical student, because it challenged many of the dominant ways in which the academy worked. I loved its radical sense of the relationship of politics to knowledge. I still see myself fighting the battle for the project itself. For me, it is a specific project; you do not just get to do the same thing you have been doing all along, only now you call it cultural studies.

Youth culture is the topic of your life. Was there a crucial experience that led you to that topic?
Sure, the events of the late 1960s. For both American and European intellectuals, this was a major event. But Europe had another major event: the rise and defeat of fascism. America never confronted fascism in the same way. So for many of us, the 1960s set the agenda. This was a political movement in which culture was absolutely at the center. This movement was defined through its cultural forms, through its music, and through communication practices. I wanted to understand how it worked.

War against kids or war on youth (Grossberg, 2001), struggle over modernity, caught in the crossfire (Grossberg, 2005): Why do you use military words describing cultural patterns?
Because I don't have sports metaphors [laughing]? Actually, I don't really like to describe a war on youth or against kids. Caught in the crossfire is my alternative imagination of what's going on. Still, I do think the metaphor of struggle goes back to the 1960s. I've always believed that the stakes in cultural change are very high. These struggles shape the ways we live, and our futures. The stakes are so high that military metaphors became the most appropriate. This is where Jim Carey and I did disagree. For him, it was always about a conversation. This could be right in the intellectual world, but I did not think it worked in the public world of politics. How do you describe a conversation in which two groups are not willing to listen to each other? Although I have to say that the end of *Caught in the Crossfire* is very much a return to Jim's position.

On the Larry Grossberg quotation: "I could define the Left by a set of values" (Sterne, 2005). Could you do this now, please?
Democracy, justice, freedom, the ability to live a "dignified" life? All those values can be interpreted in different ways. I would say the Left is a commitment to improve the lives of the vast majority of people in economic, political, and cultural terms.

Could you understand colleagues who say political questions have to stay outside the universities?
I understand them. I do believe that knowledge for its own sake is useful. The more knowledge we have, the better, as long as we always ask ourselves, "What do we know when we think we know this?" For me, the question of power and politics comes at the beginning of research and at the end of it. The questions I ask are motivated out of political interest. When I have answered them, I can talk about the political consequences. This is different from those many people, on the left as well as increasingly on the right,

Back to Table of Contents

who think that politics also operates in the middle. That is, they believe that knowledge guarantees politics and politics determines knowledge. If you do not let the empirical world speak back to your politics, or to your theory, then you have abandoned the responsibility that comes with the privileged position of an academic. The process of knowledge production is political, but the politics are never guaranteed or predictable in advance.

In 2000, the German weekly* Freitag *called you the "eloquent heretic in the humanities." How would you describe your position in the field of communication?

Wow, that's great. Probably undeserved, but I'll take it anyway. I'm probably one of those, and there were not that many of us, trying to do and proselytize some new kinds of work. I've spent a lot of my energy to convince the people that cultural studies, and philosophy or theory, and even popular culture (especially music) were good things to have in the field. Along the way, I had allies; some of them respected senior scholars with different perspectives. I was always surprised to see who was open to change, or only to some changes and not others, and who was not.

Are you a heretic in the field?

I don't think so, because communication has to be an open, changing discipline. I see myself as someone who is trying hard to keep the field from closing itself off as a discipline. The value of communication has always been its multiplicity. That chaos is precisely what makes us good and what enables us often to be a few steps ahead of other disciplines. Am I a heretic in the humanities more broadly? I hope so. How can a set of questions and concerns that matter have become so—what is the word? Small? Anemic?

Hanno Hardt complained that he was marginalized at Iowa because of his Marxist orientation (Meyen & Löblich, 2007, p. 116). What about your experiences as an academic from the Left?

There have always been people who ignored me and denigrated my work. They probably offered lots of reasons. At Illinois, for example, it was more common to be attacked in public because I was teaching and writing about rock culture than it was for being a Marxist. But I also learned early on that I didn't really care about it. I know my tenure was a bit of a battle, and I'm sure there are jobs I didn't get because of my interests or my commitments, but I've always been able to find a community of people whom I respected and who treated me with respect. I've been fortunate enough to be successful, but I've always done it knowing the risk. If you want to do anything that challenges the deep habits of the academy, you are taking a risk. And if you don't want to take any risks, then you don't believe in the value of what you are trying to do. Given the limited rewards of being an academic, you might think about another career. At least, that is what I have always told myself. Hanno was treated badly and deserves a lot more credit and visibility than he has ever been given in the discipline.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?

I was very honored because it was an acknowledgment from a body of people who don't share my perspective. It told me that my contributions to the field as a discipline and as a body of knowledge are real and significant. I was pleased as well, because it continued the process of opening up the field. At the time, there were two ICA Fellows that represented a cultural perspective: Jim Carey and me. If younger people could see that the field recognizes those contributions, then they would hopefully feel that they weren't taking quite so much of a risk and do more of that work.

Back to Table of Contents

Who is Larry Grossberg: a researcher, a teacher, the founding father of cultural studies in the U.S., the academic hero of the Left? What is the most important part of your academic life?

I am a champion of cultural studies. That's my project. I'm the person who, for 40 years now, has been fighting for the value of that project. I do that through writing, I do that through teaching, I do that through editing a journal, and I do it through creating institutional spaces. Someone once, derogatorily, described me as the CEO of cultural studies, and I am happy to embrace that as part of my job description. But I am also a teacher. I love it, and I am most proud of the students I have mentored. They are so different from me, and so many of them have become exactly what they wanted to become.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

Let me start more broadly. The study of human existence anchors the relation amongst three concepts: sociality, power, and discourse. Different disciplines start in different places. Some of them look at relations, but most don't. Economics doesn't look at the relations between the economy and the rest. The humanities often look at discourse, but don't do this particularly well in relation to the other two. Communication is one of those disciplines concerned with the relations amongst all three, but it always starts with the discourse. So communication is the study of discourse in its complex and contextual relationship to sociality and politics.

It's a very broad and chaotic definition.

When I first went to Illinois, I had no idea what communication meant. There was a pro-seminar where each of the faculty all came in for one week and introduced their research. After this seminar, it seemed to be more chaotic than I even imagined before. Jim Carey's response was, "That's good. Hold on to that notion of the discipline."

Sonia Livingstone told me about missing respect from old-established subjects. How is the reputation of communication here at North Carolina?

The department is well-respected. We have a wonderful faculty and a strong reputation as teachers and as scholars. In the U.S., the problem is slightly different than it is in England. We have these gigantic organizations like ASA, AAA, or MLA, which have enormous intellectual power and symbolic capital. Communication is very small. We don't exist in most of the private universities. The model of the Ivy League is very important in this country. Communication has little symbolic capital and little visibility, both in the academy and in the media. If *The New York Times* or the *Chronicle of Higher Education* wants to write an article about cultural studies, they are unlikely to come to me as a professor of communication. I'm a significant cultural studies figure in the rest of the world, but less so in the U.S. academy. That also has to do with disciplinary power. The problem is made even worse by the fact that we have so many organizations.

What organizations are you talking about?

ICA, NCA, AEJMC, IAMCR, cinema studies, Internet studies. Of course, part of the problem is that communication is not and should not be a discipline. It is inherently interdisciplinary, and so many people not in the discipline sociologically are in it intellectually. But when someone has to explain the sociology of our field to a dean, it does not make sense. He or she looks for our MLA, our singular authoritative

Back to Table of Contents

institution. And we do not have it. I don't know why that happened. Maybe it's the chaos of the discipline that I like, but it also operates against our ability to stand up and demand symbolic capital for what we do.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?

I don't think I can, partly because of that diversity and partly because of the flows of intellectual capital. I do not even think I can do it for cultural studies. The dominance of the English language means that the rest of the world is always going to know about us, but we are not going to know about them. The size of the U.S. market means that publishers are always concerned about what will sell here. Unfortunately, that often translates into high theory rather than the contextually grounded work that is the heart of cultural studies. Yet everywhere I go, I find wonderful work; in fact, the most exciting cultural studies work is being done outside the U.S. and Western Europe, which have dominated the intellectual scene for a long time. The constraints of translation often mean that the best work being done isn't going to be translated because the publishers don't think an American audience is willing to read an Indonesian, or even necessarily, an Australian analysis. The whole world is supposed to be interested in what's going on in the U.S., but the reverse is, unfortunately, rarely true in academic circles, even in cultural studies, where it most certainly should be true.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

I am not very good at predicting the future, especially given the changes that are already happening in society and in the universities in particular. The field is shifting, but I don't know where, and I don't know what is going to remain. I think there are some questions that are disappearing, and with it, some areas. Questions that animated some fields don't seem to have the excitement they once did.

Could you name those fields?

I would rather not be too specific because I value my friendships, and I do not like to talk about fields I know too little about. I would prefer to put the question this way: Where would I like the field to be? I would like a move away from its subfield structure, its kind of fractionalization of its own illusion of disciplinarity. I don't think that the interesting conversations are within organizational or media or rhetoric. They are across them.

How do we reorganize ourselves?

I want to suggest that we organize ourselves by a series of ongoing conversations around issues and topics that matter. That does not mean we destroy disciplines, but we limit their power. The whole university has to change. If you ask professors with whom they are working and to whom they send their research to read, the lines are no longer disciplinary. You send it to people who are working on the same problematic, and we have to find ways to enable these conversations. After all, such conversations are often temporary. On a smaller scale, I would also like to see us overcome the divide between quantitative and qualitative. It's not that everyone has to be an expert in both, but we do need to stop "fetishizing" method and start finding the best ways to answer the important questions, to educate about the values and limits of both perspectives and develop generations who can work collaboratively to produce the

Back to Table of Contents

knowledge that we need today. I am not suggesting all paradigms should be friends; I am suggesting that methodology is not a very useful dimension for judgment, at least the quantitative-qualitative divide.

Are there any scientists whom you would call a role model?

Jim and Stuart are my great models. Linus Pauling was a role model for me, too, when I was younger. He was both a scholar and an intellectual—critical, passionate, and political, but always committed to knowledge. Such persons exist in all disciplines. There are two extremes of how to be an academic. They are both valuable. One is the complete expert who devotes his or her life to one single topic. The other is someone who brings a set of critical questions or tools to bear on different issues. The American university pushes to the expert side, and I push to the other side. My role models would be intellectuals who believe that you have to do the work to be enough of an expert, to talk about something with the authority of an academic.

Looking back on 35 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

I'm most proud that cultural studies, philosophy and theory, and popular culture have a real presence in and a profound impact on the field, and in the university. Jim, Hanno, and Stuart deserve some of the credit, as do many people from my generation, but I deserve a bit of the credit, too. I have helped to redefine communication studies, and even, to some extent, broader intellectual institutions. I am also proud of my students. Many of them continue to battle to do really important work and to be great teachers. And I'm proud that I'm an ICA Fellow and a NCA Distinguished Scholar. It means my work has been recognized.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

I probably should have done a better job of winning more allies along the way. I don't mind having enemies, but some of those people became enemies of the broader project, too. On the other hand, I believe if you like where you are, you shouldn't regret what has happened, because it got you there.

What will remain when Larry Grossberg is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

What will remain are the traces of my teaching. I think the influence of cultural studies will continue in the field. I hope that the openness to political, critical and theoretical perspectives will remain. Even though I made enemies, I also made lots of friends. Some of those friendships surprise people, but those are important alliances in building a field and an intellectual conversation. I hope that those kinds of networks continue because that's one of the ways in which fields change. What should remain? The point of cultural studies is not to produce politically correct knowledge and what you already believed before. It is to take up the most rigorous tools and methods that we have available to produce the best knowledge we can of what is going on, so we can think about how to make the world better.

Back to Table of Contents

References

Grossberg, L. (2001). Why do neoliberals hate kids? The war on youth and the culture of politics. *Cultural Studies*, *23,* 111–136.

Grossberg, L. (2005). *Caught in the crossfire*: *Kids*, *politics*, and *America's future*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Koestler, A. (1959). *The sleepwalkers: A history of man's changing vision of the universe*. London: Penguin.

Meyen, M., & Löblich, M. (2007). *Ich habe dieses Fach erfunden. Wie die Kommunikationswissenschaft an die deutschsprachigen Universitäten kam*. Köln: Halem.

Sterne, J. (2005). "Being young sucks": An interview with Lawrence Grossberg. *Bad Subjects*, *74*.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1648–201653 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

RODERICK HART

"I'm a very unorthodox social scientist."

Roderick Hart, March 25, 2011.
University of Texas, Austin. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1945
Education:	B.A. in English and communication, University of Massachusetts
	M.A. Pennsylvania State University
	1970 Ph.D., Pennsylvania State University
Career:	1970 Assistant Professor, Purdue University
	1975 Associate Professor, Purdue University
	1979 Professor, University of Texas
	1993 Distinguished Scholar, NCA
	1993 ICA Fellow
	2000 Murray Edelman Career Award, APSA
	2004 Dean, College of Communication
Personal:	Married, two children

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Roderick Hart

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?
Neither of my parents went to college. My mother was a homemaker, and my father was a businessman. He worked as a manager. I always assumed that I would become a lawyer. I was good in speech and debate.

Were you on a debate team?
I was in high school, but not in college.

Do you still remember why you chose to study at Massachusetts?
I'd gone to Catholic schools all my life and wanted to be in a larger environment. We couldn't afford a private college. The University of Massachusetts was large enough, far away from home, and a kind of liberating experience.

How would you compare the student Rod Hart with your students today?
In my last year of college, I took five courses that had heavy writing components. All of my friends said I was insane. They were all afraid of writing. I loved it. That typified me. Today's kids are a bit less intimidated by writing. That's not a great answer, but certainly [is] one difference. I was a serious kid. As a first-generation student, I knew that I had to study pretty hard.

Can you tell me something about your main academic teachers?
I had some extraordinary teachers. At that time, the University of Massachusetts was small, with about 12,000 students, mostly first-generation. It was the best public university in New England. The kids were hungry, and the teachers were pretty similar. All of them probably would have preferred to teach at Harvard, but they were not of that calibre. It was not a heavy research university, but the professors were pretty committed to teaching. It was magical. They took a great deal of interest in me. I'm sure that was one reason that I went into the academy, rather than to law school. I just got hooked on a research project and was able to work one-on-one with a professor.

When did you know that you wanted to become a communication scientist?
That decision was made late. I finished my English degree and thought I would go to Columbia for graduate work in English. I was a scholar of language and I still am. During the Vietnam War, I realized poetry seemed to just sit on the page. I was becoming fascinated by the use of language to change society. That was happening outside the classroom. So I think it was "the times" that turned me to studying practical language, rather than literature. So I got a second major in communication.

I didn't find a lot of information about your institutional steps after graduating from Penn State.
I was nine years at Purdue. It was my first job, and I had very happy years there. My daughter was born, and it was a good time in my life. It was a very good department, but a narrow university that was more about science and technology, and not so strong in the social sciences and in the humanities. So I always

Back to Table of Contents

knew that I would leave there at some point. The library wasn't as large as necessary, and so on. When I was recruited here in 1979, I was made a full professor.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to the language of politics (Hart et al., 2005)?

I was five years old, and Dwight Eisenhower was going on a parade not far from our house. I knew he was coming, made a sign ("I like Ike"), and put it on a broom. I went outside and held the broom up with the crowds there. Suddenly I saw a shadow over me. My mother pulled the broom out of my hands and said, "Not in this house." She was passionate, and I felt I had done something terribly wrong. She didn't explain it to me, but as time went on, I came to understand that she was an Irish Catholic immigrant in Massachusetts who had suffered a great deal of discrimination. All of the Irish were Democrats to the core. The intensity of that emotional experience made me realize that politics is a very special thing. I wanted to know more about it.

How would you rate the position of political communication scholars within our discipline?

I think they are very fine. I really like that this area is very interdisciplinary. There are not only people from communication or political science, but also some sociologists and psychologists. The field has grown tremendously. I think it is one of the strongest sub-disciplines.

How would you rate the position of communication scholars within political science?

That has also changed. It is much stronger than it ever has been. Disciplines have their own biases. Recently, I was at a meeting and kiddingly said that the worst thing that could happen is a political scientist doing content analysis. They don't love language. They want to know what the text is about and tend to approach it very mechanically. From my background, the topic is certainly important, but there are all the other messages: emotion, relationship, vision. My work intrigues a fair number of political scientists. The regard for communication scholars had risen dramatically over time.

You founded the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Participation to respond to political cynicism in the United States. Did you succeed?

It's a life's task. All we can do is continue to look for ways of pushing back those forces of cynicism. It's similar to anti-alcohol or nonsmoking campaigns, but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't do all we can. Part of it is getting people to understand that political cynicism could be a real health hazard. A lot of people, particularly in the academy, don't think that there is a problem with cynicism. According to them, as an academic you should be cynical about politics. My goal has been to raise consciousness about the dangers.

Do you like the role of a decision maker at Texas?

I had resisted such roles for my entire career. I got into the job accidently. The dean had left, and I was asked to do it for one year as an interim. Then they had a large search. They brought in 10 people for interviews, and none of them worked out. So they put pressure on me to take the job. I came in kicking and screaming, but I've found since then that I like it a great deal. I've been in now for seven years, and I'm looking for an exit strategy, but it was a growth experience. At least at this university, fundraising is a heavy component of the job. I thought I would hate that part, but it turned out to be the part that I loved

Back to Table of Contents

most. I like to tell stories to people about the college and about the field. I found a part of me that I didn't know that I had.

What about the relationships with your faculty colleagues?
I deal more with the upper-university and with external constituencies. Department chairs have a much harder job, because they have to deal with faculty day-to-day. Obviously, I've responsibilities when we have tenure cases that are difficult, but I've not tried to intrude in the departments about their decision-making. I've been a laissez-faire dean.

The College of Communication at Texas includes five departments.[5] If you would have the chance of a fresh start, how would you organize the ideal communication college?
That's a great question. There is a tension between the applied and the theory folks. In journalism, for example, there are people who teach the students how to become journalists, and then there are researchers who study journalism as a profession. One could imagine putting the content producers together in an applied communication department, and to have a research-based department. You would get more intellectual collaboration among the researchers than you do with these separate units, but I'd have to think really hard about that. We are structured pretty well here. All the departments are doing well, all have interesting internal divisions, and all have developed their own cultures.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?
I was really pleased because I'm a very unorthodox social scientist. I started as a language major, and even though I do computerized language analyses, I'm more of a humanist than a traditional behavioral scientist. I think I was the very first fellow who came in as a humanist. If I wasn't the first, I was certainly the second. I felt particularly gratified by that. The Distinguished Scholar Award from the NCA was a more natural thing, because there are more humanists in that organization.

Who is Rod Hart: a researcher, a teacher, a university manager? What is the most important part of your academic life?
I'm a teacher, no question. I miss it greatly because I'm not able to do much of it in this job. I could have been a professional writer outside the academy. That would have been a natural thing for me to do, as well, but when I write, I see myself as a teacher. I think I have a lot of good teaching skills as a writer.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?
It's the study and practice of eliciting cooperation by using language. I say language because I just don't deal with terms like "symbols." Communication is a process of eliciting cooperation, and it's hard work. You have to do it when you want relationships and marriages, to be a leader in political society, in the world of marketing and sales, certainly as a teacher, and in all the other areas in which people use communication skills.

[5] Advertising and Public Relations, Communication Sciences and Disorders, Communication Studies, Journalism, Radio-Television-Film. http://communication.utexas.edu

Back to Table of Contents

How is the reputation of the discipline here at Texas?

It has changed over my time here. We had been perceived as a discipline primarily devoted to teaching. The administration appreciated it because oral and written communication skills are hard for some people to achieve. In lots of fields, they've learned how important it is. In the last 15 years, we are seen as scholars as well. The change began with my predecessor, Ellen Wartella. We now publish with the best university presses, and our filmmakers are world-known. The situation has really improved greatly because our products compete with other disciplines.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?

That would take some time. You have been to where the ICA Fellows are located. Obviously, those are the skyscrapers. The fellows have gone to the best institutions. Outside the United States, in my opinion, Germany has been the strongest nation. Scholars in the Scandinavian countries and in England have also become more and more impressive. I just don't know much about people who attend IAMCR. There are more progressive groups in IAMCR and a lot of South American institutions.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

Our research will be increasingly able to explain and intervene in powerful human problems. That doesn't mean that we'll be more applied, but it will bring greater intellectual rigor to the solving of practical communication problems. As the research gets better, and as people become more comfortable within their own skins, we will be able to use the best intellectual work to change the way the world is. That's what the Annette Strauss Institute is about. I think it takes time for a sub-discipline to reach maturity. Psychology, for example, made the move to applied work 30 years ago. To this point, the applied people in communication have not been as well-regarded as people who work on conceptual or theoretical problems. That will change.

Are there any scientists whom you would call a role model?

Good Lord, yes. There are so many of them. My adviser, Carroll Arnold, is certainly one. He was a fine scholar and a pragmatist who wanted to use his mind to fix the world. He came from a different generation and was not as well-published by today's standards, but he was a wonderful thinker. Gerald Miller was a role model, even though he was as far away from my area as anyone. Sam Becker is a personal role model for me, as he is for probably half of the ICA Fellows.

What did you learn from Gerald Miller and Sam Becker for your own work?

I'm not sure I have learned anything for my own work. I liked Gerry's rigor of mind and the passionate power he had pushing his ideas. I was really attracted to that. I didn't agree with him on very much of anything, however. I agree with Sam Becker on almost everything. The thing that I really loved about him is his curiosity. I hope someone will say that about me some day. I'm impatiently curious. I have points of view but very few prejudices, in my opinion. Even at this point in my career, I go to conferences, sometimes not giving a paper, but going to sessions every hour. I just sit in the back and listen. I don't find many people my age doing that. I do that all the time.

Back to Table of Contents

Looking back on 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?
Someone once called me the best writer in the field. I'm sure that's not true. I would like it to be true, though. I take pride in my writing.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?
I wish I knew more statistics. I didn't know that I would need it. I do it on a modest level, but I wished I could go and learn some more.

What will remain when Rod Hart is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
Hopefully, my students will continue to carry on some aspects of the legacy. I've produced 30 doctoral students. I hope they say that I was both very, very demanding and kind. So, I wouldn't mind people saying "he was demanding, but kind."

Reference

Hart, R., Jarvis, S. E., Jennings, W. P., & Smith-Howell, D. (2005). *Political keywords: Using language that uses us*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1654–1660 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

ROBERT HORNIK

"I viewed myself as a development person, rather than a health person."

Robert Hornik, January 13, 2011.
University of Pennsylvania. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1946 in New York
Education:	1968 A.B. in international relations, Dartmouth College
	1973 Ph.D. in communication research, Stanford University
Career:	1973 Assistant Professor at Stanford University
	1978 Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania
	2002 B. Aubrey Fisher Mentorship Award
	2010 ICA Fellow

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Robert Hornik

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

My parents were the children of immigrants. They were both born in the States, but their parents were from Europe. They were Jews, mostly from Eastern Europe, and came over in the 1880s to 1900s. No one in my parents' backgrounds had graduated from college. My father graduated from high school. He was a successful businessman in the garment industry. I grew up in a suburb of New York City. I did well in school and college, got quite interested in development issues at that time, and also worked on the college radio station. I went to graduate school with a primary interest in developing countries.

Where did this interest come from?

I don't know. I was always interested in international issues, read newspapers, and so on. The communication part was really because I was working on the college radio station. I was a news reader and became conscious of the fact that the news we are getting was taking on a particular point of view. This was in the middle of the 1960s. I was involved in some demonstrations against the Vietnam War during that period. At the radio station, I was mostly getting news from UPI, which was, in my view, quite biased and pro-war in the very early parts of the war.

How did your parents react when you moved to the communication side?

At Stanford, I was on a full fellowship. So they weren't particularly concerned financially and had some pride in my academic path. Would my father have liked me to go into his business? Sure. But my older brother already had gone through that choice point. He was in graduate school in psychology at the time. I think they recognized that my going into business wasn't going to happen.

How would you compare the student Bob Hornik with your students today?

I wouldn't be very good at making such a comparison. I am such a different person than I was [then], that my ability to judge others is a rubber ruler in terms of my own experiences and expectations.

The question aims at the changes at American universities.

When I was in college and in graduate school, there was a lot of activism going on, because it was the middle of the protest during the Vietnam War. The draft affected any young male in a personal way. It was certainly both a personal and political concern in that period. There is no similar cause now that dominates either undergraduate or graduate education. So clearly, that context is different. I wouldn't focus on the students being different, although I'm sure they are. The conditions were quite different.

What about the conditions of our discipline at that time?

As an undergraduate, I didn't study communication at all. Stanford is among the oldest U.S. doctoral programs in communication, but they really weren't giving many PhDs out until much later than that. There weren't a lot of people who graduated, even though I got there in 1968. I don't know how many there had been in the previous 10 years. We are not talking about dozens, but probably about in the 10 to 20 range. So it was still pretty early. My faculty were all early founders.

Back to Table of Contents

Wilbur Schramm.
He became both my adviser and an important influence on my own work. There were a lot of people at Stanford from that earliest generation. Nathan Maccoby, who came out of psychology, for example. Stanford was different in its origins from the most of the other communication programs. Penn-Annenberg was much later also an exception, but almost every other communication department in the U.S. had grown out of some other program; often speech, rhetoric, broadcasting and film, or journalism. Stanford hadn't grown from any of those. There were some professional elements, but Schramm really created a research- and theory-oriented institute. When I got there, an unenforced rule was that you had to have some professional experience in journalism before you were accepted into the PhD program. I did not have such experience, and maybe most of the other graduate students didn't have it either. That background expectation was still on the books, but the faculty really saw the program in a different way. It was very much psychologically oriented. Graduate students had to take a whole series of courses in the psychology department. They didn't always do it, but there weren't that many courses taught in communication.

Did you ever consider working as a journalist?
No.

When did you know that you wanted to become a scientist, maybe a communication scientist?
When I went to graduate school, I didn't want to become an academic particularly until my first semester. My image was being a professional using media for development. I can no longer recall what I meant by that. I would have to look back at my application, but my mindset was much more applied than to say, "I'm going to be a professor" at that point. I had never done any serious social scientific work before. In that first semester, I began to learn about quantitative social science and found, "This is what I like to do." I didn't have clear academic expectations. I had applied both to Penn and Stanford, and Annenberg did not offer me any money, but Stanford did. They offered me four years of fellowship. That's why I chose Stanford, even though Annenberg was, at that time, much more applied.

Looking at your CV, public health communication seems to be the topic of your life. Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to that topic?
Actually, that's not really true. My earliest work was on national development. An important intellectual source was Karl Deutsch and his work on the spread of technology. After my first year at Stanford, Schramm had a project in El Salvador. The U.S. Agency for International Development had asked him to evaluate a program that used instructional television to teach middle school there. I had developed some statistical skills at that time and spent a lot of time analyzing the data coming from that project. By my third year as a graduate student, I went out to be the field director of that project. I spent a year-and-a-half in El Salvador and also ended up doing my dissertation in El Salvador on media effects on development. At that point, I had done nothing on health. After graduating, I taught at Stanford for another five years and did some work on schooling, on agriculture, and on nutrition, but not from a health perspective. I didn't do health-related work until I came to Penn. The international development community was beginning to focus on health issues, and colleagues in Washington, DC, offered opportunities to focus on health-related mass media projects in developing countries.

Back to Table of Contents

So there is a link between your interests in development and health.

Yes. I viewed it myself as doing development work, and continued working on health and development and communication for a long time. But at some point, I stopped working in the developing country context and started in the U.S. because people were asking me about the relevance of the developing country experience to health projects in the U.S. I first worked on a vaccination program in North Philadelphia, having just completed an evaluation of a vaccination campaign in the Philippines. Then I moved on to other U.S.-based work, including the evaluation of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign—which I worked on for six or seven years—and on an evaluation of an anti-domestic violence program. So I ended up becoming a health person, even though that wasn't how I framed myself until 10 years into doing it.

You named two aims of campaign evaluations: to improve interventions, and conducting theoretical knowledge (Hornik & Yanovitsky, 2003, p. 204). Which is more important to you*?*

I do both, and I like doing both. People pay me to do the first. I have always taken advantage of that to do the second, as well. I have very applied interests, but I don't view them as separate from my theoretic interests. I couldn't have stayed at Penn unless I had conceptual interests, and I wouldn't have been happy if I wasn't doing applied stuff. I always liked to figure out how things have effects. In the last years, my focus has moved from campaigns to a complementary interest in the effects of routine media exposure. People have lots of exposure to information on health. How does that affect their behavior? So I really do theoretical work on an applied problem.

How do you explain the major position of health in our discipline?

Money? I don't want to be crass here, but people have a set of interests. I'm interested in how media influence people's behavior. At various times, there was funding available from particular sources. Some sources I worked well with; I was never successful doing research in agriculture. I just didn't understand it. I never milked a cow. In health, I was much more comfortable because a lot of the people I knew worked in that area. It was also satisfying because I was working with concrete outcomes: "Are people better off now than they were before?" I did a lot of work on child survival in developing countries. You just hoped that the babies would live a little longer than if you hadn't done it.

Do you like the role of a government advisor?

Sometimes, yes; sometimes, no. Most of the time, when I have been involved in those projects, people have been genuinely concerned about trying to make the world a better place, including people in the government I was working with. Obviously, you work within the constraints of what governments are willing to do. The most difficult one was the anti-drug project. When I started working on it, I thought it was much better to spend the money on education than on interdiction or on criminal conviction. Education allows people to make better decisions than they might make otherwise. But then I got deeply involved in the politics of the campaign. Do you know about that campaign?

Yes, I do.

It was really big. They spent a billion dollars or more on it, and close to $40 million on the evaluation. So it was serious work and the largest single research project that has been done in this area. As you may

Back to Table of Contents

know, the results say basically it didn't work. If anything, it had boomerang effects. The more kids were exposed to this campaign, the more interested they were in drugs. We were set up as independent evaluators and had a completely clean design. It was the best we could do. They agreed to it beforehand, but there were important people, particularly the so-called Drug Czar, that were extremely unhappy with the results. So there was an ongoing conflict. Eventually, I resigned from that project because they were trying to control the questions I had asked. The people who stayed returned to those questions, and in the end, the results were the same.

Do you have any explanation for that?

I really did think it was going to work. Historically, I thought that many projects had not worked because they didn't spend enough money on exposure. Nobody actually saw the messages. This time, they spent a lot of money on it, and it still didn't work. This project helped me realize that exposure is not the only answer; clearly something else was going on. We think there was an implicit meta-message. The more adolescents saw these ads, the more they thought peers were using drugs. Why else would the ads be there if there was not a big problem? So why was the government so reluctant to act on the basis of these results? I still would argue that those people wanted to reduce drug use, but given their roles, they also had to defend a program that they put a lot of money into. Government agencies often think they want to evaluate things, but I suspect they often really don't, or at least they are not ready to act on problematic findings. They think what they are doing is going to be good.

Is there any evidence that people in charge use your knowledge on campaigns?

Yes, but I don't believe that any government agency ought to look to the results of a particular evaluation as the basis for action. No single result is so convincing to justify shutting down a program. Any study can easily be wrong, but over time, the field builds up evidence. In the work on communication and child survival, we looked at 16 different projects in 10 different countries over seven or eight years. In the end, we were able to say that they worked about half the time, and here is why we think they do. My hope is that such evidence affects the people who think about communication and development. Our research is one piece of the environment that policymakers should take into account.

As a professor, does it matter working at an Ivy League university?

Yes. I am able to resign from a project, and my salary is still paid. The issue here is not so much Ivy League, but the university position. If I don't have one opportunity, I can have a different opportunity. My students are not dependent on my keeping a particular funding source happy (in the way that staff at a research agency might be); they are still getting trained. Because I'm an academic, I have the luxury of addressing a long-term perspective. Editing the *Public Health Communication* book (Hornik, 2002), my goal was to put together all the studies I could locate which showed a behavioral effect. That stuff was all over the literature, but not in one place. So I organized a conference and invited all the people that had evidence for behavioral outcomes of media health campaigns. I put the book together really as an argument. I wanted to say, "Listen, we have evidence. So let's figure out how to do this better."

Back to Table of Contents

Why did you name your chair after your adviser?

He was a very complicated man with strengths and weaknesses, but he was extraordinarily accomplished both as an institution builder and a productive scholar, and he did many things for me, including driving me toward applied and real problems, and not just toward theory.

Who is Robert Hornik: a scholar, a teacher, a research manager, or a politician who works with scientific methods? Which is the most important part of your academic life?

Teaching and research are the crucial things. I spend most of my time training the next generation of scholars. I would like to see them going off and doing this stuff better than I do. Clearly, a lot of my own identity is in my research. To do that, I often become a research manager, but if I end up doing too much management and too little research, I stop. I need to do long-term research, and to have long-term funding.

Reading ICA's presidential addresses, one gets an ambivalent picture of our research field. What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

I won't even try. I have not written any presidential addresses.

How is the reputation of the discipline in the United States?

It varies tremendously. We have a huge number of places where you can study communication. If people go to small colleges or teaching universities, teaching is the thing they are doing. Many of these places grew out of professional training programs. Lots of departments had that struggle between people who were primarily researchers and service people. We have never had that problem, at least [not] since I have been here. Early on, this was a master's program and had a lot of professional training in it, but that went away when George Gerbner became the dean. It became a theory and research place almost entirely. Obviously, some people spend a lot more energy on the undergraduate teaching than others, but there is clearly a very high expectation of research here.

What about the respect from old established disciplines?

We are fine. The provost of the University of Pennsylvania is Vincent Price, whose primary academic appointment was in Annenberg. Partly, he is in that position because he works well with the president, who is a political philosopher, but I have not heard anyone say to him, "Oh, you are just a communication researcher. You don't count." I was the Chair of the Faculty Senate and probably the third person from this tiny school who did that. In all my projects, I'm working closely with people across the campus. Sometimes people don't know what we do and ask, "Can you make this brochure for me?'" but my experience at Penn is that we haven't had that problem.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

I'm really quite unsure. Three things obviously are going on. One is the pressure toward multidisciplinary work. People are working across disciplines much more than ever before, and the university is encouraging that as best as they can. I think that will only grow. Penn is really designed to encourage staying in your silo. Each school is a budgetary unit. It has to worry about its income, investments, and expenses. That could drive faculty to stay home, but it doesn't happen. For whatever reason, Penn is a

Back to Table of Contents

place where people do collaborate across intellectual and disciplinary boundaries a great deal. That will be the model, and people will find it necessary to do that.

That is the first point.

The second is not the new technology, per se, but the nature of communication is shifting in ways that are hard to understand. I'm not sure where the research on networks and linkages is going to go, but the data they generate are large and fascinating to consider. How does collective intelligence change over time, and how does this affect our behaviors? That stuff is also transforming our research technologies.

Is this already the third point?

The demands on our skills, yes. To make any sense out of an increasingly complex environment, the skills that were enough 25 years ago, or even now, will just not be adequate. I used to think of myself as a sophisticated statistical analyst. I've worked on that for a long time, but there are things I can't do any more. My concern is that people can't contribute to the frontier because they don't have those skills. I don't want to say it's all about statistics. Methodological understanding is much more important, but as we see more and more sophistication in statistical analysis, you have to be able to do that. You can't just run a cross-tab in SPSS. If our people are not getting the skills they need to compete, the interesting questions will move to other departments.

Are there any scientists whom you would call a role model?

Yes, but I'm not prepared for the question. I don't want to leave people out.

Looking back on 40 years of communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

Students. Seeing my students do well in the world, both to be happy, but also professionally successful. They cross a range of roles. Some are in government, some in research institutions, and many in academia. Taking pleasure out of what they do is the single biggest point of pride. The second is certainly the research we have done over time.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

Learn all of those techniques I have failed to learn? I am who I am. Is there a particular awful decision? No, there isn't. Are there many mistakes I made along the way? Sure there are, but nothing which says I took a wrong turn and I'm really sorry I took it.

What will remain when Robert Hornik is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

My students. I put a lot of energy into providing opportunities for them. That's the thing.

References

Hornik, R. C. (2002). *Public health communication: Evidence for behavior change*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Hornik, R. C., & Yanovitzky, I. (2003). Using theory to design evaluations of communication campaigns: The case of the national youth anti-drug media campaign. *Communication Theory, 13*, 204–224.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1661–1668 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

YOUICHI ITO

"I'll praise de-Westernization as a result, but it cannot be my goal."

Youichi Ito, May 29, 2011.
Boston, MA. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1942 in Odawara City, Japan
Education:	1964 B.A., Keio University
	1970 M.S., Boston University
	1978 M.A., Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy
Career:	1973 Assistant Professor at Keio
	1980 Founding Editor, *Keio Communication Review*
	1986 Full Professor
	1988–1996 IAMCR Board member
	1997–2000 ICA Board member-at-large
	2007 Retirement
	2008 Professor, Akita International University
	2009 ICA Fellow
Personal:	Married, one daughter

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Youichi Ito

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?
I grew up in the suburbs of Yokohama. My father was a surgeon and the president of the city hospital. So you could say I came from an upper-middle class family.

What did your mother do?
She was a housewife. At that time, most women were housewives. I have a younger brother and a sister. When I was a child, I dreamt of many things. I was studying the piano and thought of being a composer. When I was a graduate student, I took private lessons from a professional composer. In the fourth year of my undergraduate program, I was playing Grieg's piano concerto.

It sounds complicated.
Although most of the orchestra members were amateurs, the conductor was a famous pro. I practiced four or five hours a day during the last year of university. When I graduated, I had no idea what I wanted to be. I joined the public broadcasting network NHK, thinking there was a variety of possibilities, including working in the music field. However, I gradually realized that I should concentrate on something specific instead of dabbling in so many different areas and decided to study abroad. I know that such a choice was not possible for every Japanese youth at that time. However, my father was a powerful sponsor. I must admit that I was lucky in that sense.

You went to Boston University.
Yes I did, but I still had my position at NHK.

Can you tell me something about your main academic teachers?
I have never been an orthodox student or orthodox researcher. I was not the kind of person who would learn from great teachers and transmit their thoughts or theories to the next generation, or learn in the West and introduce new Western theory to Japan. I have always wanted to do something that other people did not do. Specifically, I wanted to introduce Japanese ideas to the West. To my surprise, quite a few famous scholars understood me and encouraged my efforts in this direction. I would consider them as my teachers. Alex Edelstein, Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, Everett Rogers, William Gudykunst, Ithiel de Sola Pool, Steven Chaffee, Jim Anderson, Karl Erik Rosengren, Cleveland Wilhoit, David Paletz, and Denis McQuail are examples.

I was surprised to learn that you don't have a PhD.
In the 1960s or 1970s in Japan, many of my colleagues were hired as full-time faculty and even given tenure without it. However, the old Japanese system gradually "Americanized." When my promotion to full professorship was considered at Keio University in 1986, the lack of a PhD naturally became an issue at the promotion committee. At that time, however, as I continued to publish more than five papers every year, and more than half of them were in English, the promotion committee decided to promote me to a full professor.

Back to Table of Contents

You are famous for your work on kuuki, or social atmosphere (Ito, 2002, 2009). Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to that topic?

Kuuki is a rather new field. Before that, I was accepted by the academic world because I had introduced the concept of the information society. Should I tell you about this story?

Just go ahead, please.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the Japanese economy was booming, and Japan was accumulating a lot of foreign currency. It was the time when the U.S. and Europe were complaining about Japanese "trading imperialism." The government and industry were under strong pressure. That's why they made financial contributions to American universities. Alex Edelstein at Washington wanted to get a grant from the funding, but he didn't know what to do because he was not an expert in Japanese literature, culture, or history.

That's how you came in.

Alex came to me in 1976 and asked what kind of Japanese studies we could do in the field of communication. I suggested the information society. This topic was very popular in Japan at the time. Alex published the papers presented to a U.S.-Japan bilateral symposium (Edelstein et al., 1978). As far as I know, this book is the first English language book to use the term "Information Society" in its title. Then we decided to expand that to Europe and Asia. Alex had a good relationship with Hans Mathias Kepplinger in Germany and Leonard Chu in Hong Kong. Before Kepplinger left for our symposium at Keio University in 1980, he said something to the effect that there would be nothing to learn from Japan. Then he was excited about the concept of information society. Later, he invited me to give a lecture to his class at Mainz. I was also invited by Michael Schenk at Hohenheim and contributed a chapter to his book (Ito, 1989).

So, the relationship with Germany was the route to go international.

That was only one of the routes. I also published an article about the information society study in a Japanese English language journal. It was reprinted in the *Mass Communication Review Yearbook* (Ito, 1981), and then widely quoted in other prestigious books. That was my debut onto the international stage.

What about kuuki?

Probably because of the success of the information society research, several journal editors and conference organizers outside Japan came to think that there might be some other unique ideas in Japan. For example, *Media, Culture, and Society* asked me to be an editor of the issue featuring the "Japanese communication research." In my article in this issue, I introduced the idea of *kuuki* (air, climate, or atmosphere), which our interpersonal communication experts had emphasized as something peculiar to Japan (Ito, 1990). One Western scholar who was interested in this idea was Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann.

It is not so far from her ideas "Climate of Opinion" and "Spiral of Silence" (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, 1993).

That's right, yes. In the Japanese edition of her *Spiral of Silence* book, there is a long prefix about it, almost a chapter. In the 1990s, William Gudykunst, Philip Gaunt, and David Paletz invited me as a

Back to Table of Contents

speaker or a book contributor. By then, I had developed a method for quantifying *kuuki* on the macro level using content analysis of newspapers. Nevertheless, the idea of *kuuki* continued to be ignored by the majority of researchers.

How did it change?

I think the crucial point was the adoption in the fifth edition of the *Dictionary of Media and Communication Studies* (Watson & Hill, 2000) and publication in the *Communication Yearbook, 26*. *Kuuki* was also included in the *Encyclopaedia of Communication Theory* (Ito, 2009). Recently, I was asked by Wolfgang Donsbach to write a chapter to be published in 2013. It's for a book to commemorate Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. Donsbach suggested that my title should be "Kuuki Theory and The Spiral of Silence."

Why did you start an English language journal in Japan?

At that time, there was only one English language journal in the field of communication, *Studies of Broadcasting*, published by the research institute of NHK. That journal was not really academic. It carried a lot of survey results, but no theoretical discussions. I thought that English language articles with some theoretical perspectives should be published in Japan. As the Japanese are not always good at English, their papers tend to be rejected by international journals because of the poor English. One day, I happened to talk with an engineer friend. He emphasized how important it is to publish the basic idea in English, regardless of how poor the English might be. Original ideas published in Japanese (especially with an English summary) are likely to be stolen, and you cannot get any credit.

You are one of the few Asian scholars in the leadership of ICA and IAMCR. Was Japan too small for Youichi Ito?

Oh, no. The number of English language articles and the many close human relationships I had formed helped me to be nominated and elected to these positions. When I was younger, 60% to 70% of my work was published in English, which may not be so rare in smaller countries, such as Singapore and Hong Kong, but was very rare in Japan.

Could you name the main goal of all your activities abroad?

I don't think that I have had any particular goal. As a result, however, I suspect that my activities have contributed to the diversification of communication (Edelstein et al., 1989). Theorists tend to simplify the world by dichotomization, such as the West versus the non-West, and so on. However, Japanese intellectuals have often felt uncomfortable with these classifications, because in many cases, Japan was either an exception or had both characteristics. For example, when developing countries demanded a new world order, many Japanese intellectuals thought, "Wow, that's what we used to demand in the 1930s to expand our territory!" When some Western scholars criticized "Western cultural imperialism in Asia," Japanese cultural imperialism was attacked by the Koreans, Taiwanese, and Southeast Asians. I am sure that Russia and China will have or already have this kind of problem.

Do your colleagues in Japan recognize your activities?

Some do, yes, and it may be one of the reasons for my being elected as the president of the Japan Society of Information and Communication Research. However, another reason that strengthened my position in Japan was the interest of government agencies. My English ability was highly appreciated by

Back to Table of Contents

some officials. At one point, I was asked by the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications to chair a symposium held at the International Telecommunications Union. During the 1990s, I worked as a key member of the Foreign Ministry's project to give "intellectual aid" to Eastern Europe. As Japan paid huge amount of money to international organizations, many positions were allocated to Japan, but Japan did not have enough human resources to fill such roles. However, English is certainly a barrier, and the Japanese market is large enough. That's why the scholars tend to be satisfied with their domestic activities. It's a similar sort of thing in France and Italy.

It's also true for Germany.

Is it really? I see many more Germans at international conferences than Frenchmen or Italians. In Japan, people like me are called cosmopolitan—international dilettantes or something like that. It's intended to be a little bit sarcastic or slightly derogatory.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?

I was happy. I tried to make ICA a little bit more international. The association is still very American. One thing I did was to bring regional representations to the board.

You did serve not only for ICA, but also for IAMCR and IPSA. If you had to choose, which of those associations would be your favorite?

ICA is most familiar to me. I like the atmosphere at the conferences, and I have many friends here. My approach is basically empirical. In that sense, ICA suits me better than IAMCR. IPSA is more concerned with political science than communication.

Who is Youichi Ito: a researcher, a teacher, the Japanese ambassador to international associations? What is the most important part of your academic life?

I enjoy research most. Throughout my life, I have never been the type of person who was driven toward a goal. I have been rather passive, which I am sure has caused my weaknesses, as well as my strengths. I have been a very lucky man in the sense that I have always been in demand to do something by many people, including those in international academic associations and Japanese government agencies.

How is the reputation of our discipline in Japan?

The disciplines with longer histories, such as economics, sociology, psychology, and political science, are more prestigious than the disciplines with shorter histories, such as communication. In my view, however, the situation has changed for the better in recent years. If you read contemporary books written by famous sociologists, such as Luhmann, Habermas, and Giddens, you will realize that communication occupies a larger share of their attention than before and is playing an important role in their theories. The same is true in political science and social psychology. Thirty or 40 years ago, it was said that communication was only a "subject area" to which other theories were to be applied. Nowadays, however, we see many cases in which political or sociological phenomena are explained by theories developed by communication scientists. Diffusion, agenda-setting, and the spiral of silence are examples of this. If these cases increase, the reputation of our discipline will further improve.

Back to Table of Contents

Where do you see our field in 2030?

I'm very optimistic. There are two reasons for this. One is globalization, and the other is the remarkable development of information and communication technologies in recent years. It seems that every five or six years, new communication services appear, which are having an impact on society, politics, and culture. In other words, there are numerous new fields in which we can work. There is a joke in Japan. When people got angry at somebody, they used to say, "Let's go outside (to fight)." Nowadays, however, they say, "Let's go on the Web!"

Are there any scholars whom you regard as role models?

These tend to be Japanese and not necessarily scholars. I'm inspired by successful Japanese who are well accepted in the world. These are models who demonstrate what we should do in a world dominated by Europeans and Americans. Successful sportsmen or artists set a model not only for us Japanese, but for all Asians.

Could you please name some of those?

Among scholars, Nitobe Inazo, who published *Bushido* (samurai spirit or Japanese chivalry) in English as early as the late 19th century and gave some insight to the American political leadership. It is said that one of the motivations of Theodore Roosevelt's initiative to mediate the 1905 Russo-Japanese War in Japan's favor was the influence of that book. More recent examples are Doi Takeo and Kimura Bin, both psychiatrists who published extensively in English.

And outside the academy?

In the field of music, it is the composer Takemitsu Toru. Others are the film director Kurosawa Akira, the baseball player Suzuki Ichiro and the architect Ando Tadao. These people made me think how non-Westerners can be successful in the West, which is almost the same as in the world, at least at present. When I said so in my special lecture at ICA in Singapore, a person form West Asia came up and said that he was working to "de-Westernize communication research" and asked for my comment.

What did you answer?

Well, I repeated the names of those successful Japanese just mentioned, and said that none of them started their work with the conscious effort of de-Westernization. On the other hand, there was a time when Japanese scholars and artists tried to "Japanize" everything. Such efforts were made in the 1930s under the strong influence of Zeitgeist or nationalism that was around at that time. These efforts, however, failed miserably. The idea of intentional de-Westernization may be similar to socialist realism or Nazi art. The reason seems obvious. If you start your work with the intention of de-Westernization, you will ignore the achievements made in the West. Therefore, the results tend to be second-rate by the world standard. So, I would say, I'll praise de-Westernization as a result, but it cannot be my goal.

Looking back on your academic career, is there anything you are especially proud of?

I'm proud that we have more than 1,000 communication researchers in Japan now, and that I'm one of the best known outside the country.

Back to Table of Contents

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

As I already said, I was not the type of person who sets a goal first and consistently pursues it throughout the life. Since when I was young, I have been busy responding to many requests coming from other people, including international academic associations, journals, and government agencies. My English ability was a major reason for it. Although these activities brought to me various practical benefits, which I certainly enjoyed, now I sometimes regret that some of the work I did was a waste of time.

What will remain when Youichi Ito is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

For Japanese scholars, I'm setting an example of how to become successful in the international community. What Japanese social scientists have been doing was just translating Western ideas or applying Western theories to our situation. Although there have been many good ideas like information society or *kuuki*, they have not tried to make them acceptable to Western scholars. I did. I hope that younger people will learn from that.

Back to Table of Contents

References

Edelstein, A. S., Bowes, J. E., & Hassel, S. M (Eds.) (1978). *Information societies: Comparing the Japanese and American experiences.* Seattle, WA: International Communication Center.

Edelstein, A. S.., Ito, Y., & Kepplinger, H. M. (1989). *Communication and culture: A comparative approach*. New York: Longman.

Ito, Y. (1981). The johoko shakai approach to the study of communication in Japan. In G. C. Wilhoit & H. de Bock (Eds.), *Mass communication review yearbook 2* (pp. 671–698). Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications.

Ito, Y. (1996). Masses and mass media influence on government decision making. In D. L. Paletz (Ed.), *Political communication research*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Ito, Y. (1989). Information society studies today. In M. Schenk & J. Donnerstag (Eds.), *Medienökonomie* (pp. 13–34). Munich: R. Fischer.

Ito, Y. (1990). Mass communication theories from a Japanese perspective. *Media, Culture, & Society*, *12*, 423–464.

Ito, Y. (1993). The future of political communication research: A Japanese perspective. *Journal of Communication*, *43,* 69–79.

Ito, Y. (2002). Climate of opinion, kuuki, and democracy. *Communication Yearbook*, *26*, 267–296.

Ito, Y. (2009). Japanese kuuki theory. In S. W. Littlejohn & K. A. Foss (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of communication theory* (pp. 573–574). Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

Noelle-Neumann, E. (1974). The Spiral of Silence: A theory of public opinion. *Journal of Communication, 24,* 43–51.

Noelle-Neumann, E. (1993). *The Spiral of Silence: Public opinion – Our social skin*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Watson, J., & Hill, A. (2000). *Dictionary of media and communication studies*. London: Arnold.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1669–1675 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

KATHLEEN HALL JAMIESON

"Women should take leadership roles whenever they can."

Kathleen Hall Jamieson, May 25, 2011.
Boston, MA. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1946 in Waconia, Minnesota
Education:	1967 B.A. in rhetoric and public address, Marquette University
	1968 M.A. in communication arts, University of Wisconsin at Madison
	1972 Ph.D. in communication arts, University of Wisconsin at Madison
Career:	1971 Assistant Professor, University of Maryland
	1986 Associate and Full Professor, University of Texas at Austin
	1986 Chair of the Speech Communication Department, University of Texas
	1989 Full Professor, University of Pennsylvania
	1989 Dean, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania
	1992 Distinguished Scholar, NCA
	1995 Murray Edelman Award, APSA
	1998 ICA Fellow
Personal:	Married, two sons

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Kathleen Hall Jamieson

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?
My father ran a gas station and then worked as a trucker at the University of Minnesota. When my parents closed the gas station because they couldn't make it financially, my mom worked in an investment firm. At the age of five, I thought I would be a lady wrestler.

I guess your dreams have changed.
In high school, I thought I would be a physicist or a lawyer. I went to Marquette University on a debate scholarship. In my junior year, I visited law schools and realized that I didn't want to be a lawyer after all. So I got into academia by default. My minor in college was philosophy. I would have gone to graduate school in philosophy, but my adviser told me there were more qualified people than jobs in that field.

Were there any university graduates in your family environment?
My paternal grandfather had a law degree from the University of Michigan. He died when my father was young. My paternal grandmother was a registered nurse. So there is higher education on my father's side, but neither of my parents attended college.

Did religion play any role in your childhood?
My mother is a devout Catholic. My father was an atheist. We were raised Catholic. I went to a Catholic high school on a scholarship and to a Catholic university.

How would you compare the student Kathleen Hall with your students today?
My students today are much better prepared and more likely to be middle or upper-middle class.

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers?
In high school, a nun who was the debate coach taught me how to debate. She was getting her PhD in theology at that point. She is the reason I went to Marquette University on a scholarship. If you are competing against all the other great students from the Catholic high schools, you are not likely to be competitive for full scholarship support if you were at the top of a class of 33. She knew people, called them, and got me the debate scholarship.

What about your teachers at Marquette?
As an undergraduate, I had a remarkable philosophy professor—Francis Wade, a Jesuit. He could lay out an argument more clearly than anyone I've ever known. In grad school, my adviser was Edwin Black, whose book on the subject transformed rhetorical criticism as a field.

When did you know that you wanted to become a scholar?
I went to graduate school almost by accident and thought I'd probably get an MA. Bob and I were engaged in college and married a week after I got my MA degree. While in graduate classes at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, I realized that there were questions I wanted to answer, but that answering them required a command of a method I was just beginning to learn. I didn't consciously decide to become a scholar.

Back to Table of Contents

How did you get into political communication?

The only job in my field in the Washington area (where my husband and I moved after marrying) was at the University of Maryland. They wanted somebody to teach political communication. I was trained to be a rhetorical critic, had written a dissertation on the papal birth control encyclical, and participated in political campaigns while in school. So I argued "I have done political communication." (Additionally, the papacy is rife with it.) I grew up in Minnesota, which has a deep political culture. In graduate programs in the '60s, there wasn't really an area called political communication. So I developed courses from scratch. I wrote "Packaging the Presidency" from my class notes.

Is there any evidence that politicians use your knowledge for improving public discourse?

I founded FactCheck.org, a website that attempts to keep the discourse honest. We have anecdotal evidence that the campaign consultants pay attention to it when they are creating the ads, and that they are more likely to offer arguments that can be documented (although not necessarily with great fidelity to fact) as a result. My visual grammar for reducing the effect of ads when played in the news is used by the networks (Jamieson, 1992; Jamieson & Cappella, 1994, 1997). The greatest social effect has probably resulted from a series of books on adolescent mental health disorders that the Annenberg Public Policy Center created and distributed at no cost to those who treat adolescents. We've gotten some lovely letters from people saying that the books helped them.

How would you rate the position of political communication within our discipline?

It's still a field trying to find itself. It's not completely clear on most days exactly what it is studying outside elections. Some study power relationships, although others don't construe the field that way. In general, the field is quantitatively-based, but houses a lot of good qualitative work. So it's not necessarily methodologically distinctive. When I'm writing about presidential rhetoric (Campbell & Jamieson, 2008), I think I'm doing political communication, although some of my friends say, "No, you are doing rhetorical criticism," as if those two were mutually exclusive.

How would you rate the position of rhetorical scholars in communication?

It depends on the people you are talking to. In NCA, it's one of the stronger traditions.

Do you like the role of a university manager and decision maker?

Yes. It is satisfying when you have the needed resources. During my time at the University of Maryland, we were always struggling for funds. I headed up the communication doctoral program there for a while. Every semester we had to find money for the students. When Walter Annenberg and the faculty at Penn said they wanted me to be dean and that offer was tied to resources, I considered it an irresistible invitation.

So this is the main difference being at an institution like Penn.

It's Annenberg. The Annenberg schools at USC and Penn have been well financed. Each can fund its graduate students. When your faculty members get a competing offer, you don't even think about it. You match. You don't have the problem of not having resources.

Back to Table of Contents

Did you ever consider applying for a position outside Annenberg?

I've been offered positions outside the school, but when I accepted the Annenberg offer, Walter Annenberg ensured that I would never leave. I have a $5 million professorship and a policy center that is backed by over a $100 million in endowment and housed in a new building. It would be criminally negligent to walk away.

You named your chair after Elizabeth Ware Packard, an icon of the women's movement. Were you ever forced to think about gender questions during your academic career?

I was offered the Maryland job for the first time when I was pregnant with our first child. When I told the department chair that I would have to take some time off in order to deliver but would ensure that my classes were covered, he withdrew the offer. Two years later, they still had not filled the position. A new chair interviewed me and said they would welcome a female faculty member who planned to have additional children. As a result, I was the first pregnant woman in tenure-track in the communication area at Maryland. In subsequent years, I've been treated well. Studies suggest that a lot of women in academia are not paid what comparably talented men are, through most of my career that's not been true for me. One of the advantages of being an administrator is being able to address gender inequality in pay.

What about Elizabeth Ware Packard?

I found out about her when I was writing the book *Beyond the Double Bind: Women and Leadership* (Jamieson, 1995). She was institutionalized by her husband because she wanted to speak to God in her own right. After her friends helped her to get out, she divorced him and then worked to ensure that what happened to her couldn't happen to other women. That's a very powerful message, and why I took her name for my professorship. At the Annenberg School, we are allowed to name our own chairs.

You are one of the TV stars in the discipline. Do you like the role of a public speaker, a celebrity?

I don't consider myself a celebrity. There is a space for public intellectuals from our field. Rhetorical analysis of public speech is my niche. A growing number of scholars from our field are now recognized as public intellectuals. The question for me is: Can I say something non-obvious and insightful? But spending time on air can distract from scholarship and teaching. Early in my career, I did a weekly segment on NPR. I gave it up because preparing those three-and-a-half minutes was taking time from my own work. I try to stay off air except in election years—unless the news agenda is focused on issues that I have thought a lot about.

Where is the difference between a public intellectual and a politician?

If you don't want to be a public intellectual who is not perceived as partisan, you can't engage in political advocacy. I worked in politics until I started writing books about it. It was difficult giving up the role of political advocate. I am proud to have worked on Capitol Hil,l and to have helped craft a communication strategy to pass protection from age discrimination in employment in 1978.

How did you feel when you became an ICA fellow?

I was surprised and pleased.

Back to Table of Contents

You got awards and honors not only from NCA or ICA, but also from APSA. If you had to choose between all those associations, which one is your favorite?

The American Philosophical Society (APS). APS meets twice a year. The society is devoted to the sharing of knowledge across disciplines. I protect that time, because in those two-and-a-half days, I will hear scholars speak insightfully on topics in fields I know nothing about.

Who is Kathleen Jamieson: a researcher, a teacher, the "queen of quotes," the former Annenberg dean? What is the most important part of your academic life?

Sometimes I write things that matter a lot to me. I really wanted to write the book *Beyond the Double Bind* (Jamieson, 1995), but overall, the most important part in my professional life is teaching undergraduates. I relish the excitement they bring to learning new things. They have no sense of where the boundaries are. If I could keep only one facet of my professional life, I would keep my freshmen class.

It sounds like Doris Graber at Illinois-Chicago, who loves kids that need the teaching.

At Maryland and Texas, I was teaching first-generation college students. You can see the difference an education makes for them. Teaching well carries tangible psychological rewards.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

The discipline is critiqued for not having boundaries, but I see that as a strength. The strength of the field is its interdisciplinary and its methodological pluralism focused on the communicative act—the moment in which meaning is created by humans interacting with other humans and settings.

How is the reputation of the discipline at Penn?

The Annenberg School is a leading school there. I used to do an exercise with some of the other deans: Do you know which school on campus has the highest per capita number of members in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences? It's Annenberg. Which school has the highest per capita number of Guggenheim fellows? Which faculty has the highest per capita production of books in the last year? Annenberg is a very good school in a very good university.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

ICA has become an international organization. For a while, it was a label only. Now, the exchanges are shaping U.S. scholars' work. The British work on debates, the work in the Netherlands on elections or those people in New Zealand who are pushing methods in really important ways. By 2050, we will have internationally based theory to account for similarities and differences by nationality, geography, and so on. We are not there yet, but en route. You see it here. You can see major scholars from multiple countries talking about common problems. We should do more writing across countries. Most of our writing teams are still within country. It's hard to get cross-national funding, but some have done it, the people in journalism for example (Hanitzsch et al., 2010). It's the next natural step.

Are there any scholars whom you regard as role models?

It's hard to limit. Jay Blumler has been a major theorist who forged a U.S.-British partnership, and a U.S.-British-Israeli partnership with Elihu Katz. Elihu is one of the wonders of the world. Both see big pictures, theorize, and are generous, good people. Jay and Elihu don't live in their own bubble. They are generous

Back to Table of Contents

to young scholars. Michael Schudson is another, and Doris Graber. There aren't limits to what Doris is interested in. She is always doing something unexpected that I learn from. The field has been blessed with strong scholars who are also fine, generous teachers.

Looking back on 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

The field wasn't producing books when I first came into it. It was largely known as a field that taught people how to communicate, and it was still being confused with drama and communication disorders. Radio-Television-Film was often a separate department. We have gotten rid of the useless distinction by medium. That's a huge advance. This field has also become a book-producing field, and it became it within my lifetime. I'm proud of being part of that tradition. My adviser produced one of the first single-authored major books in the field (Black, 1965). In the 1970s and early 1980s, people started to be able to control an idea well enough to generate a book. Now, the major university presses routinely publish in communication. They didn't before. The field should be proud of that.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

The field wasted a lot of time and energy fighting about the relative merits of quantitative versus qualitative methods. Those were fruitless debates. Finally, peace was declared, but it took us too much time to get there.

What will remain when Kathleen Jamieson is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

Most people's work doesn't live after them. The piece that will have some value is probably *Packaging the Presidency*, because I interviewed people for it who were important in development of political advertising (Jamieson, 1996). I hope the Annenberg Public Policy Center will survive for decades or centuries to come. I'm proud of its work.

Back to Table of Contents

References

Black, E. (1965). *Rhetorical criticism: A study in method.* New York: McMillan.

Campbell, K. K., & Jamieson, K. H. (2008). *Presidents creating the Presidency: Deeds done in words*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hanitzsch, T., Anikina, M., Berganza, R., Cangoz, I., Coman, M., Hamada, B., et al. (2010). Modeling perceived influences on journalism: Evidence from a cross-national survey of journalists. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 87*, 7–24.

Jamieson, K. H. (1992). *Dirty politics: Deception, distraction and democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Jamieson, K. H. (1995). *Beyond the double bind: Women and leadership*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Jamieson, K. H. (1996). *Packaging the presidency: A history and criticism of presidential campaign advertising.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Jamieson, K. H., & Cappella, J. N. (1994). Broadcast adwatch effects: A field experiment. *Communication Research,* 21, 342–365.

Jamieson, K. H., & Cappella, J. N. (1997). Setting the record straight: Do ad watches help or hurt? *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics, 2*, 13–22.

Nichols, M. H. (1963). *Rhetoric and criticism*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1676–1683 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

ELIHU KATZ

"My whole life is commuting."

Elihu Katz, January 21, 2011.
Philadelphia, PA. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1926 in New York City
Education:	1948 B.A Columbia College, Columbia University
	1950 M.A. Department of Sociology, Columbia University
	1956 Ph.D. Department of Sociology, Columbia University
Career:	1951 Research Associate, Bureau of Applied Social Research, Columbia
	1956 Visiting Lecturer, Dept. of Sociology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
	1955–1968 Professor at the University of Chicago
	1963–1993 Professor of Sociology and Communication, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
	1968/1969 Founding Director of Israel Television
	1978 Distinguished Visiting Professor, USC Annenberg School of Communication
	1989 Israel Prize for Social Sciences
	1991 ICA Fellow
	1993 Trustee Professor, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania
	1993 Emeritus Professor of Sociology and Communications, Hebrew University
	1999 Research Fellow, Guttman Center, Israel Democracy Institute
	2005 Marshall Sklare Award

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Elihu Katz

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

My parents were immigrants from Eastern Europe. They came very early, at age five or six, and were educated in New York schools. They spoke Yiddish with their parents and sent my brother and me to a bilingual elementary school. Half English, half Hebrew. It was an excellent school, with two Nobel Prize winners so far. In 1944, I began at Columbia University and was then drafted into the U.S. army. I was a Japanese interpreter. I returned to Columbia after the war and finished BA, MA, and PhD. What else do you want to know?

What did your parents do for a living?

My father was in business. He was a chief sales-marketing person. His company sold woolen cloth to tailors and manufacturers.

What about your mother?

She was a secretary for a while. Then she stopped working and was basically a middle-class housewife, very active in philanthropic organizations, mostly Jewish.

Do you still remember why you chose to study sociology at Columbia?

First, I didn't know what I wanted to study. I entered a general liberal arts program. I think, for a long time, I wanted to be a manager of a circus. Then, I thought maybe to be a journalist. When I began to look for courses in mass communication or public opinion, I found they were in sociology more than in journalism. I realized that I enjoyed the sociology of communication, and I was encouraged by my teachers: Paul Lazarsfeld, Robert Merton, Robert Lynd, Martin Lipset, and Herbert Hyman.

All the famous colleagues.

Teachers, teachers.

How would you compare the student Elihu Katz with your students today?

I was too much of a student. I used to commute from my parents' home in Brooklyn by subway and was not active in students' lives. I was studying and took it all seriously, I guess.

How did you get the position in Lazarsfeld's Bureau?

I don't know exactly how it happened. Lazarsfeld used to teach what he was working on, so you had a share in what he was doing. If he had contracts for projects, he would invite you to join. That was one thing.

And the other one?

The other thing is more interesting. When I began work on my master's degree in 1948 or 1949, I had the good luck of being a student of Leo Löwenthal. He was a guest of Columbia, partly because the university had offered assistance to the Frankfurt School (Jay, 1973; Wheatland, 2009). Löwenthal had an agenda. He wanted to prepare himself for a job as research director of the *Voice of America*.

Back to Table of Contents

Strange for a member of the Frankfurt School.
It was during the Cold War. This made it okay to be on the side of the United States. Löwenthal wanted all the students in his class to work on radio fan mail.

***In anticipation of this means of feedback to the* Voice of America.**
Yes. But my fan mail was totally different. It was a commercial program run by a popular "philosopher" who gave his listeners, mostly housewives, projects. For example, they had to tell him what their happiest day in 1949 was. So I analyzed American conceptions of happiness as reflected in these fan letters. Thousands of them.

A good source.
Recently, Paddy Scannell discovered this thesis. It was never published. Scannell decided to organize an ICA session on this thesis of 1950 at the Boston conference.

That is funny. Was this your way into Lazarsfeld's Bureau?
That's how I gradually got more and more involved in research. I moved in the Bureau as a regular member and was there until I finished my dissertation, which, again, was to work on a Lazarsfeld project, which we published in the end together (Lazarsfeld & Katz, 1955).

In common academic careers, a book like* Personal Influence *comes at the very end. What did it feel like to be not even 30 years old and almost be done with your work?
This was a different story. It was based on an empirical study that was conducted just after the war, before I joined the Bureau. When I came in, Lazarsfeld had already worked with four or five doctoral students who tried to organize and analyze the findings. The client who paid was the publisher McFadden, who wanted to show that the idea of opinion leaders applied also to his lower-middle class readers.

How did you come in?
Lazarsfeld was never satisfied that it was coherent enough. So he asked me to try my hand. I said what needs to be done is to marry small group with mass communication research. To look at interpersonal networks in the context of mass communication was a paradox at that time, because these fields were so disconnected.

Did Lazarsfeld like this idea?
Yes. This became my PhD dissertation. It's a very different story than publishing your major work at age 85.

How would you describe the relationship between you and Paul Lazarsfeld?
Easy. Good humor. Half the meetings with him were in taxis either going to or coming from the airport. He was always [going] somewhere, very dynamic, smoking cigars, being almost a typical American. Do you know the joke at Columbia?

Back to Table of Contents

No.

Lazarsfeld was a European trying to be an American, and Robert Merton was an American trying to be a European.

In which fields did you copy your main academic teacher, and where did you differ from him?

I think I'm still copying him. I feel very close to his legacy in the field of mass communication. It's only a part of him. For example, he had quantitative methodological interests, which I don't consider myself to be an expert in. I do it, but there were other followers like James Coleman who did it much better. I learned a lot from Lazarsfeld just by being at his side. Whereas from Merton, you learned by listening.

Why did you take the job as an assistant professor at Chicago in 1955?

Three or four of my colleagues at Columbia went from New York to Chicago and imported the Columbia virus to the Chicago School of Sociology.

Was this a good mix?

No. The Chicago school came from a much more ethnographic tradition. The people there were much more macroscopic. The Columbia imports were much more based on quantitative work, on survey research, and on more individualistic units of analysis. Anyway, I was at Chicago on and off from 1955 to 1969.

Did you then have appointments in both Chicago and in Jerusalem for a while?

In Jerusalem first as a guest. In 1963, my family and I moved to Israel, and I began to commute.

Was there anything like communication research when you arrived?

Not really. In a way, Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt did it, the founder of the Jerusalem Department of Sociology. He was interested in American developments like reference group theory. He was also interested in media for a while, but he didn't know what to do with it.

How did your colleagues at Chicago react when you left the U.S. and started a career in Israel?

I guess they didn't like it. They certainly didn't like that I took off two years in both places to be the founding director of national television in Israel.

Why would a professor work for a government?

It was to establish television. It's true that the government commissioned it. The broadcasting authority law from 1965 established a BBC-like public broadcasting system, which did not cover television. Radio only. That's one thing. The second: There was a great fear of television.

Fear of television?

For 10 years, they debated. Was television worth doing? Is it good for nation-building? What about materialism? What about religion? What about culture? Television was feared, because they imagined it as imported American programs.

Back to Table of Contents

In the end, television came to the people of the book, too (Katz, 1971).

After the Six-Day War, it was decided that Israel had to have television, because all the Arab states had it. As a result of the war, there were one million occupied people whom the government thought could be talked to nicely by TV. I was not totally leaving academia for that period. We did some research, which allowed us, 20 years later, to look at some long-run effects. Even though you think that working on television would be unacademic, in fact, it changed my academic life.

In which way?

When I returned to university, I found that I was more of a sociologist than a social psychologist. At the beginning, I was more like Lazarsfeld, but after having been on the production side, I realized that I was more interested in the institution and in the medium than in the content or in opinions and attitudes.

Some of the most famous scholars in the field were supported and even produced by Elihu Katz.

I hope it's true. But I don't know. They start out young and produce themselves.

Is there anyone you are especially proud of?

A lot of people. Some in Israel. Tamar Liebes or Menahem Blondheim. In a way, I discovered Sonia Livingstone. There is a guy in Korea whom I'm proud of, too. Joohan Kim.

Some people are really glad to become 65 or 67 and finally to retire. Could you name, please, the stimulus that keeps you going?

I enjoy it, as you see. I'll come back to this question, but first I should talk about commuting.

Yes, please.

It's not just Chicago and Jerusalem. My whole life is really commuting. I commuted first between New York and Chicago because my wife was finishing her dissertation. Now, she is a professor of musicology in Jerusalem. After Jerusalem and Chicago, I had an invitation to consult for the BBC, which I did for a few years (Katz, 1977). Then George Wedell and I got a grant to study the introduction of television in the Third World (Katz & Wedell, 1977).

Based on your experience in Israel.

Yes. And on his experience in England. Wedell was professor of adult education at the University of Manchester. This led to the study with Tamar Liebes about the diffusion of *Dallas* (Katz & Liebes, 1990), and to my biggest collaboration with Daniel Dayan.

The book on media events (Katz & Dayan, 1992).

That's really a great book. We have translations in eight languages. But I put this into my answer to your question [about] what do you do after age 68. When I was about to retire in Jerusalem, it seemed very early. I was involved in all these projects.

Back to Table of Contents

How did you solve this problem?
Kathleen Jamieson said, "Why don't you come to Philadelphia?" She was the dean here. There is no retirement age in the United States. We made a deal. I commute to Philadelphia for a semester-and-a-half. From March 1 to September 1, I'm with my family in Israel. Why stop? It seems okay to me.

Who is Elihu Katz: a researcher, the founding father of communication in Israel, the sociologist who became a communication scholar, the promoter of Lazarsfeld's ideas, the inventor of the uses and gratifications approach?
All of those.

What is the most important part of your academic life?
Teaching, research. The academic part, which connects with Lazarsfeld's legacy. Of course, I established the department in Jerusalem, but I wouldn't put that on the highest rank.

And what about the uses and gratifications approach?
I don't think that's the world's most important thing.

What is your definition of "communication"?
As you know, my interest spans the different media, from interpersonal communication through television and a little beyond. I'm not really so involved in the new media. I would say that communication research, in its most basic form, is about how ideas get from here to there.

Like transportation?
Like diffusion. That's the dynamic part. But there is also an institutional part. Why don't we ask what's your definition of political science? You would have to look at both its institutional aspect, like government, and at the dynamic part, which also involves public opinion or parliaments and stuff like that. The school here used to be organized around influence, which is persuasion.

Why don't you like this idea?
It's too narrow. Real influence is in the long-run. Have you seen our book on the end of television (Katz & Scannell, 2009)? Studying communication is also about an institution that has a structure and a dynamic of flow. Of all the academic disciplines, communication is most like education. Nobody likes to hear this. Education also has norms, roles, organizations, as well as information and influence. And students. A medium involves a structure: ownership and management, technology, content, and a context of reception. I think the field moves among those four things.

How is the reputation of communication here at Penn?
The Annenberg School is a graduate school. It is about research mostly. Here, our discipline has a very high status, partly, but only partly, because it's rich. It was really well-endowed by Walter Annenberg. The school has very good people. Those people have status in other disciplines as well.

Back to Table of Contents

Maybe Annenberg is an exception.
Maybe. I think most of the departments are doing pretty well now, but in the Ivy League, they don't exist. I think that's slightly snobbish, because it's as interdisciplinary as political science.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?
From the American point of view, we underestimate the activity in Europe. It began much earlier there. One of Lazarsfeld's heroes is Gabriel Tarde, who said as much about communication and public opinion as anybody since. Even today in Europe, there are many good departments. In England, Goldsmiths, Leeds or the LSE. Sonia is a big hero. France and the Scandinavian countries have some good people, too.

What about Asia?
I was just in China. They have two or three places that seemed to be okay. Hong Kong is certainly very good, and many universities in Japan also have communication.

Where do you see the field in 2030?
For the moment, it's fighting to redefine itself vis-à-vis the new media. What belongs to engineering and what belongs to computer science? I think that 20% of the people at any university are doing communication without knowing it, or without calling themselves communication researchers. It could be because they study the diffusion of a disease, for example. Communication has to renegotiate its place, especially because of the new media, where everybody is claiming some kind of credit.

Looking back on about 60 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?
I'm proud of the book on media events. There is a sequel (Katz & Liebes, 2007). Of all the publications, I would say this book with Daniel Dayan is the one.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?
As I said, I would have concentrated more on the institutional side and a little less on the social-psychology side, which is very frustrating. I don't do it, but my colleagues never give up. They are still trying to figure out how to influence people. I think that is over-emphasized. I would also have been glad to be more sophisticated in statistics. When I was at Columbia, I was doing so well that people said, "You don't have to do that." So I regret some lack of training.

Anything else?
You could ask, "am I sorry that I left the administrative side of television"?

Okay. Are you sorry?
Sometimes, the answer is "yes." That was very exiting. Very creative people, a lot of young talents running around. The television was really something crazy. Like the circus, which is what I wanted to run at the beginning.

Back to Table of Contents

What will remain when Elihu Katz is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
Everything will be the same.

References

Jay, M. (1973). *The dialectical imagination: A history of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923–1950*. Boston: Little Brown.

Katz, E. (1971). Television comes to the people of the book. In I. L. Horowitz (Ed.), *The use and abuse of social science* (pp. 249–272). New Brunswick: Transaction Books.

Katz, E. (1977). *Social research on broadcasting: Proposals for further development*. London: BBC.

Katz, E., & Feldman, J. (1962). The debates in light of research: A survey of surveys. In S. Kraus (Ed.), *The great debates: Kennedy vs. Nixon, 1960* (pp. 173–223). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Katz, E., & Wedell, G. E. (1977). *Broadcasting in the Third World: Promise and performance*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Katz, E., & Dayan, D. (1992). *Media events: The live broadcasting of history*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Katz, E., & Liebes, T. (1990). *The export of meaning: Cross-cultural readings of* Dallas. New York: Oxford University Press.

Katz, E., & Liebes, T. (2007). "No more peace!": How disaster, terror and war have upstaged media events. *International Journal of Communication*, *1*, 157–166.

Katz, E., & Scannell, P. (Eds.). (2009). On the end of television. Its impact on the world (so far). *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Special Volume.

Lazarsfeld, P. F., & Katz, E. (1955). *Personal influence: The part played by people in the flow of mass communications. A report of the Bureau of Applied Social Research, Columbia University*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Wheatland, T. (2009). *The Frankfurt School in exile*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1684–1690 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

YOUNG KIM

"My mission is to integrate."

Young Kim, March 31, 2011.
University of Oklahoma, Norman. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1948 in Seoul, South Korea
Education:	B.A. in English literature, Seoul National University
	M.A. in speech communication, University of Hawaii
	1976 Ph.D., Northwestern University
Career:	1977 Assistant Professor at Governors State University in Illinois
	1989 Professor, University of Oklahoma, Norman
	2002 ICA Fellow

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Young Kim

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

I was the youngest of eight children. My mother was a homemaker and my father was a banker. At that time, Korea was a very traditional society and not highly Westernized, but my father was very progressive. He always emphasized I should dream big. He was an important factor in my life. All of my siblings are college-educated. One of my brothers went to a medical school, first in Korea and then in the United States. He became a doctor and is at Johns Hopkins now. When I was growing up, this brother was my role model and an inspiration. My sisters were more typical Korean women. When you graduate from college, you marry and stay home. I was always good in school for some reason. I got awards and so on. When you get rewarded like this, then you shape your ideas of the future in a different way. I always wanted to be an academic.

Do you still remember why you chose to study at Seoul National University?

This was, and still is, the biggest and the best university in Korea. To get in there was pretty hard. There was an entrance exam, and I was successful. I started out in English literature. My brother thought that I should go to medical school, but I didn't like the blood [laughing]. Maybe I was thinking about going to the U.S. in my subconscious. Looking back, it seems that way.

Was there any connection to communication or to the media?

As I was approaching graduation, a brand-new TV station hired producers, editors, and trainees. I applied, got it, and worked there for one-and-a-half years. I was producing documentary films. About a year into that job, I heard, by chance, of the East-West Center scholarship for a master's program in Hawaii. They sponsor graduate students from a variety of Pacific-Rim countries, including the United States. It was like the United Nations of students. I had only about a week to prepare the exam, but somehow I was successful in getting the scholarship.

That's why you graduated at Hawaii.

I did my degree in the Speech Communication Department of the University and was sponsored by the East-West Communication Institute, which was right next to the campus. The East-West Center has multiple institutes, including the Communication Institute. At that time, we had Wilbur Schramm, Daniel Lerner, and other excellent visiting scholars who gave lectures or seminars.

Did you benefit from your professional experience in the TV station?

I guess it influenced the topic of my master's thesis. It was a case study about *Voice of America* broadcasts on Lieutenant Calley to Southeast Asia.[6] I did a content analysis, as well as audience research. However, toward the end of the program, my understanding of communication broadened to include other kinds of issues and more theoretical aspects. My professors encouraged me to go on for a PhD. I applied to Syracuse and Northwestern. Both of them offered assistantships. I visited both and fell in love with Northwestern.

[6] Lt. William Calley was involved in the My Lai Massacre on March 16, 1968, during the Vietnam War, and was ultimately found guilty of murder.

Back to Table of Contents

How could this happen?

It was summer, and the school was over. When I walked in the communication building, there was only the sound from a single typewriter. I had the courage to knock on Charles Berger's door. I introduced myself and he spoke to me in Korean! That's how I started. Berger was the most impressive young scholar at that time. His intelligence and his dedication to research were just amazing.

Who were your other main academic teachers?

He was the main one. Even as a graduate student, I was always interested in an interdisciplinary approach. I took great courses from Donald Campbell in social psychology. At that time, he was teaching attitude measurements and scale development. Campbell wrote a recommendation letter for me. He got to know me. In cultural anthropology, I took a course on proxemics from Edward T. Hall. In sociology, there were also a couple of distinguished professors.

What about communication itself?

What I was interested in doing was so interdisciplinary that I didn't really take advantage of other great professors there.

Could you please compare the student Young Kim with your students today?

There has been some cultural and generational change over the years. Today, professors are expected to help the students. You have to know their needs and their weaknesses. When I was young, there was none of those. Professors had their expectations, and it was our job to meet them. They didn't have to come down to me and help me up. Today, it's much more allegiant and accommodating. By and large, I feel graduate students today are somewhat less dedicated to studying than we were then.

When did you know that you wanted to become a communication scientist*?*

At Hawaii, my plan was always to go back to the TV station. I was on leave. The station had the expectation to have me back, but I loved the graduate courses. My professors were always complimenting me about how well I was doing. I realized then that my true strength was in academic work. The TV work was really hard. There was a lot of time pressure, and you had to manage a crew. I was doing okay, but I didn't have this true satisfaction I was experiencing when I was studying as a graduate student.

How did you get to Governors State University?

A friend told me that there was an opening in intercultural communication. She said I would be perfect. It was before I finished my PhD. The professor called me, and they waited for me to start teaching after graduation. At that time, I was married, and my husband had a good job in Chicago. It is funny that I never looked for a job.

What about Oklahoma?

In 1987, I got a call from the chair of this department. He asked if I could come as a visiting professor for a year. At the department, there was a Native American professor whom I knew from conferences. I decided to go for a year to do research on the adaptation of Native Americans. Oklahoma is a very unique state. There are no reservations. I came here in August 1988. In November, the department secretly

Back to Table of Contents

created a position for me as a tenured full professor and offered me the job. At that time, I was also talking with Rutgers University. So this department hurried. That's how I came here.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to interethnic and intercultural communication?

I think so. This has never been a conscious decision. I don't think that anyone really says, "This is what I'm going to do." You are exposed to different ideas, and something in you is drawn to something. I came from another culture and have gone through a difficult learning and adaptation process. I also experienced the East-West Center with all kinds of people.

On your website, you claim to work for "a more perfect union." How can a single professor fix the world?

There is no way. What I am saying was that everybody can contribute to that. Of course, if you are the U.S. president, you can do a lot more than a professor. As an academic, the best I can do is to develop persuasive theories with empirical evidence. I believe that I may have some impact not only on my students, but also on a lot of people who were trained in intercultural issues and read my research. This is what I wish to do in the remainder of my scholarly career: to make something important in terms of theorizing about interethnic communication that suggests ways to strengthen interethnic relations in societies such as the U.S.

How would you rate the academic position of intercultural scholars within communication?

It is not as powerful as mass communication, political communication, or interpersonal, but about the same as organizational; in terms of visibility, theories, and division size. I served as a chair of the intercultural division both in ICA and NCA.

Were you ever forced to think about gender questions during your academic career?

No, never. By the time I graduated, in academic contexts, those questions became almost irrelevant. I know that there are some people who believe that gender still is an issue, but I never had any kind of constraint because of my gender; not to mention that I'm not a native-born American. You can also look at the female faculty. In our department, seven of the 19 professors are women. This is a lot. Whenever we open a position, gender has never been an issue. It's always about scholarship and publications.

In Germany, most of the female professors in communication have no kids or one only.

If you are a mother, it's a challenge. I admire our female faculty members who have both sets of responsibilities. I have noticed that they have husbands who are willing to go this way. Without their help, they probably can't do it as well as they do.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?

I was just extremely honored. For me, this honor was almost as good as my books being widely read (Kim 1988, 2001). It's similar, because people think what I've done is important enough to make a difference and not trivial. Within the communication field, ICA Fellow is the highest honor.

Back to Table of Contents

You have served both for ICA and NCA, and you got awards from both associations. If you had to choose: which one is your favorite?

Even though NCA is bigger, ICA is better academically. At ICA conferences, I have more sessions I want to go to. ICA is more social sciences-orientated than NCA, and I'm a social scientist. NCA has also rhetoricians, educators, debaters, forensic people, and teachers. I also feel that NCA has become more politicized and more ideological in recent years.

Could you give me an example, please?

Last year, the conference was scheduled in a Hilton in San Francisco. There was a labor dispute between the union and the management. The conference contract had been made two years before. Suddenly, the workers were striking. That did not affect guests, but NCA almost boycotted the place. I believe that academic organizations should not act in this way. I feel very strongly about that. This was only one example. There is also a gay-lesbian group and a lot of other interest groups who tend to come to conferences and mainly talk among themselves. This appears to be more political than academic in purpose.

Who is Young Kim: a researcher, a teacher, the commuter between Asia and the U.S., the promoter of intercultural communication research? What is the most important part of your academic life?

I would say I'm a researcher. Very, very close to that is teacher. The promoter of the topic comes with the research. I hope to function also as an East-West promoter through my work, as well as through speeches or lectures. Last December, I was a keynote speaker at a conference in Shanghai. There were all these Chinese scholars. This is my way of bridging. Several universities in China invited me to give additional talks there. I also get invited by Japanese conferences and would love to do it in Korea, too. But that is not my priority. First is my work: research and teaching.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

This is a constant issue for us. Everyone who calls himself or herself a communication person has to deal with it. My preferred way is the most inclusive one. When I say communication and cross-cultural adaptation, then we are talking about all kinds of communication. From a systems perspective, communication is one of the two basic life activities. Number one is the physiological exchange of energy, air, water, and things like that. All the rest is communication with the environment in some way, whether you use language or just watch something happening. It's all communication. Sometimes we use machines like TV, and sometimes it is face-to-face. Some of our activities are more organized, some more informal, and some more purpose-driven. Communication is all about interacting with the environment.

The evolution of ICA and NCA reflects that.

The disadvantage is that we get confused. Having all these diverse interests is quite a challenge. It is hard to explain what communication is. Related to this vastness is the difficulty that we have to cohere conceptually. Let's take the example of communication competence. All the subareas have an idea about it—interpersonal, instructional, intercultural, and even mass communication. What is needed for us is somebody looking at all those different conceptions of communication competence and abstracting them

Back to Table of Contents

to a broader theoretical level. My mission is to integrate. I want to offer a big-picture theory that applies to all kinds of situations. That's the kind of theory we in communication need to strive for.

One could despair because of this.

Never. This vastness has given us opportunities to investigate what we are interested in without being bound by the orthodoxy or strict approaches that more established disciplines tend to expect. I'm so lucky to be in this field. In the entire literature, no theory of cross-cultural adaptation or inter-ethnic communication looks like mine. That's because I'm in communication. I must add that many of the ICA Fellows' works reflect the creativity and dynamic nature of the field.

What about the preconception that communication is about the training of students first and only secondly about research? How is the situation here at Oklahoma?

This university does emphasize both. The annual evaluation of faculty members gives equal weight: 40% teaching, 40% research, and 20% service.

Some of my interviewees spoke about missing respect from traditional subjects.

It's true that more established subjects do not do a good job in searching valuable literature from communication. Many of us in communication do look for literature across the board. Unfortunately, that's not the case in psychology, sociology, anthropology, or social linguistics, but this is their problem, and it shouldn't discourage us. Our job is to produce theories that are so excellent that they will have to look at us. I do believe that things are improving. I get requests for my publications from all kinds of disciplines.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?

I'm really not familiar enough to compare the centers of excellence worldwide. Outside of the U.S., Germany and England are very, very active. I'm also aware of some scholars from Japan, Australia, and New Zealand, and increasingly from places like Korea, China, and Taiwan. I believe that China is rising very fast. There is a huge interest in communication. These people are just amazing. They are so well-read about what is going on here, catching up very fast and developing their own theories. Right now, they are still behind.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

I'm pretty confident that the field as a whole will continue to flourish. I'm not quite confident about the quality of work. The field is growing and growing and needs an intellectual center. If we are going to remain as a field, we have to bring the diverse approaches to a higher level of abstraction.

Are there any scientists whom you regard as role models?

My hero is Charles Berger. I can spend hours telling you about him, not only because of all the work he has done at the highest level of social science. He dedicates himself to excellence and doesn't do this for ego, fame, or a better job. That pure motivation for excellence has been my inspiration. I just think the world of him.

Back to Table of Contents

Are there any other role models?

I should mention Brent Ruben. I met him several years after I finished my PhD, and he introduced me to general systems theory (Ruben & Kim, 1975). This is the only perspective that enables you to develop a truly integrative theory. I have never learned it from Charles Berger, who is a positivist. He is one of the most impactful people in my career. Frank Dance was also a role model because of his work. His functional theory of communication just opened my eyes (Dance & Larson, 1976). That's a big theory.

Looking back on 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

The books that I've published are my pride. How can they not be? You dedicate yourself for years. All the research, all the reading, all the thinking goes into that one book. If there is any single thing I can point out, it is the theory book (Kim, 2001).

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

I cannot imagine. You follow your heart and what you are interested in. How else can you live a life well? Looking back on not only the past 40 years, but also on the years before, it really makes sense how it has taken all these turns to reach where I am. I've been given all the opportunities that I've needed to be what I wanted to be. I'm not a very ambitious person. This is what I wanted to be. No regrets.

What will remain when Young Kim is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

I hope some of my books and some influence that I might have had on my students. Their work could be a reflection of some things that I was able to provide. Good books should last for a while. So, I'm hoping.

References

Dance, F. E., & Larson, C. E. (1976). *The functions of human communication: A theoretical approach*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Kim, Y. Y. (1988). *Communication and cross-cultural adaptation: An integrative theory*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Kim, Y. Y. (2001). *Becoming intercultural: An integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Ruben, B. D., & Kim, Y. Y. (Eds.) (1975). *General systems theory and human communication*. Rochelle Park, NJ: Hayden Book Company.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1691–1698 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

MARK KNAPP

"I always taught courses that I invented."

Mark Knapp, March 25, 2011.
University of Texas, Austin. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1938 in Kansas City, Missouri
Education:	1962 B.A. University of Kansas
	1963 M.A. in speech, University of Kansas
	1966 Ph.D. in speech, Penn State
Career:	1957–1959 army service in Germany
	1965 Assistant Professor, University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee
	1970 Purdue University
	1980 State University of New York at New Paltz
	1983 University of Vermont
	1983–2008 University of Texas at Austin
	1975 ICA President
	1980 ICA Fellow
	1989 NCA President
	1993 Distinguished Scholar, NCA

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Mark Knapp

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?
Neither one of my parents were very highly educated. My mother was a high school graduate, but did not go to college. My father had an associate's degree in law, but he never practiced. My older brother, my older sister, and I were the first in our family to have a full college education.

What did your father do for a living?
He was very much into business. He started out as a time-keeper and worked his way up to becoming the president of his company. My father is the classic American story of pulling himself up by his own bootstraps. He wanted his boys be in business, too. I always had that in the back of my mind, even though I had no idea how to make money. My older brother went to Panama and became a professor teaching army children there. So both of my father's sons didn't do what he wanted them to do.

And your mother?
She also had some business sense. She was a sort-of secretary and treasurer for a printing company. When she got married, the idea in those days was that she would stay at home. She was a very talented artist. She would draw pictures of movie stars and send them out for signing. When I grew up, I saw pictures of all the movie stars I knew with their signatures. My mother had a fellowship to go to the Art Institute in Kansas City, but she didn't take it because she had to support herself, and the only way to do this was the job in the printing company.

Did religion play any role in your childhood?
My parents were what I would call casually religious. They went to church and took us to different church functions, but it never was an integral part of my life. As I grew up, I went around and visited all kinds of churches trying to find something that fit me. I didn't find it and went through a long period as an agnostic, because that was fashionable for professors. Finally, I figured out I was an atheist. Agnostics are waiting for evidence. I didn't feel like I'd ever get the evidence I was looking for in a spiritual category. It is very uncomfortable for some people who are religious to have you say that. I was very judicious about where I revealed my atheist belief.

Do you still remember why you chose to study at Kansas?
In my first college year, I was totally confused and not sure this was what I wanted to do, but I didn't know what else I wanted to do. A guy that I was playing handball with said, "Let's join the army." While I was in the army in Bamberg, Germany, I took a correspondence course and found it to be very easy. I also got a lot of personal education in the army. When I came back, I was unsure about what I wanted to major in. My older sister said, "You like to watch TV. Why don't you major in television?" So I did. At that time, a broadcasting major was mainly performance and not so much the study of media and media effects. In my senior year, I was supposed to interview program directors in the Kansas City area. I felt they were uninspiring, even unethical—people who I could not work effectively with. And I was ready to graduate.

Back to Table of Contents

Sounds like a second time-out.

I was also about to get married. I was depressed and talked to a professor whom I liked. He said I should go to graduate school. I didn't know what graduate school was all about, so I asked. He said, "Well, you keep going to school; we pay you, and you teach a class." This sounded good to me. I loved the teaching, but I still didn't consider myself an academic after I finished my master's degree. I thought you had to be dull, use words that nobody understood, and sit around smoking a pipe in a tweed jacket. I knew that wasn't me.

How would you compare the student Mark Knapp with today's students?

I don't see a lot of differences. There are some students who are very much on top of things and some who are getting lost. I was sort of in-between. I was searching for something, and it took me a long time to find it. I think there are a lot of students like that today.

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers?

Frank Dance was my master's adviser. At that time, I really needed somebody who believed in me. He did that for me. So he became a personal friend, as well as [a] scholarly mentor. I respected his intellect as well. Frank also offered me my first job. In those days, you could just say, "Do you want to come here and work?" When I was considering my PhD work in organizational communication, there were two professors in the country who were well-known in this area: Charles Redding at Purdue and Harold Zelko at Penn State (Redding, 1972; Zelko & Dance, 1965). Dance knew Zelko, so I went to Penn State. Zelko was not a scholar. He was a wonderful, older, sensitive guy. We got along just fine, but he didn't teach me a lot. From a scholarly standpoint, I probably learned more from my peers, the people I worked with, and the people I co-authored with.

Could you name some of those peers?

Rod Hart was very influential. We did several studies together. He taught me to publish in the top-tier journals. He was a good writer, and he knew all the basics that needed to be covered. Carl Larson was another influential guy that I worked with. He showed me how to approach scholarship. And then, there were other people whose work I used as a kind of template for what I was going to do. The field was changing in those days, from the study of dead orators to one that encompassed interpersonal communication and social science perspectives. A lot of the teachers I had in grad school didn't have much to say to those of us interested in these new perspectives. In fact, I think I never taught a course after I left grad school that was similar to one I had in graduate school. I always taught courses that I invented.

When did you know that you wanted to be an academic?

After my master's, Frank Dance said to me, "If you don't try for a PhD, you will never know whether this career is for you or not. If you fail, nobody will really care, because the only people that will know about it are the people that love you anyway." This made a lot of sense to me. After about the first semester at Penn State, I got a good feeling that I could compete, and thought maybe I'd landed where I should be. At that point, I began to commit myself toward the field, even though, during the five years of my first job, I still considered jobs in business and industry. They paid a lot more, and I still had my dad's desire for me to be in business in the back of my head.

Back to Table of Contents

Why did you never take your talents to business*?*
I always came back to the idea that the position that I had gave me the satisfaction and freedom that I needed. It also gave me an opportunity to do consulting with business, which I could not do with academia if I was in business.

Did you like the role of an academic expert?
Sometimes. I've been asked several times to be an expert witness in a jury trial, but I've never done it. People who ask you to do it are always people with a point of view. Academics are, by their nature, open to different points of view. So I can imagine myself being on the witness stand and saying just the opposite of what I was hired to say. I used to do a lot of consulting when I was younger. The pay was good, and I learned a little bit more about how communication manifested itself in organizations. Over time, I did less and less consulting, because I would walk away with the check in my pocket, exhausted from sharing everything I thought I knew, and getting nothing intellectual in return. The money eventually lost its ability to offset the lack of learning that I experienced in those situations.

Nonverbal communication and relationships are the topics of your life. Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to those topics?
Yes. I'll start with the nonverbal. In my first job, I was teaching a course called "The Psychology of Communication." I was trying to translate some of the current work in the social sciences into an interpersonal communication perspective, but I couldn't really answer all the student's questions about physical attractiveness, facial expressions, or the use of vocal cues. I began to read and to incorporate this material into my course. One day, a publisher and friend of mine said, "Put that in a book" (Knapp, 1972). It came out just after the bestseller *Body Language* (Fast, 1970), a book that swept the country and raised the public's consciousness about nonverbal communication. This was helpful in terms of my book sales, and there also was a sudden mushrooming of courses in nonverbal communication.

Next are the relationships.
In 1974, I was divorced after 11 years. I knew the reasons, but there was a lot of communication stuff that I knew I was not fully aware of. I wanted to find out more about it. I started reading, but there wasn't a whole lot available in the social science literature at that time. I took what was available, identified some patterns, and put it together with my own ideas in a book (Knapp, 1978). You didn't mention the third area that I moved into: lying and deception.

Just go ahead, please.
There was the idea that you could detect lies through nonverbal cues because people were supposedly less conscious of those things. It didn't turn out to be quite as simple as people thought, but it led some of us who were studying nonverbal communication into the area of lying and deception as early as the 1970s. In the 1990s, I sensed a surge of interest in this topic. All of a sudden, people in different academic areas were publishing research and raising questions about deceptive behavior. I started a course on it that enrolled 300 people a semester and later wrote a book on the subject (Knapp, 2008). You never know how the things you're interested in are going to play out, but you have to be ready to go with the opportunity.

Back to Table of Contents

How would you rate the academic position of interpersonal scholars within our discipline?

The people that I know are first-rate. They are quite talented and accomplished. I guess old people always say this, but I don't see a next generation of the same caliber. Maybe they are just interested in different things, and maybe I just don't know them as well. I have a great deal of respect for the interpersonal people of my generation. In my era, the field was smaller, and I think scholars read widely and learned from the work of colleagues in other areas of communication study. I could be wrong, but I don't think the younger scholars today do that as much. They are more specialized, and their specializations often have a huge literature and history. Keeping up with their own specialization may affect knowledge-seeking in seemingly unrelated areas. I also think the proliferation of journals has led to a greater number of studies in the literature, but also a greater number of lower-quality publications. The literature in most areas is big, but the quality of the theory and research within an area varies considerably.

How did you feel when you were asked to run for ICA President?

I felt really prepared, because I knew the organization very well. I thought I could make some changes, and I didn't want anybody else that I knew to do it. I had spent a lot of years on the ICA board before that, and the meetings there were often crazy, but exemplified the growing pains of the organization. My presidential address was designed to say that ICA should focus all its decisions on becoming the premier scholarly organization in communication. That's not very exciting news nowadays, and I'm not sure I was the only cause of this change, but in those days, we had people from government, people from business, and teachers who didn't want to do scholarship. The organization didn't have a clear identity. I said, "Let those who aren't interested in research go to other organizations if they choose, and let's make ICA *the* scholarly organization in communication." This was pretty controversial at that time, because some of my friends were people who weren't likely to be comfortable in such an organization and wanted it to be more inclusive.

How do you compare the recent community with the community of those days?

It's much stronger today, simply because we didn't know as much. I don't think we were pioneers, but we were certainly the first generation that was trying to establish the subject in the scientific community. We didn't know much about administration or politics, experimental methods or statistics, but all these people that I went through that with have since taught a generation who has become much better in those kinds of things. From a scientific standpoint, they will pass us. That's how it should be.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?

Naturally, I felt good. External rewards are sometimes different, depending on how you feel about yourself. If I had never become an ICA Fellow, I wouldn't have felt that it reflected on my abilities. I felt good about what I had done. The thing that I might have resented would have been less-talented people getting it. It's important to have these external rewards, but it's also important not to get too carried away with them.

If you had to choose between NCA and ICA, which one is your favorite?

They are different. If I had to choose an organization for a collection of scholars to work with, I would choose ICA. I probably have more fun when I go to NCA. It doesn't mean that NCA doesn't have scholarly

Back to Table of Contents

activities. It just means that its history is different, and the people that populate it are more diverse. ICA can sometimes be dull. Scholarship isn't always exciting. I'm glad both exist.

Who is Mark Knapp: a researcher, a teacher, the chairman of scientific associations, the mentor of the new ICA Fellows' generation? What is the most important part of your academic life?

I'll give you two answers. The first one is: I loved everything I did and the diversity of my roles. I loved being the chair of a communication department, but I was glad I didn't have to do it for a lifetime. I loved teaching; I loved research; and I loved writing books.

What is the second answer?

If I can only pick one, I would pick teaching. I feel like I am a nurturing person. Even after the students leave your presence, they are writing or calling you and talking about ideas that they had in your classes. That has an impact on me that I don't get from all the other activities. Maybe it's just me, because I like mutually learning with people so much.

Most of my interviewees told me about the preconception that communication is about the training of students first, and only secondly about research. How was the situation here at Texas?

People have been saying that for the last 40 years. There is a link between skills and knowledge in the study of communication, and there are, no doubt, some who emphasize skills over research. I don't think that is the case at the University of Texas. There are so many talented communication researchers and so much good solid communication research that I don't give much credence to those who say we are not to be respected because we only focus on skills. Skills training and research knowledge feed off of each other. I don't get the impression that people doing research will be undervalued or get less respect because they are in communication, but it is true that we can do a better job of teaching research methods to our undergraduate and graduate students.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?

We are often very provincial in the way we look at communication as a worldwide field of study. We Americans are typically failures in foreign languages. So I'm exposed to literature from the UK, Australia, or New Zealand, and that's often my base of knowledge. I'm doing a book on nonverbal communication with the publisher Mouton de Gruyter in Berlin. They demanded that half the authors be European. Judith Hall and I did some research and found a lot of people whose work fit our volume. When you are pushed to look for information in other countries, you can find it. When I was young and just out of graduate school, the departments on the east and on the west coasts of the U.S. were primarily focused on mass communication. They didn't deal with interpersonal at all. In the U.S., interpersonal developed primarily in the Midwest. In some places in Europe, the media is very strong, but interpersonal isn't. But my guess is that interpersonal will gradually emerge like it did in the U.S.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

I don't know. I'm not ashamed to say that, because almost every effort at predicting the future that far in advance has been riddled with errors. I'll gladly leave guessing the distant future up to someone else.

Back to Table of Contents

Are there any scientists whom you regard as role models?

Erving Goffman, Gregory Bateson, Robert Rosenthal, and many others were giants in the scholarship they produced, and I greatly respected it. I also respected what Frank Dance taught me as a teacher and performer. When you teach large classes, it is important to have a performance part to it, but obviously you have to have substance as well. Frank was one of those people I could listen to, learn from, and laugh every time he told a story, even if I'd heard it several times before. He was definitely a teaching model when I didn't know anything about teaching, but I perfected my own style from that. My friend Carl Larson was totally different. He was very quiet, methodical, and very student-oriented. I learned a lot from his approach as well.

Looking back on 50 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

I guess I'm most proud of the individuals whom I feel have learned things from me. That's been at the core of my academic mission. So I'm proud of some of my graduate students, and also of some of my undergraduates. You have a feeling that you had an impact on them, but it is a great feeling when you get evidence to that effect.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

Make me younger [laughing]. I'm very fortunate. There is only one thing that I would try to change if I could, even though it was probably a pretty good lesson for me: the move to Austin. My wife at that time worked for IBM and accepted a job here. I came with her. I knew people on the faculty; I had co-authored with them, and they all knew me. I had been the ICA President and thought it would not be a problem getting a job at the University of Texas, but it took about four years before I became a full-time employee. That was a very stressful period for me, and I came very close to accepting a job in the corporate world. Two or three years after I was finally hired full-time, they wanted me to be chair of the department. I don't know if that was supposed to be additional punishment or not [laughing].

What will remain when Mark Knapp is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

The only thing that should remain would be people interested in continuing to study and teach interpersonal communication. It has nothing to do with Mark Knapp.

Back to Table of Contents

References

Fast, J. (1970). *Body language*. New York: M. Evans.

Knapp, M. L. (1972). *Nonverbal communication in human interaction*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Knapp, M. L. (1978). *Social intercourse: From greeting to goodbye*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Knapp, M. L. (2008). *Lying and deception in human interaction*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Redding, W. C. (1972). *Communication within the organization*. New York: Industrial Communication.

Zelko, H., & Dance, F. E. (1965). *Business and professional speech communication*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1699–1707 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

KLAUS KRIPPENDORFF

"I was never a real mass communication person."

Klaus Krippendorff, January 21, 2011. Philadelphia, PA. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1932 in Frankfurt, Germany
Education:	1954 Engineer, State Engineering School Hannover
	1961 Diploma in Design, Ulm School of Design
	1961 Fulbright travel grant
	1967 Ph.D., University of Illinois, Urbana
Career:	1964 Assistant Professor, University of Pennsylvania
	1970 Associate Professor, University of Pennsylvania
	1980 Professor, University of Pennsylvania
	2000 Gregory Bateson Professor for Cybernetics, Language, and Culture, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania
	1970 Visiting Professor in Berlin
	1979 NIAS Fellow
	1982 AAAS Fellow
	1984 ICA President
	1985 ICA Fellow
Personal:	Married, two children

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Klaus Krippendorff

Can you tell me something about your childhood?
I grew up in Nazi Germany. My family was bombed out in Halberstadt. These experiences certainly shaped my political perspective. Already, as a member of the Jungvolk, I had conflicts with my superior. That's where I root my anti-authoritarian attitude.

What did your parents do for a living?
My father was an engineer working at Junkers. So he was lucky not to be drafted into the army. Some of my early interests probably come from him. My mother was a housewife, but she emphasized education, too. As a young lady, she first worked in a bank, and then as a bookkeeper at the University of Dresden, where my father studied. Could I add another element that probably has to do with why I ended up here?

Just go ahead, please.
In 1924, my father went to the U.S. as a work-study student. The program was very different than what is available today. Students received a grant for the voyage on the ship, but once here, they had to find work on their own. My father worked at Ford in Detroit. Later, he came to New York to coordinate the program and keep track of the work-study students. Before my mother got married, she, too, spent several years in the States. When I grew up, I always heard about Niagara Falls, where my parents got engaged; the Grand Canyon; and Yellowstone Park. So I was pretty much primed to be interested in the United States.

How did your father's affiliation survive the war?
It was dangerous. My father had an American flag hidden under his clothes. And there were two layers of books on the shelves; the prohibited ones were hidden behind those that one could show.

What about your first professional steps?
In 1949, we fled to West Germany. In the East, there was virtually no chance for me to enter a university because my father was an academic, and quotas for children of academics were very small. Right after the war, I became an apprentice in mechanics. In the West, I took evening classes. With my family background, it seemed natural to become an engineer as well.

Why did you abandon your first profession?
After my engineering degree, I worked for a couple of years at a consulting firm. I was good in math and could calculate anything. But as a young engineer with many innovative ideas, it was difficult to survive in that firm. Its owner was more interested in satisfying our clients than in solving real problems. I found this quite unethical and left the firm, [but] not without putting my misgivings in writing. I was more interested in the complexity of human involvement in technology than in the bolts and nuts of engineering. I was encouraged in my decision by the opening of a new avant-garde design school in Ulm. There, my interests shifted toward the social sciences more generally.

Back to Table of Contents

Is there any connection between the three parts of your education—engineering, design, and communication research?

There is a very strong connection. In my very first paper, I argued against the technological determinism that ruled the school at that time. I suggested that the issue of product design should be communication with users, not technical function. This was quite unpopular among the ruling faculty, but made sense to those who mattered to me. My thesis addressed the sign and symbol qualities of objects (Krippendorff, 1961). In the United States, I wanted to further inquire into all the great ideas that I was exposed to in Ulm.

What ideas are you talking about?

I'm talking about symbolic interactionism, social perception, information theory, game theory, cybernetics, and systems theory. I started studying at Princeton, but found myself among psychologists studying rats. I escaped after the first semester and landed at the Institute of Communication Research in Urbana. This interdisciplinary PhD program allowed me to take a lot of courses outside communication: cybernetics, cultural anthropology, and linguistics. I became a student of Ross Ashby. I became increasingly fascinated by the complexities of human communication, but never was a real mass communication researcher.

Why did you stay in the United States?

I came here for intellectual reasons, not for getting a degree. But what I did was very much appreciated, and a lot of people suggested getting a degree commensurate with my interests.

How would you compare the student Klaus Krippendorff with your students today?

I think I was much more daring in approaching different areas than students do now. They often have a more narrow conception about the field of their study and their professional paths.

How do you explain this difference?

I came from a different discipline, English was my second language, and the field of communication was not as institutionalized as it is now. Coming from the outside, I could utilize different ways of thinking that others didn't have. Last, but not least, the communication program at Illinois was very much interdisciplinary. I had five very different mentors on my dissertation committee. Basically, I wrote a chapter for each. For example, for Ross Ashby, I developed a mathematical theory of information applied to content analysis (Krippendorff, 1967).

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers in communication?

This is actually Ashby. He is not well known in our field. Then Anatol Rapoport, Gregory Bateson, and maybe Paul Watzlawick. When I was in Ulm, I spent a summer in Oxford, mainly to learn English. At the famous Blackwell bookstore, I purchased two books that turned out to be critical to my future thinking: Ashby's *Introduction to Cybernetics* (Ashby, 1956) and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* (Wittgenstein, 1922).

When did you know that you wanted to become a scientist, a communication scientist?

I think I slipped into that. Once I came to Annenberg, I realized that I could make contributions to the development of the school. Yet, while a professor for communication, I did not abandon my connection with design. About half of what I'm writing now is about design, to which I apply communication ideas

Back to Table of Contents

(Krippendorff, 2006). But the reverse is true as well. I have been designing research methods, programmed computers, and constructed theories, all of which are the result of design activities.

Talking about Annenberg in the 1960s, the German Manfred Rühl went into raptures about the atmosphere. He said colleagues from numerous disciplines came here in order to build a new discipline (Meyen & Löblich, 2007, p. 92). Does this story fit in your own memories?
There is a lot of truth in it. Manfred Rühl visited Annenberg while I was here.

He remembered you sitting in front of a screen and doing content analysis.
I was one of the first social scientists who learned computer programming. I took a course in the Department of Electrical Engineering. When I taught in Berlin in 1970, I had to struggle both with people at the *Rechenzentrum* who couldn't believe that a social scientist needed a computer, and with a group of Marxists who insisted that computers only serve American capitalism. Incidentally, when Rühl was here, we had no computer screens. We punched Hollerith cards.

Back to the early Annenberg School.
The school was founded in 1956. Walter Annenberg was the owner of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and wanted to pay for a school that would create professionals who could work in his newspaper. The University of Pennsylvania didn't want to have a narrow professional focus, but liked the idea of a communication school. The first dean was Gilbert Seldes, a media philosopher without scientific interests. This didn't go so well. It attracted art-related students without interests in research.

How did you come in?
Charles Osgood, the head of the institute at Urbana, was invited by the university to give advice about the direction a communication school should take. George Gerbner and Shel Feldman, a psychologist, both from Illinois, applied to the university. Feldman took me with him. I was still a student, but was interviewed by the acting dean. Our assignment was to create a school with an academic curriculum worthy of the university. Many interesting scholars were invited to give colloquia: Lazarsfeld, Lasswell, Berelson, Bateson, Lilly. Maybe Manfred Rühls' conception is a little bit exaggerated, but a lot of things happened here. One of our strength was financial. Walter Annenberg provided ample resources. He appreciated that the school flourished, became widely known, and immortalized his name.

Have you ever considered applying for a position outside the Annenberg School?
I had many offers, but in the end, the Annenberg School is a school without many rivals, and I like the East coast.

What about West Berlin?
In 1970, Harry Pross wanted me to join the university, and I spent a summer there. But I felt that the climate was not conducive to new ideas. Communication studies were non-existent. Journalism was part of the faculty of philosophy. Sociology thought to capture communication under the category of knowledge, none of which provided a fruitful frame for academic explorations of communication. And then I was already married. My wife was from Bangladesh and did not have the best experiences in Germany. Life seemed easier where both partners [would] have foreign backgrounds.

Back to Table of Contents

Does it matter working at an Ivy League university as a professor?
Penn is not like Princeton or Harvard, who play the elite game. Our university has made a major effort to attract a diverse student body, ethnically, internationally, and gender wise, besides being above-average intellectually. This matters to me.

And what about the Annenberg School? Does it matter being here?
It is a considerable benefit that the school is relatively well-endowed. For example, we have free lunch at faculty meetings. Students are supported when giving papers at academic conferences. They are paid for studying here, and are given the opportunity to be research or teaching assistants. We have the luxury of small seminars and few students over all.

Being linked to content analysis (Krippendorff, 1980): Is this more a burden or more a delight to you?
Every 10 years or so, I've reinvented myself or added a new orientation. That I am still talking of content analysis is because I know more than most. My content analysis text and Krippendorff's alpha are widely known, mainly because there is just nothing better around. I certainly am preoccupied with more exciting ideas.

Sounds like a burden.
There are a lot of tiny developments, and I'm keeping up with some of them. The first edition of *Content Analysis* from 1980 was half the size and a third of the number of pages than the second edition from 2004. In the 24 years between the two editions, I had learned a lot while teaching, advising, and applying the method, and I didn't mind writing about it. It is a burden to prepare the third edition of the text. The publisher's motivation is economic. Still, it will be better than the second edition, but my heart is elsewhere.

Some people are glad to become 65 and finally retire. What keeps you going?
Sixty-five is just a number. I would call a law requiring retirement at 65 age discrimination. I enjoy exploring new avenues. Students who ask questions keep me alive. Preparing lectures or writing essays is a creative way to be in the world. I'm teaching now one-third of my normal load, and my dean says you may teach whatever you want, as long as you have students. Actually, he didn't even say this last line. I'm saying that.

How did you feel when you were asked to run for ICA President?
I was flattered in some ways and felt kind of ill-prepared. This was not the most important stage of my life. In the end, I couldn't change the association as much as I wanted to. Computers and digital communication were around, and I thought ICA needed to prepare itself for the challenges of the digital world.

A year of presidency is very short.
I managed to institute some changes. The annual meeting, which I organized, was the first one with a theme: *The Future of Communication*. Now all of them follow a theme. Meetings were called "conventions." Now they are "conferences." I designed the conference program and the ICA logo. Believe

Back to Table of Contents

it or not, I initiated gender studies at ICA, which morphed into the Feminist and Women Studies Division, and my successor was the first female ICA President.

Could you, please, describe the association in its beginnings?
When I joined, it was more like a family affair. The scholars who gathered at annual conventions knew each other, and the program was printed on one page folded three ways. For me, one of the most interesting conferences was in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1971. ICA rented a motel with rooms around a swimming pool, and there were few parallel sessions. The climate was completely different. I remember this conference also because I received the award for the most outstanding article in the *Journal of Communication*.

"On Generating Data in Communication Research" (Krippendorff, 1970).
Yes, this was my very first contribution to communication studies and also a very controversial paper. The reviewers rejected it, but the editor thought otherwise and managed to get it into the journal. At that time, there was a lot of excitement about communication among scholars who followed diverse approaches. Mine was guided by the idea that communication, after all, arises in dynamic relationships, and studying the components of communication separately would hide the phenomenon of communication from view. I am pleased that paper is still being discussed. As you probably know, the ICA was formed by scholars who walked out of the Speech Association of America,[7] mainly because they wanted to pursue a broader concept of communication, not just tied to speech. If you want to write about the origin of communication research, you should write about that walkout. That's were ICA started.

Why did these people call it an international association?
This was born out of the recognition that communication is not a national or culture-specific phenomenon. Initially the association had four founding divisions: information systems, interpersonal, mass, and organizational communication.

Who is Klaus Krippendorff: a researcher, a teacher, the artist and engineer who became a communication researcher? What is the most important part of your academic life*?*
I'm not a researcher who is grinding data. I see myself as a conceptualizer, both of communication phenomena and design activities. Many communication researchers want to find out what is. Not me. I'm interested in language, discourse and in what theories do. My favorite seminar that I'm teaching right now is on the social construction of reality.

Reading all the presidential addresses at ICA's annual conferences, one gets a very ambivalent picture of the research field and the idea of what communication is all about.
My address was "on the ethics of constructing communication" (Krippendorff, 1989). I do think there is an ethical element to theorizing communication. What you theorize or construct has implications for how

[7] The National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking was founded in 1914 and changed its name several times: National Association of Teachers of Speech (1923), Speech Association of America (1946), Speech Communication Association (1970), and now National Communication Association (1997) (www.natcom.org).

Back to Table of Contents

people explain their living with each other. Some people say this presidential address was the first scholarly one. Presidents before me showed movies and talked about it. I also remember the address of Mark Knapp, who talked about the state of the association.

What did he say?

He sought to instill pride in being a small association, but counting the best people as its members. This was, of course, meant in contrast to the rather massive Speech Communication Association. I agreed with that wholeheartedly. Now the ICA has become too big, and I almost want to walk out to have the productive conversations that big meetings stifle.

A former president can't do this.

It doesn't matter. ICA is not manageable anymore, and [it] does not serve the function of really creating something among people.

Let's go back to your definition of communication research.

We have an object of study. It includes media, all kinds of media that link people to each other, not just the mass media. In my own definition, communication is a particular way of living together, respecting each other. Historically, this is a relatively recent phenomenon. Earlier societies took ownership, obligations, hereditary commitments, or social norms as their primary social relations. Do you see this Chinese sign (showing at a whiteboard in his office)?

What does it mean?

It is the symbol for the Hawaii conference, which I selected. I was looking for a Chinese sign that represents communication. It does not exist, as such. In Chinese writing, one character means nothing by itself. If you combine this one with other characters, it means exchanging something, making a transaction, intercourse—but not by itself. Communication, as we conceive of it now, is really a new phenomenon. True, people always spoke, but differently. Kings were giving instructions or setting laws. Cryptographers deciphered messages; journalists wrote for newspapers but didn't think of it as communication.

Sonia Livingstone told me about the preconception that communication is about the training of students first and only secondly about research. How is the situation in the U.S.?

It's very different. It's true that we have a large number of students who want to work in the media industry, but we are trying to bring the idea of communication to their profession. We think it opens the possibility of a different kind of awareness about the social context in which one works. This is an important task.

What about the status in academia?

For a long time, communication was a stepchild. Even here at Penn, they looked down on us. Sociologists claimed communication as part of their discipline. The Wharton School said marketing is communication. Cognitive scientists think it is all cognition. And the School of Engineering considers signal transmission the only real communication, the human involvement being a mere epiphenomenon.

Back to Table of Contents

Why did the situation change?
This has something to do with more and more students being interested in the social and creative aspect of communication.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are the skyscrapers, where the construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?
I don't think I can do that. I have seen a great number of approaches pursued in different cultures, but I can't easily answer that question in a few sentences.

Where do you see the field in 2030?
There will be a major shift. The idea of studying media is outdated. The whole communication landscape is changing quite radically toward mediated relationships, network conceptions. We make a mistake to generalize from the kind of media that we are accustomed to. New technologies connect people in novel ways. People engage in networks we cannot yet anticipate. In 2030, we'll have very different understandings of communication.

Are there any scientists whom you regard as role models?
No. I don't like the idea of role models and don't see a particular communication researcher as such.

Looking back on about 50 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?
Nothing special. I've written some very good articles. I have made a difference in ICA. I have left tools for content analysis behind for others to improve upon.

What about followers or mentees?
Charles Goodwin, for example. He changed conversation theory toward acknowledging bodily involvements. James Taylor made a major mark in organizational communication theory. Mariaelena Bartesaghi took two-and-a-half years to work in Philadelphia's Child Guidance Clinic and observed what happens in therapy. Nicole Keating wrote about the network of stakeholders that interactively create documentary films. Most recently, Mary Bock studied and continues to teach how technology changes the way video journalists relate their subjects to their readers. They are not followers, but I am proud to have been part of their journey.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?
I would do a lot of things differently, but considering the situations, I didn't really make bad decisions. Of course, beginning as a mechanic put me on a wrong track. It wasn't easy to change course, but I am proud to have managed against all odds. It made me appreciate education more than those who were not disadvantaged by the war. My brother, Ekkehart, who is just two years younger, earned his doctorate in Germany. He arrived at what he wanted to do 10 years before I did.

Back to Table of Contents

What will remain when Klaus Krippendorff is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

The Internet keeps a lot of what I did alive. No doubt, something will remain for others to enjoy and benefit from. But I have children and grandchildren. They will remember me as a person and perhaps continue the path toward a more reflective way of life.

References

Ashby, R. (1956). *An introduction to cybernetics*. London: Chapman & Hall.

Krippendorff, K. (1961). *Über den Zeichen- und Symbolcharakter von Gegenständen: Versuch zu einer Zeichentheorie für die Programmierung von Produktformen in sozialen Kommunikationsstrukturen*. Ulm, Germany: Hochschule für Gestaltung.

Krippendorff, K. (1967). *An examination of content analysis: A proposal for a framework and an information calculus for message analytic situations*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois.

Krippendorff, K. (1970). On generating data in communication research. *Journal of Communication*, *20*, 241–269.

Krippendorff, K. (1980). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications.

Krippendorff, K. (1989). On the ethics of constructing communication. Presidential address delivered at the ICA conference on paradigm dialogues, Honolulu, HI, May 26, 1985. In B. Dervin, L. Grossberg, B. J. O'Keefe, & E. Wartella (Eds.), *Rethinking communication: Paradigm issues*. *Vol. I* (pp. 66–96). Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications.

Krippendorff, K. (2006). *The semantic turn: A new foundation for design*. London: Taylor & Francis.

Meyen, M., & Löblich, M. (2007). *Ich habe dieses Fach erfunden. Wie die Kommunikationswissenschaft an die deutschsprachigen Universitäten kam*. Köln, Germany: Halem.

Wittgenstein, L. (1922). *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. London: Paul Kegan.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1708–1714 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

ANNIE LANG

"I hope to kill mass communication and effects research at the same time."

Annie Lang, March 8, 2011.
Indiana University, Bloomington. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1957 in Buffalo, New York
Education:	1980 B.S. in journalism, University of Wisconsin-Madison
	1983 M.A. in mass communication, University of Florida-Gainesville
	1987 Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-Madison
Career:	1987 Assistant Professor, Washington State University
	1994 Professor, Indiana University
	2006 ICA Fellow
	2009 Steven H. Chaffee Career Productivity Award
	Editor of *Media Psychology*
Personal:	Married, two children

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Annie Lang

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

My father is a professor of psychology. Peter Lang, a genius. You should never have a genius for a father. You are always a failure. He graduated high school at 14 and college at 17. He got a degree in painting at 18, a master's in romance languages at 21, and a PhD in psychology at 23.

It's hard to beat.

He is now 81 and still working. He has continuously been funded by NIH with over a million dollars a year since 1957. I'm nothing [laughing]. My mother is a commercial artist, a water-color painter. I have two brothers. Both are high school drop-outs with incredible talents. One of them is a successful jazz piano player, and the other one is a computer nerd who consults with every big company in the world. It's a weird family.

What about you?

I actually was the dumb one. I didn't have any professional dreams. I just wanted to have fun. In high school, I was on the swim team and on the gymnastics team. I didn't do much that was scholarly. I went to the University of Wisconsin because I was there. I was a very bad undergraduate student.

Do you still remember why you chose journalism?

In the last year, I was tired of going to college. I went to the general adviser for the university and asked what I could graduate in that semester. She said chemistry, math or journalism. The classes in journalism were easier. So I graduated there, got a job as a waitress in Madison, and wrote a novel that was rejected by all publishers. I moved to Florida and got a job at the *Gainesville Sun*. I worked there for about two years and discovered that I didn't like nine-to-five jobs. I applied to graduate school and got interested, finally.

Did you ever consider staying in journalism?

I was in the advertising department. I don't like to talk to strangers, and I don't like to talk on the phone. I would make a horrible journalist.

How would you compare the student Annie Lang with your students today?

I have a lot of insight into the typical American undergraduate, because I was one. Most professors were good students. They cared and paid attention. I had semesters where I finished with three credits and thought that was funny. Students are learning important things like how to be a grown-up and how to live away from home. Some of them find school interests while they are doing that. In graduate school, I was very good.

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers?

My first mentor at Florida was Mary Ann Ferguson. She had just graduated from Wisconsin and is still at Florida. If you get those people who are right out of a good graduate program, they teach the hardest classes.

Back to Table of Contents

And at Wisconsin?

My paperwork says that my adviser was Byron Reeves, but I always thought that Byron and Esther Thorson were my co-advisers. Byron left for Stanford in my last year, and Esther was on my side when I needed somebody. When I was there, Steven Chaffee came back. He was also a great mentor for me. Then, Jack McLeod, Joanne Cantor, Joseph Cappella, and Ed Donnerstein were there. A lot of good people.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to information processing?

That was genetic. My father is a psychophysiologist. I really didn't know anything about his research or his theory. When I came to Wisconsin, Byron and Esther were just starting with psychophysiology. I got involved in that immediately. In the second semester, my dad visited me and said, "You know that's what I do." I didn't know.

How did this end up?

Great. Getting training in psychophysiology wasn't that easy back then. Nobody was doing it in communication. My dad called Francis Graham up. So I studied with one of the most famous psychophysiologists. And of course, I had my dad for my own private consultations.

Does he read your work?

He never reads it. There is no sign of it. His students and colleagues do, though. But I read his.

In a self-description, you named the improvement of public service messages as one research aim. Is communication able to provide useful knowledge?

It should be. In my first cover letter for a job, I wrote that I wanted to understand how people process mediated messages, and whether and if this is different from processing real life. That was my lifetime question. I'll probably die before I have the answer. I believe strongly that if you have it, then you should be able to design messages that achieve your goals. I see myself as a communication engineer.

This could be dangerous.

Knowledge is power, and it can be used for good or bad. Not having knowledge is just ignorance. I have made a lot of progress. I can predict a lot about what will happen when people encounter messages.

Methods seem to be your second passion.

I'm not a methodologist. Everyone always thinks I'm interested in methods. You may join the crowd. Methods are boring. I'm question-driven, and my interest is in theory-building. If you have a theory, every concept in it has to have a measure. As a field, we don't have any measures. We are so far from being a science, because everybody is still making up their own measures.

When you got the Chaffee Award, the committee stated that you influenced many scholars. How would you describe your influence?

I've graduated 15 doctoral students, five currently writing dissertations, and two taking coursework. The graduates are all working in the field all over the world. That's one way. They all have students, too. Secondly, I teach "Philosophy of Inquiry." This class is required for all incoming students. I pretty much

Back to Table of Contents

teach every PhD student that comes out of here at least once. The third type of influence is that people come here to visit the lab and learn how to do stuff.

Now you are editor of* Media Psychology, *too.
I'm not a very directive editor, but it gives you an opportunity to tell people what they might think about.

How would you rate the academic position of psychophysiologists within our discipline?
Last summer, I gave a talk in Taiwan and showed a map with dots for all the psychophysiology laboratories in communication I know about. There are more than 30 now. When I started, there was just one. So I would say it's growing. It's much more accessible now. When I started, I had to be a geek. Now, you open the box and it goes. There is a downside, too. Most people use psychophysiology as a measure instead of as an indicator of a psychological concept. This is a distinction which I try to make in my writing. Psychophysiology is the science of finding psychological correlations for physiological changes in a given context.

Were you ever forced to think about gender questions during your academic career?
I grew up in Madison, which was incredibly liberal at that time. As a young student, I never felt that I was being prevented from doing anything I wanted to do because I was a woman. The older I get and the higher I've gone up the ranks, the more I discover what a damn sexist place the university is. They don't realize that they are doing it, but they do. In our last presidential election, more people would rather elect a black man than a white woman. That tells you a lot about this country. We can have women doing lots of things, but we really don't want them in charge.

Can you give me an example for this kind of discrimination?
Every time you get evaluated, you get offered less and you fall behind faster. I had my run-ins, but I mostly won them. I spent three years as the Associate Dean for Research and Sciences. The College here has about 50 departments and more than 750 faculty members; everything from the humanities to the hard sciences. When I took that job, I told the dean there are all these sexist, old, male scientists who are going to try to jump all over me. The dean answered, I'm not going to let them. I had a lot of interesting experiences with some of these old famous men. It's not just women. It's every kind of discrimination, but I like to mentor women.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?
That was great. When I was at Washington State, I went to ICA and asked Byron why he wasn't a fellow. He said, nobody has nominated me. I nominated him the next year, and he got it. Actually, it was he who nominated me for a fellow. It's nice when your mentor does that. I was almost the first of my generation.

Who is Annie Lang: a researcher, a teacher, a university manager, a battle fighter at Indiana? What is the most important part of your academic life?
I guess I'm a researcher. Right behind it, I'm a mentor. Those are the two things that I care about.

Back to Table of Contents

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

I'm writing a book about that. All the books called "Media Psychology" have the same table of contents as any book on mass communication effects. You know that I want us to give up the focus on effects (Lang & Ewoldsen, 2010). We didn't learn anything in 30 years of studying it. If you control everything important, then the amount of something that you show people ends up having a 3% effect on something else, and you don't know why. To me, that's not science. That's a whole bunch of empirical findings that aren't interesting.

What is the subject all about?

I've always argued that LC4MP is a general model of communication applicable to any medium, including interpersonal communication and any kind of message (Lang 2000, 2006). I'm interested in much more general definitions than we have had. I was trained in MassComm, but I think that's a dead notion. I hope to kill MassComm and Effects at the same time. In the new world, mass communication and interpersonal communication need to come together. They are both studying communication. The only variable is the type of mediation. It is a variable because different media have different structures, contents, and dynamics that influence the way we interact.

How would you define communication?

I have stolen a definition from John Sherry and modified it. He defines communication as brains interacting with brains. It doesn't matter what kind of medium there is. My brain is trying to interact with your brain. I like that definition, except I don't always want to have a brain on the other side. I'm playing with the book title "Human-media interaction," This is not much used and kind of open. My current definition is: one evolved, embodied, embedded brain interacting with a brain-like being. This means you can communicate with an avatar or a robot. I'm still going to call that communication.

How is the reputation of communication at Indiana?

People in psychology, sociology, or chemistry have no idea what we do. My colleagues here assume that we are doing something and we are doing it well. It's not that they think we have nothing. People on the cognitive science faculty respect our work, and we collaborate with them. But there is no question that very little funding is available to communication. It's pretty much all in health communication. If your department doesn't get external money, you have to teach a lot of students. We are the third-largest credit-hour generator in the College of Arts and Sciences. We are big in teaching.

Actually, you do a bit of health communication (Lang & Yegiyan, 2011).

Since I'm interested in building a general theory, I can work in health messages as easily as I can work in anything else. If they give me money, then the university likes me better. But I think it's stupid to build a health communication theory, an advertising theory, or a journalism theory. What's the difference between the three of them? It comes from the way our departments are organized.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, battlegrounds?

In my way of thinking, the big communication countries are the Netherlands, Germany, the United States, Korea, Taiwan, and Australia. There are a lot of departments that have been doing communication for 20

Back to Table of Contents

or 30 years. They export their students to our graduate programs, and we export some to their programs. I would not put England and most of the rest of Europe within that group. They have it, but it's much smaller. Japan doesn't have communication, which I find quite amusing. I gave three talks there last summer. They were all in psych departments.

What about China?

I get a lot of visitors and graduate students from there. They have lots of undergraduate programs and master's degrees. I really don't know what they are doing at the doctoral level.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

I don't know. It's either gone or changed. In this country, many departments have pulled themselves out of Arts and Sciences and become professional schools where graduate students have to pay. Here, all of our PhD students and most of our masters are supported by the college. The professional school looms as a threat to our field as a scientific field. That's one of the reasons I'm pushing so hard to stop doing research that makes us look trivial. In that sense, we are our own worst enemies.

Are there any scientists whom you would call regard as role models?

My dad, and all my mentors. Byron Reeves, Esther Thorson, Mary Ann Ferguson. I learned a lot from all of them about being a scientist.

Looking back on 30 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

Yes. I did it my way. My area didn't exist. It's data-driven, scientific, and pretty solidly based in the literature. I've always been on the outside, saying you shouldn't care about the standard approach. At every stage, it made it a horror to get published. And it still does. Every paper gets rejected three or four times, always for the same reason: It's too complex and it's not communication research.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

I might have become a gardener. Once I was in this field, I was and am pretty happy with the way I did it.

What will remain when Annie Lang is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

I hope that there will be a general theory of communication, and that it will see some of my works as its roots. That's the best you can do.

Back to Table of Contents

References

Lang, A. (2000). The limited capacity model of mediated message processing. *Journal of Communication*, *50*, 46–70.

Lang, A. (2006). Using the limited capacity model of motivated mediated message processing to design effective cancer communication messages. *Journal of Communication*, *56*, 57–80.

Lang, A., & Ewoldsen, D. (2010). Beyond effects: Conceptualizing communication as dynamic, complex, nonlinear, and fundamental. In S. Allan (Ed.), *Rethinking communication: Keywords in communication research* (pp. 109–120). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Lang, A., & Yegiyan, N. (2011). Individual differences in motivational activation influence responses to pictures of risky or taboo products. *Journal of Health Communication*, *16*(10), 1072–1087.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1715–1723 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

DAFNA LEMISH

"I feel myself as a bridge."

Dafna Lemish, March 11, 2011.
Southern Illinois University. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1951
Education:	1974 B.A. in geography, Tel Aviv University
	1977 M.A. in communication, Hebrew University
	1982 Ph.D. in communication, Ohio State University
Career:	1982 Post-doctoral fellowship, University of Kansas, Lawrence
	1983 Returned to Israel, held several positions in the media and academia
	1996 Senior Lecturer, Department of Communication at Tel Aviv University
	2002 Associate Professor, Tel Aviv University
	2006 Founding Editor, *Journal of Children and Media*
	2008 Professor, Tel Aviv University
	2010 Southern Illinois University, Carbondale
	2010 ICA Fellow
Personal:	Married, three children

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Dafna Lemish

Can you tell me something about your parents?

My father was an economist and an active labor party member. He held some major administrative positions in Israel, including in industry and the national health system, and was in the public eye. My mother was a teacher by training, but also worked as a secretary and raised a family of three. She was born in Israel. Her parents immigrated to Israel from the Ukraine. My father was born in Lithuania and immigrated with his parents as a young boy. My parents' generation was the one that established the State of Israel and fought for its independence. I was raised on that legacy. When I was five years old, my father was on a Jewish Agency mission in New York for two years. This was a formative experience for me, which I believe explains lots of things, including me being here right now. I got acquainted with American life and ended up marrying somebody who was originally from California. Our three children have dual citizenship.

What about your first professional dreams?

As far as I remember into my childhood, I liked to write. My dream for many years was to be a journalist. I never planned to be an academic. I am an ICA Fellow by coincidence. I always wanted to write, and I also wanted to travel the world. The idea was to be a kind of *National Geographic* journalist. I wasn't interested in politics, but in visiting places, in meeting people and cultures, and of course, in falling in love with an exotic prince somewhere. I ended up actually doing what I always wanted to do: I write, I meet people, and I travel the world.

Then it's no coincidence that your preferred method is interviewing.

Not at all. Most of my work is qualitative. When I work with children or adults, it's mainly about interviewing them, communicating with them. There is a second thing that has been true for me since I was a little girl. I'm very energetic. That's my personality. I always did 10 things at the same time. As a child, I was busy in a youth movement, I was playing the piano and running the school newspaper, I was in an acting club, and I won medals in athletics. And there is a third point that was important for who I am today.

Just go ahead.

Like all Israelis, I had to serve in the military after high school for two years. I was in a commanding position and developed leadership skills that served me very well later on in life. I guess you can say that is true for everything else I did. As an athlete in high school, for example, I learned about persistence, determination, and working really hard.

Do you still remember why you chose to study geography?

At that time, there were no undergraduate programs in communication or journalism. Since I wanted to be a journalist, I felt I should know the world better. So I went to study geography. After I completed my undergraduate degree, Elihu Katz had already established the first department of communication in Jerusalem. It was a graduate program only. I applied, completed my masters' degree there, and still wanted to become a journalist.

Back to Table of Contents

Was Elihu your adviser?

Yes, he was. When I asked him, he said, "Can you work independently? I can only be your adviser if you will take the lead." He was a big celebrity in Israel and very busy, but he recommended me for a job in the Israeli TV where I had to develop in-service training courses for people who produced instructional TV shows. That's the turning point that got me into children and television, totally coincidental.

Why did you apply to Ohio State University?

My husband, Peter, wanted to do his PhD in the U.S. and had professors he wanted to work with at Ohio State. I was really excited about going to live in the States for a while, but had no plans to pursue a PhD. It happened that, at Ohio State, they needed a Hebrew instructor, and I was offered the assistantship, pending on becoming a graduate student. I thought it's a good way to make some money until I become a journalist. So I became a PhD student. I know, it sounds ridiculous. When I applied, Elihu Katz wrote a recommendation for me. I did not know that he was such a big name in the U.S. I was totally naïve to the academic world. I didn't think I will be competitive with students whose native language is English. In one of my first classes, Ellen Wartella said to the class, "I'm so happy that we have here a student of Elihu Katz. Dafna, please tell us something about uses and gratifications." I had no idea what she was talking about. It was the first time I ever heard this term. So I desperately started to think of what Elihu might talk about, and mumbled something about active audiences. Apparently, it was the right answer, and I have been friends with Ellen since.

When did you know that you wanted to become a communication scholar?

After two weeks at Ohio State. I really fell in love with academics, although I had some very hard times, too. I took a course in phenomenology and didn't understand a word the professor said. My English skills left much to be desired. It wasn't easy.

How would you compare the student Dafna Lemish with your students today?

I was a very different kind of student at the time. They didn't have any foreign students in my department then. I was also the only one doing qualitative research. Even now, the communication department at Ohio State is a very strong quantitative department. Thom McCain, my adviser, said, "I know nothing about qualitative research, but I'm happy to learn it with you." I give him lots of credit for that courage and faith in me. Thom was also editor of the *Journal of Broadcasting* at the time and asked me to be his assistant. When I think of my role now as a journal editor, I am sure I have learned so much from that experience already then, of how important this is and how it's done. But there was a third thing in which I was different than any other graduate student.

Just go ahead, please.

I got pregnant with our first son after a few months in school. We were married for three years, wanted to have children and thought that the flexibility we had as graduate students to share parenthood created a great opportunity. Toward the end of the program, I got pregnant again, with our second son. I was a weird phenomenon—both foreign and pregnant, and doing it twice! Luckily, I was also an excellent student. When I was nine months pregnant for the first time, I was sent to Lee Becker at the School of Journalism, who was looking for a research assistant. I thought nobody would hire an assistant at that stage of her pregnancy. Lee only said, "Sure, you are hired, have the baby and come back." So I did. For

Back to Table of Contents

me, this was an eye-opener. It was 1978, when equal opportunities for women in the academy were less talked about. Lee gave me, as a heavily pregnant woman, a chance which I have never forgotten. It was a very progressive act at the time.

Why did you return to Israel?

After completing my PhD, we moved to Kansas for a post-doctoral fellowship at the Center for Research on the Influences of Television on Children, which was run by Aletha Huston and John Wright, a married couple. At Kansas, I did my ethnographic work on babies' viewing of television (Lemish, 1987). It was the first study on this topic at the time, and I was very excited about it, but nobody followed up on it, to my surprise. Only recently, there is booming interest in babies and media because the market is pushing lots of products for them. I have a history of starting something that nobody seems to be interested in at the time.

What kind of history?

For example, my dissertation was on viewing television in public places (Lemish, 1982). I thought it's a great topic, but there was nothing more on it for a long time until Friedrich Krotz went back to it (Krotz & Eastman, 1999). Anyway, after a year at Kansas, our oldest son was ready to go to kindergarten. We thought it is a good idea to return home and get him settled into the school system. Maybe it was a mistake not to stay the full two years in the post-doctoral fellowship that I was offered. Again, Peter was the one who was looking for academic jobs. I didn't apply very actively, as I still didn't think that I would pursue an academic career. We tried living in a kibbutz, given our interest in a socialist way of life, so I worked in the communal dining room and as an aid in a children's day-care. The only position opened for me at the time was in a teacher education college. I had no long-term career agenda. I noted that teachers had no idea about the role media have in children's lives and found myself starting a movement for media literacy in the Israeli Ministry of Education (Lemish & Lemish, 1997). At the same time, we also had our third child, a daughter. So children and their education were prominent on my mind.

So your career is an outcome of life circumstances and family needs.

Yes, in some aspects. But there must have been something inside me that was driving me to do research. I kept at it all the time, even when I was outside the university for years. I also got involved in feminist work and theory, partly again through life when I realized how pervasive gender inequality is, and when I started getting really annoyed by media representations of women and girls (Lemish, 2002). Both of my topics of research were influenced deeply by life experiences.

So, your research was very inductive.

Reality drove me to the next study. But also, a most fundamental part of my academic career was played by my relationship with Peter, an engaged scholar himself. He actually was the one who handed me my first feminist book shortly after we got married, and he constantly challenged me to move forward. He is always ahead of the times in his thinking. For example, it was a chat we had strolling together that lead to the initiative of founding a new journal. I was complaining about the scarcity of places to publish the kind of work I am interested in, and he just said, "So why don't you establish such a journal?" And I did. But that's the way he is. I would have never been where I am without his constant support on all levels. And I deeply mean this. In very many ways, I share the Fellow award with him. It is not mine alone.

Back to Table of Contents

So how did you end up at Tel Aviv?

A turning point for me was the scholarship at Annenberg in 1993. I spent six months in Philadelphia with my three kids alone, as Peter was not able to leave his position, and we didn't want to give up on such an opportunity. At the time, I was employed at the School of Communication of the College of Management in Israel and already leading a full academic life. But the Annenberg experience got me back into the real research mode and an ambition to move to a research university. So when the opportunity came, I accepted an invitation to be part of a new department of communication at Tel Aviv University that Akiba Cohen was asked to chair.

How would you rate the position of scholars who are interested in children and gender questions within communication?

I think the area of children and media is still perceived, to a large degree, as a gendered issue. Everything that has to do with the private sphere and with family is not rated at the highest level in academia, as is the case in other spheres of life as well. In both research and industry, it is more populated by women. When I was developing my career, I had to struggle to make the point that children and gender are very important issues and should be considered seriously. That's why I established the *Journal of Children and Media*. For many years, it was difficult to find a respectable place for publication in this area within the field of communication.

You sound like things have changed. There is a whole bunch of women now who are ICA Fellows.

That process accelerated in the last few years, when women like Barbara Wilson, Patti Valkenburg, Sonia Livingstone, and myself were elected ICA Fellows. It didn't happen naturally. In the feminist scholarship division, we decided to promote women more actively to visible places. It takes active work to make changes. It's the same with awards. We can't just sit and wait for it to happen by itself. Now, with so many fellows in the area of children and media, including Ellen Wartella and Joanne Cantor, and the new division that we are all active in, it has become an important ICA topic.

Is there any other explanation than promotion for this development?

Certainly, there is a realization that children and media is a huge and important area. Patti Valkenburg was instrumental in establishing our division. Then there is a growing interest in funding in this area, particularly when you connect it with issues such as health or obesity. So the issue is more visible and more prestigious. It has to do with politics, financing, and public debates. However, I don't find a strong enough representation of feminist scholars on the Fellows' list, despite the fact that there are many deserving. For me, the feminist scholarship division of ICA played a tremendous role in my career development. When I came to ICA for the very first time, I was totally isolated. It was a very competitive place, and very male-dominated. Then I went to the feminist group, and it was so inclusive, so warm, and so supportive. It has been my home for many, many years. This is how I grew in ICA.

Were you ever forced to think about gender questions during your academic career?

Yes, very much so. As a student, I didn't have any woman role model who was balancing a career and a family. Peter and I had to invent it for ourselves. And then the higher you go in the ranks, the fewer

Back to Table of Contents

women you have, particularly when I think of the communication field in Israel at the time. I had to do "double shifts"—maintain an active research, teaching, and service agenda, but at the same time, continue my feminist activism and scholarship that was frowned upon. I also had some rough bumps on my road. I received the promotion to full professor very late, when I had more than 100 articles and seven books. It was ridiculous, and partly because one man wrote a negative letter in an earlier stage of my career. It was totally unfair, as everyone admitted later on, including the president and provost of the university in private talks with me—clearly a gender-related issue. What bothered me most was that the system was not able to say, "Just a second, this biased letter should not be considered in this process." And there is a second, related gender story, which I love to tell.

I would love to hear it.

When I was denied the promotion, a high-ranking male professor came to me and said, "Don't worry about not getting the promotion. We all love you." Nobody would ever say that to a man. I was supposed to be satisfied with the fact that everyone loves me, by pleasing everybody. The message was that women shouldn't care about status and position, as long as they are being loved. Of course, that professor meant well, and he was truly trying to comfort me, but he didn't realize how gendered this expression was. On the face of it, there is equality. In Israel, the salaries and benefits are the same, and so on, but underneath, there are structural obstacles that prevent true equality, even in academia.

Where is the home of Dafna Lemish?

You are asking me this in a very sensitive time in my life, when I just recently moved to Southern Illinois. I'm a "Rolls Royce" kind of temporary immigrant, because I'm familiar with the culture, strongly networked here, and have a good job, but I'm still a kind of immigrant. There are so many issues around being here and not being at home. I have black holes in terms of popular culture, or politics, or jokes. I am fluent in English, but it is not my native language. I always feel I am not expressing myself as eloquently as I can in Hebrew. The first thing I check in the morning is the online news from Israel. My heart is at Tel Aviv University. That's true home for me.

What about Southern Illinois?

I love it here as well. I have wonderful colleagues, great opportunities, and great challenges. I was welcomed most warmly. I am very fortunate for having this opportunity. Being here allows me to do things that I couldn't do in Israel, because the industry and the global connections are here, and I have gradually moved in recent years to bridging academia and industry. And I am learning a tremendous amount and growing constantly.

How did your colleagues in Tel Aviv react when you left for Carbondale?

They were very sympathetic and understanding, partly because our three children are here. I don't know what they said behind my back though. In Israel, people hardly move from one university to the other. When Akiba Cohen moved from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv, it was a big thing. It's like betraying your home university. Leaving Israel carries a sense of betrayal of your heritage and your national identity. In Hebrew, moving to Israel is called "going up" and leaving the country is "going down." That's why I'm sure my friends and colleagues are not happy about me "going down." That hurts, but I totally understand it and can't blame them. I am ambivalent about it myself. Israel is a tight society with many challenges that

Back to Table of Contents

needs every member that can make a difference. So I'm making huge efforts to stay strongly networked with my Israeli colleagues, and to continue to contribute from afar by advising, reviewing, participating in conferences, publishing in Hebrew. It is extremely important to me.

The question remains: Why did you move?

This is too complicated and personal. But just yesterday, I was approached by the ICA nominating committee to put my name forward for the next presidential election. I don't know if I would have been offered this if I was in Israel. But I may be wrong. There are just things here that I couldn't do in Israel.

Quotation from Dafna Lemish: "I want to ensure continued strengthening of students' social consciousness and desire to harness the media for social good" (Rosenberg, 2010). What could a single professor do to reach this aim?

In both of my research areas, there is strong commitment to social change. Children and media, as well as feminist work, are about how you can make the world a better place. I truly believe that everybody has the responsibility to repair the world, especially privileged people like us. We are in positions that can make a difference. I'm teaching students who will go out in the media industry, and many will also become parents. I want them to do a lot more than just earn a living. For my last book, I collected interviews with 135 TV producers from 65 countries around the world and created eight principles for better television for children (Lemish, 2010). I know that producers now use this list. It gives me a deep sense of satisfaction.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?

I was totally caught off-guard. I had no idea this was coming. It's a great honor. Being president is service work. The real status in ICA is not the president. It's the Fellow. I still can't believe it. I still think of myself as a young scholar with potential, not as someone who is already collecting awards.

Who is Dafna Lemish: a researcher, a teacher, the founder of the* Journal of Children and Media*, the fighter for social justice and women's rights? What is the most important part of your academic life?

I'm all of these. Right now, the most important part for me is to facilitate academic careers of others. Of course, I've got lots of ideas for new books, but I've moved into positions where I can multiply my effect by facilitating others' work. Editing the journal is a huge amount of volunteer work. I don't benefit from it directly, but it mobilizes the field and provides young scholars opportunities. Chairing a department is all about facilitating opportunities for other academics and students. Running for ICA President is also about facilitating others' development.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

To me, communication is the basic definition of humanity. Everything we do is about improving the human condition. It doesn't matter if it is interpersonal or mediated.

How is the reputation of the discipline in Israel, and also here at Southern Illinois?

There is still a great misunderstanding of what communication is all about, partly because of our own complexity. The subject is multidisciplinary and both skills-orientated and scholarly. And on top of it,

Back to Table of Contents

everybody believes they understand communication because they watch TV und use a mobile. Many still think it's not sophisticated and not theoretical. At Tel Aviv, I have often heard, "Maybe we don't need a department of communication. Let's put one of you in psychology and the other one in political science or sociology, and that will be it."

What about the students?

That creates a kind of tension. There is great interest on one hand, and again, a lot of misunderstanding on the other. Many students want to be the next TV celebrity or inventor of the next Facebook. Because communication was so popular in Israel, it also created jealously toward the discipline. Here at Southern Illinois, we are part of a strong college that's all about communication. We have a public TV and radio station on campus that gives us visibility. So the status of the discipline seems different.

Could you draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, battlefields?

I love the metaphor. It's easy to say that there are skyscrapers in the U.S. Let me use a similar metaphor: I feel myself as a bridge, because I've done work both here and in Israel, and in Europe. Unfortunately, not enough of the work from around the world is translated into English. Germany is a great example. The colleagues there tend to write for themselves. If you don't read German, you just don't read them. You also read very little work coming from France or Southern Europe in English. So we don't know where the skyscrapers are, because many of them are hidden from the English sight. My second point is that the skyscrapers depend on the topic. When I worked on migration (Elias & Lemish, 2011), I found a lot of interest in Europe and almost nothing in the United States. And then we know very little about the work in Africa or Latin America. What was your last metaphor?

Where are the battlefields?

The battle quantitative vs. qualitative is still alive and kicking. To me, this is ridiculous, as they are so clearly complementary. And there is also a kind of tension between cultural studies and more empiricist work. Those are old and not too productive battles.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

It's clear to me that communication will remain an important topic of study, but we don't know what the technologies will look like in 20 years. We don't know how those technologies will change the way we teach and the topics of our research. Communicating the unknown. This is one of the directions I would like to think about if elected ICA President. How do we conceptualize dealing with unknown future developments? My concern is that we move more into technology and lose the human aspects.

Are there any scientists whom you would call a role model?

I don't have ideal prototypes—like the favorite movie. I like mix and matching things.

Looking back on 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

My PhD students. I'm just one person, but they are already 12. All but one are women. Even the man did a study on gender issues. I have to admit that this is a gendered response. When you ask women of the one thing they are proud of, they would say their children. In many ways, my students are my children.

Back to Table of Contents

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

I would have fought the battle of my failed promotion for the sake of other women. That's a minor regret. I don't look back and regret anything. I could have lived different lives, but this is the one I'm in, and I'm happy with it.

What will remain when Dafna Lemish is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

My students and their students will remain. Even if my articles are gone, in both of my research areas of children and gender, some changes have already appeared. The ideas will stay, the concern will stay, and the awareness of the importance of the issues will stay. There will be other people doing great work. There is a wonderful expression in Hebrew, "The graveyards are full of people who were irreplaceable."

References

Elias, N., & Lemish, D. (2011). Between three worlds: Host, homeland, and global media in the lives of Russian immigrant families in Israel and Germany. *Journal of Family Issues*, *32,* 1245–1274.

Krotz, F., & Eastman, S. (1999). Orientations toward television outside the home. *Journal of Communication*, *49*, 5–27.

Lemish, D. (1982). The rules of viewing television in public places. *Journal of Broadcasting*, *26*, 757–781.

Lemish, D. (1987). Viewers in diapers: The early development of television viewing. In T. Lindlof (Ed.), *Natural audiences: Qualitative research of media uses and effects* (pp. 33–57). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Lemish, D. (2002). Normalizing inequality: Portrayals of women in Israeli media. *The Journal of Israeli History*, *21*, 110–125.

Lemish, D. (2010). *Screening gender in children's TV: The views of producers around the world.* New York: Routledge.

Lemish, D., & Lemish, P. (1997). A much debated consensus: Media literacy in Israel. In R. Kubey & B. Ruben (Eds.), *Media literacy in the information age* (pp. 213–228). New York: Transaction Publishers.

Rosenberg, P. (2010, January 27). Dafna Lemish named chair of radio-TV department. *The Saluki Times*.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1724–1732 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

SONIA LIVINGSTONE

"I like being where the action is."

Sonia Livingstone, December 14, 2010. London.

Born:	1960 in Adelaide, Australia
Education:	1982 B.Sc. in psychology, University College London
	1987 D.Phil., Oxford
Career:	Post-doc work in Brunel, Jerusalem, Oxford, and Kent
	1990 Lecturer, later Professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)
	2007 ICA President
	2008 ICA Fellow
Personal:	Lives with Peter Lunt, two children

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Sonia Livingstone

Can you tell me something about your parents and about your first professional dreams?
My parents are both academics. Everybody I knew was an academic. My father, Rodney, is a translator of Adorno, Marx, Weber, and Lukàcs. He is a Germanist. My mother, Angela, translates Russian poetry and prose.

Majakowskij and so on?
Particularly Marina Tsvetaeva, also Platonov and Pasternak. Pasternak was first.

Good stuff.
Yes. She knows a lot about the other side of what was the Iron Curtain. My father knows a lot about Germany. I couldn't speak any languages, so I was encouraged to be a scientist. I felt I had to do the opposite, but I had to be an academic. Everybody in my life was talking about ideas, books, and studying.

Why did you become a psychologist?
It was presented to me as the discipline which melds the humanities and sciences. All of my career, I have been interested in bridging different perspectives—qualitative and quantitative methods, for example.

Was this melting pot your idea, or did it come from your parents?
My father would have liked me to be a scientist, and my mother would really have liked me to study languages. So this was something in between. It was also a field which they knew nothing about. I could be an expert, too. Do you want me to say more about my childhood? I've gone too fast.

Just go ahead, please.
I will show you something. Here is my childhood [showing a picture]. This is little Sonia, born in Australia, being brought to see her grandparents in England and surprised at her first snow. She was always a serious girl.

When did your family move to the UK?
When I was four. My father went to Australia. That was the new Promised Land.

After World War II?
They moved in 1959. The Australian government was paying Britain to populate the country. He loved it, and my mother hated it. So they separated, and my mother brought us home. My father came back to his children, not to my mother. She got a job at the University of Essex, a very exciting place. It was the place of 1968, and of Marxist and socialist discussions. It seemed very exciting to debate if you were Trotskyist or Stalinist or Leninist. That was my environment through the '60s and '70s.

Why did you not go into politics?
My father wanted me go to America, where the life of an academic is so much better. I don't think so, but he did. Every academic generation thinks that it has seen the best and the worst is to come. For my parents, the story of the university is a story of decline. For me, it has been a good story, but now I fear it

Back to Table of Contents

is declining, too. My son would now like to be an academic, and I say, "No, no, the best years are gone!'" But he thinks the best is to come.

It depends on your criteria.

It depends on what you value, yes. My parents value the extraordinarily level of freedom from the state and from public exploitation. Whereas for me, the academic system demands a huge amount of investment from the state and commitment back to the state and the society. I enjoy this. For me, it's less an independent academic freedom, it's more a mode of engagement.

How would you compare the student Sonia Livingstone with your students today?

I was rather a lonely student. I didn't understand the student culture. I thought it was fun to spend the summer at the library studying. I did travel, but I was very dedicated to the world of ideas. I have some students like this, but I have a lot of students who just want to have a good time and to pass.

When did you know that you wanted to become a scientist?

When I was 10, my school had a competition to write something. I wrote a story which happened to get into a national book of stories by children. After that, when everyone asked me, "What do you want to be?", I said, "I want to be a writer," which of course, I am. I never said I wanted to be a teacher, but now I am also a teacher. I did think about science when I was finishing school. In the last three years, I thought I should be a biochemist or a geneticist.

A real scientist.

Yes. Then I discovered that there was very little scope for discussion and dissociations. Actually, there is, but it seemed to me then that it was a matter of learning many facts. Psychology suddenly seemed to be a way out, because I always read a lot of literature, and I wanted to think about the world. Psychology, then, was very proud of its origins in philosophy and its inclusion of humanities and discussions of meaning, identity, and interpretation. So it was a good choice. Now, psychology has become very scientific.

Experiments, statistics, and so on.

I don't mind experiments and statistics, but I do reject the persistent reduction of explanations of the social to the biological. Whenever a department bought a MRI scanner to make pictures of the brain, this was, to me, so far from questions of mediated influence. It's not the statistics. It is the reduction instead of explanation.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to audience research?

There was actually one. My PhD was going to be on why biological explanations for human behavior have become so popular in everyday discourse. But there was no money. It was 1982 when I applied and 1983 when I began. The Independent Broadcasting Authority agreed with Oxford University to establish a studentship on a TV subject. I won this studentship and had to throw away my beloved project about the popular discourse of genetics.

Back to Table of Contents

You had to do something with television.

Peter, my partner, comes from a working class background. One day, he said, "Sonia, you are so privileged. You have no idea what television the ordinary public engages with. They watch soap operas." I had never seen a soap opera. He said, "If you wish to understand people, you must start watching it." I did, and it raised lots of social psychological questions. It's become a theme for my life. When I began, I just studied British and American soaps, but soap operas are everywhere. I have taught students from all over the world. So it's a very good focus for thinking about mediated globalization.

In an interview, you claimed that, in the UK, core disciplines such as social psychology pay remarkably little attention to media and communication (Livingstone, 2006, p. 181).

This is a running puzzle for me. In the world of social psychology, you can read textbook after textbook, and they will never ever mention the media. I do find it extraordinary. It was explained to me once by somebody who has written a best-selling textbook on social influence, "There is no need to write about media, because media are just one particular form of social influence." To me, this is bizarre. Actually recently, I became involved with a group of sociologists of the family. They asked me to talk about the role of the media. It was the same all over again. They know that family homes are full of media, but they really don't think it is important to any fundamental family processes. Society sees media as incidental and unimportant, or just the cause of some nasty problems: violent children, mindless adults, and so on. Why? I don't know. Maybe social science prefers to focus on the state, and the media seem merely tangential to real power?

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers?

My undergraduate degree was in a classic psychological department, very successful with a small group of social psychologists, who I found completely inspiring. My first mentor was my doctoral supervisor Michael Argyle, a rather maverick academic. He had 20 bow-ties, very large, with lights and bells, sort of the classic wacky professor. He wrote books all the time, including on Christmas day. He was an expert in nonverbal communication and social skills. What he really liked to do was to teach the doctor who looks at his or her notepad while asking, "What is the matter with you?" to look up, make eye contact with you, and smile. Simple skills, but not widely in use. Argyle was quite influenced by Goffman. He taught me to pay attention to micro details of an everyday life, but he knew little about media or soap opera. It was so weird. I was talking about Italian and German theories from reception, and he thought I was mad. But he left me to get on with it.

Were there other mentors or teachers, as well?

One of the people who really guided me was Roger Silverstone. He had just written *The Message of Television* (Silverstone, 1981). We had a fabulous conversation just as I was finishing my PhD, and he then gave me my first job. My PhD was examined by Jay Blumler. He said to my bemused supervisor, "I understand absolutely what she has been doing, it's brilliant, let's promote its publication." He became my mentor forever. He helped me publish in the early days, and he introduced me to people.

Back to Table of Contents

Sounds like a highway to an academic career.

We had still Margaret Thatcher. There was no money for the social sciences. I had five jobs in three years. It was exhausting. Roger Silverstone got a grant, and I taught sociology for a year. That was a tough experience. I had come from this traditional psychology department in Oxford, and suddenly I was in an interdisciplinary group of sociologists, information scientists, and anthropologists. It was fantastic and it was terrifying. Then I got a grant for a post-doc. I could go anywhere in the world, but not Britain or America. With my one language, this condition did not give me so many choices.

Back to Australia, for example.

In fact, I went to Jerusalem. Elihu Katz has been a mentor to me ever since, and Tamar Liebes became a friend. We worked together, and I wrote *Making Sense of Television* (Livingstone, 1990). It was my first time in a media department. I went back to Oxford and had all the privileges of research—no teaching, no demands, but nobody to talk to.

Were you ever forced to think about gender questions during your academic career?

Yes, often. In Britain, 1 in 20 professors was female when I started. Now, it's about 1 in 15 or 1 in 10. At LSE, it's better, especially since Tony Giddens came as director. There is an untold story. In that time when I had the five jobs, I also had a baby. That was terrifying, because I had no job security and kept going to interviews. Everyone could see I was pregnant. In my Oxford college, they said that has never happened here before; we have no arrangements for maternity leave. In the early days, it was very hard to make any public mention of having children. At LSE, I got maternity leave for my second child, but I was the first person in the department to have a child, it seemed. My head of the department was embarrassed. I felt I had to work very hard to say my brain has not turned into porridge; I'm still a serious academic. So it was a point of pride to me that you could not see on my CV when the children came. Now things are easier. It is okay to have a few years where you don't publish so much.

Is there anything that a single professor could do to improve the situation?

Yes, of course. In our department, it is acknowledged that people—men as well as women—have childcare responsibilities. I anticipate that people have future needs. I think the head of a department should not look surprised when somebody says, "I'm pregnant."

In an interview, you talked about your efforts to put your statistical and experimental training into dialogue with qualitative and critical approaches. Why did you choose this rocky road?

I have always tried to bring together things which are apart. I have decided that is because my parents got divorced when I was very young. I can't think of any other reason why, from my choice of psychology as a bridging discipline, to my present interest in cross-national studies. Now, I'm doing a survey with 25,000 people. This is a lot of statistics, but next year, I will return to focus groups and observations. I always oscillate. I think it was the move around the disciplines when I was just starting out, but I think also I just love bringing things together. Peter said to me, quoting Goffman, the important thing is always to be where the action is. There are the fights—and the bridges.

Back to Table of Contents

Normally, nobody would leave the center of power.

I left it when I couldn't bear any longer discussions about the adequacy of control groups in experimental psychology, and I left it again when I joined the media and communication department. Perhaps I always left where the power is, but I like where the action is. Power somehow stultifies the dynamism of intellectual ideas.

How did you feel when you were asked to run for ICA President?

Honored. Anxious. I felt it was something that, if it were going to happen, should happen 10 or 20 years further on. But I couldn't say no. Actually, I said no the first time, because it arrived at a moment when I had a big grant. The following year, they called me again. I think I have pursued where the action is, but I am not immune to the processes of power. It was always important to me to engage at the highest institutional level that I could.

Why did you feel anxious?

I stood on the mandate that I would try to internationalize ICA and bring together the different factions. It was like the classic metaphor of trying to steer a huge ship. You can change it very slowly. Wolfgang Donsbach began, in many ways, with internationalization. I tried some more initiatives. I was anxious because I tried too much. Some presidents seem to have felt less need to transform the organization at all, just to promote it. I tried to improve the transparency of how the organization worked, and this, too, was a step toward internationalization, because scholars outside America didn't know much about ICA: If you don't know how something works, you don't know how to influence it.

Did you ever consider applying for a position in the U.S.?

I think about it every now and again. When I first got my PhD, I was interviewed by UCLA, and it was a most bizarre experience. I had no idea how different American universities are. Then 10 years ago, I spent half a year at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign and got a better understanding of the system. I have really enjoyed moving my career from a focus on Britain to a focus on Europe. I loved working with colleagues from different countries. In America, my work would be so different. I don't think I could do there what I can do here.

***Could you name the main difference between European und U.S. universities*?**

Could I? Our power has certainly declined since the late 16th century. That gives people in Europe an awareness of the world. In America, they sometimes seem rather blind to the rest of the world. They analyze typical Americans. They say 75% of the people have access to a mobile phone. I think, how arrogant. What about really poor countries? Many scholars seem so grounded in America they don't see the questions about other cultures. Maybe I just don't want to be in America. The whole career process is very foreign to me. I felt I have always been an outsider looking in. In this country, I have the chance to enter the debate. In America, I would be a weird foreigner bringing peculiar British practices.

Do you like the role of government adviser?

This one is newer for me. About 10 years ago, I began to think: Am I writing for communication journals, or for people who might do something with these ideas? I see it as a 10-year experiment. You will observe the coincidence with the Labour government. Now, I'm thinking what position to take, because I disagree

Back to Table of Contents

with the direction of the present government in every way. The one role I have continued is on the UK Council for Child Internet Safety. I'm the evidence champion for the government on that topic.

Evidence champion sounds good.
It sounds like I could get an Olympic gold for that. I like the interaction between academic research and governmental advice. Now, the British universities are being evaluated for their impact. They will have to document how they have changed society.

Is it a task of university to change a society?
Yes, for the better. This is quite a task, and perhaps our other tasks are no longer valued [laughing]. Oddly enough, my 10-year experiment now coincides with the ambitions of my university. We have to establish that well-regarded academic publications can be traced through to a change in industry revenues. This is the game.

Who is Sonia Livingstone? A scholar, a teacher, a chairwoman of international organizations, a politician who works with scientific methods? What is the most important part of your academic life?
The freedom to get up in the morning and think about what to do next, and then being able to do it. This is what most fascinates me. I might decide to reach a section of the government and persuade them of a case, or to write a critical article on the future of communication. I might decide to redo my course on audiences. Usually, I can get up in the morning and decide.

Are there any roles you like the best?
It is exactly the combination of all of that.

In your presidential address, you gave a very ambivalent picture of the research field (Livingstone, 2009). What is your definition of communication science? What is the subject all about?
I don't call it communication science. I call it media and communications. When we formed our department in 2003, we spent a lot of time discussing its name. We think of ourselves as a department at the intersection of audiovisual, print media, telecommunications, and information systems. Of course, I think communication is the core process that makes all this unique. I hesitate about the word "science." It's such a contested word. It doesn't necessarily make us better to claim that, and it makes some of my colleagues feel excluded. My address about the mediation of everything goes back to Michael Argyle. What he alerted me to was the way in which even this conversation is mediated by the language, which is mine and not yours, by the arrangement of this house, even by the presence of the cat. Now, everything is mediated by complex technological systems, which are largely commercially owned. So I keep thinking, what is the connection between a face-to-face dialogue and the advent of Facebook, Google, or WikiLeaks. The continuities and differences are what our field is about.

Back to Table of Contents

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?

That is a hard question. I don't have a good overview of the world, but I do see two dominant trends. One is the increasing worldwide dialogue among people who call themselves scholars of media and communications in one way or another. So I now have a better knowledge of what is happening with the field in China than I did 10 years ago. This is exciting, and I don't think anymore we are facing an Americanization of the field, which is how it was 20 years ago.

And trend number two?

People in departments of political science, English, or history say, "There are media in this world." They are now studying them, and they don't come to us for a history of ideas, methods, or theories. A typical political scientist might study the impact of the Internet for political processes without ever reading a communication journal. This is a real threat to our field. We cite all of these disciplines, and they rarely cite us.

It's all about reputation, of course.

But we also cite people as a matter of professional respect. If I write about children and the Internet, then I go to childhood studies in psychology. This is a research requirement. But if they write something about children and the Internet, they do not feel the need to come to us.

Where do you see our field in 2030?

Fortunately, we have a market in terms of students. There is also the trend for strengthening and growing media and communications departments. That expansion would give us visibility, and then maybe political scientists and sociologists will cite us back. Then there are big unknowns. Isn't China opening a new university every week? So what will be happening in 2030? I have no idea.

Are there any scientists whom you would regard as role models?

Elihu Katz is one, perhaps not achievable. He always goes to where the action is and creates a lively discourse about it. There are some problematic role models, too, especially for women. Hilde Himmelweit accumulated a trail of stories I hope would never attach to me. Sandra Ball-Rokeach is a role model—an excellent scholar, always straight and effective. She integrates theory and empirical perspective in a way I like. I watch my peers closely—Patti Valkenburg, for example. She and I share a kind of insane energy to do too many things at once. There are lots of others—especially admirable are those who are always ready to rethink, to question the taken-for-granted.

Looking back on 25 years in communications, is there anything you are especially proud of?

I'm proud of teaching and promoting audience research in the face of a field that keeps forgetting about audiences and thinking production and text is all that matters. I am proud of *Making Sense of Television* (Livingstone, 1990) and *Talk on Television* (Livingstone & Lunt, 1994). Those two books most expressed a vision of what I thought the field could be. I am proud of building networks of European researchers since 1995. Some of those people I still work with. We are creating a sense that there could be, at least in the field of children and media, real collaboration and meeting of ideas. And I am proud of getting this funny,

Back to Table of Contents

interdisciplinary field recognized within the LSE. Now I am feeling quite good [laughing]. I'm also proud of being one of those to bang on the door of America saying, "Hello, there is someone out here."

Is there something that you would do differently today?

Perhaps I wasted 10 years engaged in the fight about social psychology. Perhaps it was useful; I don't know. It was a fight in which I failed. It was a fight to change the discipline. I spent 10 years trying to work in a department that did not want media. Otherwise? I have probably written too much. I should have written less and better. But I can't stop myself, and I love writing.

What will remain when Sonia Livingstone is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

I would like to say what remains is a field that is more confident of its international and interdisciplinary contribution. But I am one small player, and many people have this aim. I would like to have written books that people will remember. But I don't think this is so important. I think you act for now, the world you are in. Each act shapes the conditions for future acts. So, I influence my students and my colleagues in a small way, and they do things differently.

References

Livingstone, S. (1990). *Making sense* of *television*: *The psychology* of *audience interpretation*. Oxford, UK: Pergamon.

Livingstone, S. (2006). Interview with Prof. Sonia Livingstone. *Zeitschrift für Medienpsychologie*, *18*, 179–182.

Livingstone, S. (2009). On the mediation of everything: ICA presidential address 2008. *Journal of Communication*, *59*, 1–18.

Livingstone, S., & Lunt, P. (1994). *Talk on television*: *Audience participation and public debate*. London: Routledge.

Silverstone, R. (1981). *The message of television: Myth and narrative in contemporary culture*. London: Heinemann Educational.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1733–1738 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

MAX MCCOMBS

"Agenda-setting theory is a lot more than me."

Max McCombs, March 24, 2011.
University of Texas, Austin. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1938 in Birmingham, Alabama
Education:	1960 B.A., Tulane University
	1961 M.A., Stanford University
	1966 Ph.D., Stanford University
Career:	1961–1963 Journalist, *New Orleans Times-Picayune*
	1966 Assistant Professor, University of California, Los Angeles
	1967 Assistant Professor, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
	1969 Associate Professor, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
	1973 Research Professor, Syracuse University
	1985 Chair, Department of Journalism, University of Texas, Austin
	1995 ICA Fellow
	1997 WAPOR President
Personal:	Married, two sons and two daughters

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Max McCombs

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?
Birmingham was an industrial city at that time. My father worked for a steel company. When I was small, my mother was at home. Later, she took a position at an elementary school. In high school, I had an English teacher who said I wrote well and I should get on the school newspaper staff. That was my introduction to journalism at a pretty low level, of course. When it came time to go to college, I had already decided to major in journalism.

Were there any university graduates in your family or in your environment?
Yes and no. All the women in my mother's family had graduated from college. She was also set to go, but unfortunately, my parents became of the age to go to college just as the Depression struck. There was no college money anymore for her. My father had inherited some money, and indeed, had gone to a prep school in Birmingham, but he couldn't follow up this route.

What did he do in the factory?
Over the years, he rose up through the ranks. By the time I was in high school, he was the foreman of the maintenance group, and shortly after that, he became supervisor. It was the number two position in that place. Most of the people my parents knew had gone to college. No one ever questioned what I would do after finishing high school.

Did religion play any role in your childhood?
Yes. My parents were both Methodists and active in the church. We didn't go every Sunday, but most of them.

Do you still remember why you chose to study at Tulane?
I had looked at a number of different journalism programs. Tulane had a relatively small one, but it was a good choice. It was a good university. Although none of our family had ever lived in New Orleans, there were a lot of connections. It was a familiar city. The daughter of our neighbors, who was a year-and-a-half ahead of me, was also there. I'm still in touch with this family.

How would you compare the student Max McCombs with your students today?
It depends on what students you are speaking about. I see great similarities to a lot of them. Mostly, I work with PhD students. These are people who have clearly found their way along a career path.

Why did you abandon your beginning journalistic career in New Orleans?
I was the victim of a benevolent conspiracy. It began with Walter Wilcox, who was my professor at Tulane and became a friend. In my senior year, Walter said, "Before you get a job as a journalist, you have to get a master's at Stanford." When I arrived there, I had to go to Chilton Bush. He was the founder of the program, the adviser to all graduate students, and in his last year. He said that I should take Wilbur Schramm's theory course, Bush's course on content analysis, and two courses in psychology. Basically, my master's degree was the first year of the PhD program. In those days, you didn't get continuing

Back to Table of Contents

financial support at Stanford unless you had some professional experience. For the first year, I had a good scholarship. If I wanted to go back, I needed to work for a couple of years.

That's why you became a reporter in New Orleans.
I applied for a number of newspaper jobs and got one offer from Glendale, in the suburbs of L.A., and one from New Orleans. Glendale paid five dollars a week more, but the *Picayune* was the bigger paper. I started as most beginners do, in general assignments, and did whatever needed to be done. I enjoyed it very much. I was young, single, and went to work at two o'clock in the afternoon. That was great. After a year or so, I was switched over to cover the State Supreme Court. This was fascinating, but I had already discovered communication research. The program at Stanford had an elective reading list with about 50 books you were supposed to read. I was going to the Tulane library with some regularity and checking out these books.

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers?
Chilton Bush was very influential, as Wilbur Schramm certainly was. It was not just that first theory course. In my last two years, I was one of his research assistants and worked on a number of projects. I spent a pleasant summer moving across the country and copying punch cards in the National Election Center and in the depository for the Gallup polls. When Schramm retired and moved to Hawaii, I was out there three times. The best theoretician on faculty was probably Richard Carter. I've learned a lot of habits and work patterns from him.

Does a communication researcher need inside knowledge about journalism?
You can certainly study some aspects without any practical experience, but it's helpful if you have been there and know how journalists work, and what their habits and traditions are. I can give you a simple example. In the very first agenda-setting study, Donald Shaw and I correlated the issue agendas of the news media and saw that these agendas were highly homogeneous (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). This, methodologically, is very valuable, but also very understandable. Journalists are great plagiarists. They look to see what other journalists are doing and tend to do pretty much the same.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to agenda-setting?
One root is Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (Lippmann, 1922). Reading the entire book was one of the things I did on my own as a master's student. It was still very fresh. A second source was a small faculty group at UCLA that used to have lunch together. One Friday, the *Los Angeles Times* had three potential lead stories on the front page, which started a speculative conversation: What happens to public response if events get buried because of the circumstances? That fall, I moved to North Carolina and met Donald Shaw. We talked about this idea and started the study you know.

More than 40 years later, you are still writing on agenda-setting. What keeps you going?
The theory keeps growing. The Chapel Hill study was focused on what I would now describe as basic agenda-setting effects. *Setting the Agenda* covers five different aspects of the theory (McCombs, 2004). There has just been steady growth over the years. David Weaver introduced "need for orientation" (Weaver, 1980), Donald and I introduced the idea of "attribute agenda-setting" (Shaw & McCombs, 1977), which was actually tested in a study where Doris Graber was involved (Weaver et al., 1981). Along the

Back to Table of Contents

way, scholars began to ask, "Who sets the media's agenda?" At ICA in Boston, I'll present a paper using network analysis. There always seem to be new interesting questions. Polity asked me to do a second edition of the book, because there has been a lot of research since 2004.

How would you rate the academic position of agenda-setting scholars within our discipline?
It's a vibrant and diverse group. There are people on every continent, first in Germany and later in Spain and in East Asia. My family and I have been going to the University of Navarra since 1994. I worked there with Esteban Lopez-Escobar (McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, & Llamas, 2000). Not all agenda-setting people are students or friends of mine. There are still people who make major contributions, and I don't really know them [laughing]. I've met most of them, since we've obviously something in common.

You took a long ride from New Orleans to Texas. Was it so difficult to find a home?
No. It's all about opportunities. Fate is kind. I left Stanford for UCLA partly because Walter Wilcox had become the department chair there. I spent the first year commuting from the Bay Area to L.A., teaching two sections every Monday. Then a permanent position came up, but Ronald Reagan cut the university money, and I moved to North Carolina. One day, after six years in North Carolina, I got a call from Henry Schulte, who was a dean in Syracuse at that time. He offered me an endowed chair and was very persuasive. It was a really good opportunity to build something there and just fate. Eventually, I became director of the ANPA research centre. I worked on newspaper audience research and spent a lot of time in Washington.

This sounds perfect.
Yes, it was. But then Schulte retired, and the dean who took his place was a person who liked to throw his power. Two years after I left, there was a faculty vote on no confidence, which was 27 to one. I came to Austin as chair of the Department of Journalism. I did this for six years and then decided that it was enough.

How did you feel when you became an ICA fellow?
I was excited and had no clue that this was going to happen. I learned about it in Pamplona. Steven Chaffee came to town and asked, "Have you heard from ICA?" I often didn't go to the conferences because it conflicted with Spain. It was one of the four top honors I've ever received.

Which are the three others?
The Deutschmann Award from AEJ, the Murray Edelman Award from APSA, and the honorary doctorate from the University of Antwerp.

Who is Max McCombs: a researcher, a teacher, the inventor of the trademark agenda-setting? What is the most important part of your academic life?
It's all of the above. Research on agenda-setting obviously involves teaching and supervising dissertations. This is my life, and I love it.

Back to Table of Contents

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

I don't think that there is a fixed definition. I come primarily from a journalistic and media effects perspective, and it is gratifying to see how agenda-setting theory expands, but there are many, many other perspectives that one can take. About two years ago, I received a paper from a professor in Israel who had used my theory as framework for a study on Jewish religious practices in Early Central Europe. One of the trends in agenda-setting research is a movement well beyond public affairs. I'm still in contact with that professor. We submitted a paper to the Religion and Media Interest group at AEJMC. So probably, my name will suddenly appear on a study about a Jewish sect.

How is the reputation of our discipline here at Texas?

I think the research is well received here. Our college is one of the largest at campus. We have good ties, particularly with political science, because there are a number of faculty members who are interested in communication issues. Our students take quite a few courses in psychology or sociology. Those people are serving in our committees. I see at least one disadvantage. In the National Science Foundation, there is no communication category. To compete with those grants, we have to play on somebody else's field.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?

The most exciting feature is probably East Asia. That's where the new milestones will come from (Lowery & DeFleur, 1983). They come out of a different culture and can look at things a little differently. There are newer universities, newer programs, and less tradition than in North America or Europe. In South America, there are also some interesting programs coming along, particularly in Chile, Argentina, and Brazil.

So you see the field moving to Asia till 2030.

You can't predict the future. In the 1960s and 1970s, a lot of new things like the spiral of silence, knowledge gap, cultivation analyses, uses and gratifications, framing, and agenda-setting happened. Most of those continued, but some got into boundary disputes. Agenda-setting has a little bit of that, but those problems are relatively minor. I think, for example, the term agenda-building is redundant, but if people want to call this sequence like that, it is okay, as long as it doesn't really change what they investigate.

Are there any scientists whom you would call role models?

Probably Schramm and Carter, as well as the general atmosphere at Stanford, where physics was particularly at its height in the 1960s. There, I saw a model for scientific work and learned about the creative sparks of where the ideas come from and how to keep going with your ideas (McCombs, 2009).

Looking back on 50 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

Yes, I'm proud of the agenda-setting theory. It is very gratifying to see how that has grown. There is now a broad international coalition of scholars. I see two trends in the field and start with the centripetal one. People are going back to the basic ideas and pursuing them in greater detail. A quick example is Jörg Matthes (2008) and his approach to need for orientation. At the same time, there is a centrifugal trend like this study about the Jewish sect. Agenda-setting is very big in business schools. They study corporate reputations and the consequences of those. There is a major subfield of agenda-setting in the area of

Back to Table of Contents

economics and public relations. John Fortunato (2001) wrote a book about the NBA and used agenda-setting. So you have all these different applications now.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?
I would try to dump some of the administrative stuff earlier and to concentrate more on the research, but given the nature of university life, this is probably not possible.

What will remain when Max McCombs is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
The theory will clearly remain. It's a lot more than me. As long as I can be active, I want to continue and build it out.

References

Fortunato, J. A. (2001). *The ultimate assist: The relationship and broadcast strategies of the NBA and television networks*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Lippmann, W. (1922). *Public opinion*. New York: The Free Press.

Lowery, S. A., & DeFleur, M. L. (1983). *Milestones in mass communication research: Media effects*. New York: Longman.

Matthes, J. (2008). Need for orientation as a predictor of agenda setting effects: Causal evidence from a two-wave panel study. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 20*, 440–453.

McCombs, M. (2004). *Setting the agenda: The mass media and public opinion*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

McCombs, M. (2009). *An agenda-setting notebook*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

McCombs, M., Lopez-Escobar, E., & Llamas, J. P. (2000). Setting the agenda of attributes in the 1996 Spanish general election. *Journal of Communication*, *50*, 77–92.

McCombs, M., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *36*, 176-187.

Shaw, D. L., & McCombs, M. E. (1977). *The emergence of American political issues: The agenda setting function of the press*. St. Paul, MN: West.

Weaver, D. H. (1980). Audience need for orientation and media effects. *Communication Research*, *7*, 361–376.

Weaver, D. H., Graber, D. A., McCombs, M. E., & Eyal, C. H. (1981). *Media agenda setting in a presidential election: Issues, images and interest*. New York: Praeger.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1739–1746 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

JACK MCLEOD

"Communication is also a matter of environmental influences."

Jack McLeod, March 3, 2011.
University of Wisconsin-Madison. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1930 in Chicago
Education:	1952 B.S.
	1953 M.S. in journalism, University of Wisconsin-Madison
	1957 M.A. in sociology, Michigan
	1962 Ph.D. in social psychology, Michigan
Career:	1953–1955 army service
	1962 Assistant Professor in journalism and mass communication, University of Wisconsin-Madison
	1966 Associate Professor, University of Wisconsin-Madison
	1970 Professor, University of Wisconsin-Madison
	1988 ICA Fellow
	1991 B. Aubrey Fisher Mentorship Award
	2001 Edelman Career Achievement Award (with Steven Chaffee)
	2001 Emeritus

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Jack McLeod

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

I grew up in the lower-middle class, predominately Jewish neighborhood in Chicago. My father was a second-generation railroad clerical worker. My mother was second-generation Swedish. She had been a secretary until she had kids. I went to Chicago public schools during the Depression. I have certain memories that I would hate to see repeated. I remember that I saw my neighbor crying. My mother told me that they had lost their house to foreclosure. I remember workers who got paid bare-minimum wages by the Works Progress Association [just] to keep people working. The high schools had a terrible reputation. I think I learned something nevertheless [laughing]. I later went to a junior college with people who worked during the day and went to college at night. That was another aspect of reality.

Do you have any siblings?

My brother is three years older. He became a successful international commodities trader. My mother used to read Mark Twain and Robert Lewis Stevenson to us. There began an appreciation of reading for both of us at that point.

Where there any university graduates in your environment?

My uncle, George Hanson, was a significant figure in my life. He was a brilliant guy who had gone to college when the three girls in their family were not allowed to do so by my autocratic maternal grandfather. My grandfather was a contractor and entrepreneur who insisted that the boys would study engineering in college. Uncle George was originally a communist before I knew him. That was not uncommon at the time. He became a theoretical socialist. In the end, he was a non-violent anti-capitalist and very cynical regarding politics. Part of his radicalism insisted that he would not work for a profit-making corporation. He tested safety equipment for Underwriters Laboratory, a funded consumer organization. He gave us Russian novels and stuff on mathematics [laughing]. He read seven languages, was a champion chess player, and an amateur theatre actor. He was a big influence on my independence and curiosity for a whole bunch of things. A little bit later, my mother saved up enough money to pay for my university tuition.

Why did you go to Wisconsin?

I had a choice between here and Illinois. I visited both and had a girlfriend studying in Champaign. Despite that, I decided that Madison would be like a new world for me. It was just beautiful here. Sadly, my economic circumstances would not be able to afford a place like this today. That is one of the things that bother me. It influenced me to look at status differences in my research. It became a major thing for me to examine status and other structural constraints on communication and the effects of communication on people from different class and status levels.

You started out in journalism.

I liked writing, and I began to realize how important mass media were in conveying information to ordinary people. I didn't know what I wanted to do, but I was interested in journalism techniques. My dream was to be a foreign or a Washington correspondent, but the only jobs I could get when I finished were on small-town papers.

Back to Table of Contents

How did your family react when they realized you wanted to be a journalist?

I don't know. I worked for the student newspaper as a photographer in high school and wrote for the student paper in college. My uncle approved of Wisconsin, but neither my mother nor my father went beyond the eighth grade. I don't know how they felt. Anyway, as a college senior, I took a course in research methods. Ralph Nafziger was the director of the School of Journalism, and Malcolm MacLean taught the course. It was very interesting, and I had no problem following the abstract research concepts. I decided to stay on for a master's degree in journalism, and it involved research. I did a content analysis of *The American Legion Magazine*.

That sounds like a Frankfurt School topic, made by Leo Lowenthal (1944).

Yeah [laughing]. Well, I discovered a lot. The organization was politically controversial; an activist right-wing organization. They were running out of veterans in the 1930s and decided to start the *Sons of the American Legion*. There was some indication they sought ties with a Nazi German veterans' organization. I was also a project assistant. This tells you something about the early days of research. As others, Malcolm MacLean was convinced that there were essentially new methodological and statistical techniques whose answers would influence journalists and others. I helped him to build a Guttman's Scalogram. Now you can do a Guttman analysis in seconds, but back then, you did it by hand. I spent hours and hours drilling holes: 60 holes, 100 holes for each of 160 balsa wood strips?

I guess Malcolm MacLean became something of a role model.

Yes, he was a great person. I got to know his family as well. Mal was son of an academic who developed a college curriculum to encourage less privileged kids to get a college education. Mal sought to make a similar academic contribution. I was quite inspired by that, but I was also facing the army. I was so tired after finishing my master's degree that I wrote a letter and asked if they would wait six months before they drafted me [laughing]. I worked during that interval as a public opinion interviewer, going from door-to-door. Since I was male, they sent me to the black areas of Chicago, which white people never really see. It was like two worlds. This was eye-opening for me. I learned more about the conditions people faced and [gained] respect for their difficulties, such as those older black American women faced just walking to the store and not getting your purse stolen. There, I got the appreciation for people and how they function with their aspirations and often broken dreams. That's also true for the army, where I was, for a time, in the combat engineers with many minority soldiers.

How would you compare the student Jack McLeod with today's students?

Wisconsin is average in size, population, and level of income. It is very un-average in many other ways. There is no obvious reason why Wisconsin became one of the world's leading universities except for a progressive tradition that brought public policy and higher education closer together after Robert La Follette became Governor in 1900. Prior to that, this was a state settled in large numbers by the 48ers from Germany and Scandinavians, both of whom stressed education. So it has an interesting tradition, but there was never huge funding available for the journalism school to attract the best graduate students. But many who did come became the best students and later renowned scholars in the field.

Back to Table of Contents

What about the students today and back then in the 1950s?

Of necessity, today's doctoral students are more focused on a career. You have to publish enough to get tenure before you leave graduate school [laughing]. Most doctoral programs today are very much focused on publication and getting citations. That is not all for the good. I guess I was very naïve, but I never worried about tenure, or that I wasn't going to be a star. I did have time to read and do other things. After the army, MacLean was at Michigan State. He had advised me regarding different communication programs, but they were so early in their development, including the one at Wisconsin.

Is it because of MacLean that you changed your subject to sociology?

Yeah. He recommended social psychology. This was the premier new field. I also thought of Columbia. But half of the famous social psychologists of the time were in Ann Arbor at Michigan. Ted Newcomb and Morris Janowitz as examples. The statistician Tad Blalock was a fantastic teacher. Communication in the late 1950s was primarily a small branch of speech and journalism schools held closely to their trade focus. I went into the doctoral program in social psychology, which was based on close ties between sociologists and psychologists. Janowitz, Newcomb, Dan Katz, and some others really made it a cohesive program. I enjoyed being a part of it, but I decided fairly early on that I was much more interested in the sociological end of it. Anyway, that's where my ideas of experiential learning come from—the need for exposure to the real world, for example. A lot of that led to the redevelopment of our doctoral program in mass communication, starting with Steve Chaffee's arrival from Stanford in 1965.

You are talking about Wisconsin again.

Yes. We did it almost from scratch because there were very few people that could be hired. Most of the schools in journalism wanted people who had 10 years of media experience. I wasn't willing to go to the *Dubuque Telegraph Herald* for 10 years. One of the people who influenced me at Michigan was a fellow student, Ernie Harburg. He was working on the health effects of the environment, living in slums for example. We developed a theory on that which also looked at Freud, Marx, and things in between (McLeod, Harburg, & Price, 1966). We were studying basic ideas in a very free and open discussion. It was a model for learning, teaching, and later reshaping the doctoral program. While at Michigan, Mal would often invite me up to East Lansing. So I got an insight into David Berlo and the people that were employed there. When I was finishing my PhD, I turned down a job offer at MSU.

What led you away from them?

The dynamics of the place. I didn't want to be there. Paul Deutschmann had died suddenly. Mal had heart problems and later died at age 53. Everyone up there was ruled by terror. I realized that the three of Schramm's Illinois graduates were all rivals: George Gerbner, David Berlo, and Percy Tannenbaum. I had no desire to be part of a system of that kind, though I must say it improved greatly after Berlo left. I could have gone to a psych department at Connecticut, but psychology departments are often boring places to be part of.

When did you know that you wanted to become a communication scientist?

Well, I didn't really [laughing]. Another job possibility was in sociology, at San Francisco State. I could have worked in survey research there. I had some very much applied goals in starting the graduate work. I wanted to adopt messages to the way people live, so as to reach the underserved. When Ralph Nafziger

Back to Table of Contents

contacted me, I had some reservations how I would fit in here. It was a small school. The doctoral program was basically Tannenbaum and myself. Percy was very nice to me. He had a wonderful sense of humour and lots of stories to tell about Gerbner and Berlo. Tannenbaum terrorized the grad students, but he treated me well.

Did you ever regret that you abandoned newspaper journalism?

I would have liked the practice of journalism if it had a more investigative research focus and were journalists less phobic about numbers. I did a study on the Milwaukee papers and had questionnaires from the journalists working there. I realized that even a fairly progressive paper had a marketing idea of research. At least I got some insights in the job. Actually, there is a part of the associations' story I didn't get to.

Just go ahead, please.

I don't know what really made ICA a viable institution. When Chaffee got here, everything was close to journalism and to AEJ. By 1965, AEJ got a new constitution and formed divisions well before ICA did. Chaffee, Richard Carter, Brad Greenberg, Gerald Kline, and I planned the Theory and Methodology Division. Later, it became the Communication Theory and Methodology Division because they wanted to have it earlier in the alphabetical order. In 1968, I was head-elect of the division and Chaffee the paper-chair. We designed whatever we wanted to do with the convention program. We were the first division that had discussants, for example. Not everyone agreed, but it was a good idea. They didn't like to be criticized. Our plan was to have two or three papers in a 90-minutes session, and to have the papers arrive the day before so they could be read in advance. Ultimately, that plan became common in other divisions, as well, but today we have four or more papers per session and poster sessions to demonstrate research productivity. There isn't much time for discussion of ideas.

What about ICA?

I don't know why it took ICA more than 10 years to reform itself as a more substantial association. I guess some of the old rhetoricians who controlled speech departments stood in the way. But Dave Berlo ran over them. ICA's redevelopment also had to do with a succession of strong research presidents in the late 1970s, but that is just a hypothesis.

That explains why you originally connected more with AEJ than with ICA.

Another factor was that the ICA convention paper submission deadline came at the peak time of our annual survey (McLeod, 2005). Our life trajectories are guided by a host of accidental, as well as intentional, factors. By and large, ICA became more international in scope and developed its divisions at that time. There is a downside to a divisional structure, though. Research in political and mass communication has little or no connection with organizational communication or other relevant areas. Divisions have advantages in developing specialties and improving camaraderie, but creative research is not fostered merely by in-group competition.

This is not just an ICA or AEJ problem.

No. The expedient thing students do today is to find a well-worn concept that works, and then to hammer it once more. Third-person effect always works, but there are many other misperceptions that are no less

Back to Table of Contents

important. I once encountered the founder of that idea (Davison, 1983). He didn't see third-person effect as anything wonderful, but just a thought. It's the same with agenda-setting and framing. There is a kind of imperialism that grows around them that is a bit foolish.

How would you rate the academic position of political communication within the discipline?
It is one of the top divisions. That has certainly been helped by the connection with APSA. The quality of the journal *Political Communication* is very good.

Could you describe your heritage after 38 years at Wisconsin?
Chaffee and I realized that the field wouldn't go very far unless we produced quality students. Ultimately, people like Byron Reeves came as a faculty member in the early 1970s and did broaden the doctoral program. We tried to organize the program so that our students would become serious scholars. Part of their training was participation in an annual survey of adults in Dane County. Over 37 years, with different topics and new concepts each year, we analyzed data from an estimated 15,000 people. We knew that most of the learning doesn't come in the classroom from lecturing, but from doing. Nowadays, it's so expensive to do original survey research. You have to go through clearances on and on. It is much easier to do a secondary analysis. Sadly, that limits creative scholarship.

Your son, Douglas, got a position at Wisconsin as well. Is there a kind of McLeod dynasty?
Of course, I am delighted to have Doug here, but I swear I didn't have anything to do with bringing him back. He was in a nice situation in Delaware. His interests are more in social movements and protest groups. It's not that I didn't like those topics, but there were constraints. We did a survey every year (McLeod, 2005), and I couldn't use as many other methods as I would have liked to.

In your essay about the future of communication, you wrote that the field remains marginalized in various ways (McLeod, 2005). How do you explain this situation?
After the war in the 1950s, the social sciences were new. The government, the National Science Foundation, for example, looked to the established associations and not to wannabe disciplines. That has become less so, but if you don't get there first, things are set unless there are foundations that have a sustained interest in particular areas. Those are not going to be very interested in basic research on any form of communication. You have to focus it on problems. So progress is really through the connections with other fields, even though not all of them are prestigious. Some of the new hiring in universities is intentionally done across disciplines. That is our best hope: to establish our legitimacy through what we can do. We should ask, "Do we have anything that is special?" I think it's the focus on process, especially with the move from attitudinal persuasion to cognition and beyond.

Is this cognitive process what communication is all about?
Yes mostly, but only at the individual level. We have difficulties in designing studies that really look at the same people over longer periods of time. We need not only to treat it as a kind of internal thing. It is also a matter of environmental influences: the workplace, your neighborhood, your social network. These are social constructs that produce change over time. Kurt Lewin always said, "Try to look at people at their life junctures." That is where you get a kind of dynamic. I would really like to have a focus on citizenship, where you follow the same people up through schooling and beyond. That would be a magnificent study.

Back to Table of Contents

We would need heavy funding, unfortunately. To me, that would get more at the essence of communication and its effects.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?
I was surprised and honored. On that list, there are so many excellent scholars and good people. I felt guilty a bit about being among them. To be honest, I am more proud of the mentorship award.

Why did you feel guilty?
I think I did a better job of mentorship than of being a Fellow [laughing].

Who is Jack McLeod: a researcher, a teacher, the adviser of more than 70 PhD students, the icon of communication at Wisconsin? What is the most important part of your academic life?
It was very labor-intensive for our grad students, as well as for us, in terms of what could be done with limited resources. It was intensive for Chaffee as well, but he was often running off to Stanford. I missed him then, and even more now.

Were there any other guiding influences?
In the middle of my career, Jay Blumler stands out, along with Klaus Schönbach and Karl Erik Rosengren. In looking back at all of these people, I realize they were not only extremely smart and productive people, but also strong personalities possessing of great ironic senses of humor and genuinely interesting to be around. There may be lessons to be learned from that for young scholars: Look for interesting people to work with.

Is there anything you are especially proud of?
I'm proud that I never had to be chair of any department [laughing]. I think it is the mentor business. I would add that I am proud of concepts we explicated as part of our annual surveys, the contacts made with European scholars, and the many international students who studied in Madison, and also of our efforts to promote multi-level analysis that includes institutional-level influences and comparative research on systems across space and time.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?
If I knew everything I know now, I'm not sure I would have done it [laughing]. No, I think I would have. There were a lot of false starts and stumbling around without foresight, but I still have hopes. The production of scholars who will influence the younger generation is the only hope we have when the marketplace is the dominant feature of power. You can't do anything about that. You can only modify it and hope that people develop deeper interests. Lack of information still makes a difference in public support of policy. We can't have any kind of democracy without doing something to combat the rising tides of ignorance in today's world.

What will remain when Jack McLeod is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
Some kind of dedication to concepts and new ideas for research. A commitment to examining everything and trying to take a fresh look at concepts. Not forgetting problems and levels of analysis, and not reducing everything to individual behavior. I would like to think that the history of the field would not be

Back to Table of Contents

lost. It is not, in all respects, a pure heritage, but I am a little disturbed that students think there is no history of communication beyond five years ago. In the social psych program, we had to take an exam on the history of that field. That was a good idea. Unless you know where these ideas come from, you can't really understand them.

Today's students are not very interested in those topics.

It's very much locked into the present culture. I hope that things get archived and easily accessible as time goes by. To gain perspective, I like to go back and read things that were written 30, 50, or 100 years ago. The classic studies are our received wisdom; they are not sacred texts, but they do contain the basis of many new ideas.

References

Davison, W. P. (1983). The third-person effect in communication. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 47*, 1–15.

Lowenthal, L. (1944). The triumph of mass idols. In P. F. Lazarsfeld & F. Stanton (Eds.), *Radio research 1942–1943* (pp. 516–528). New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce.

McLeod, J. M. (2005). Today and tomorrow: Reflections on the future of mass communication research. In S. Dunwoody, L. B. Becker, D. M. McLeod, & G. M. Kosicki (Eds.), *The evolution of key mass communication concepts: Honoring Jack M. McLeod* (pp. 303–333). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

McLeod, J. M., Harburg, E., & Kendall, O. P. (1966). Socialization, liking and yielding of opinions in imbalanced situations. *Sociometry, 29*, 197–212.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1747–1754 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

PETER MONGE

"I was at the right place at the right time."

Peter Monge, April 11, 2011.
Los Angeles, CA. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1942 Brooklyn, New York
Education:	1964 B.A. in theology, Pacific Union College
	1968 M.A. in speech communication, California State University, San Jose
	1972 Ph.D. in communication, Michigan State
Career:	1972 Assistant Professor, San Jose State University
	1976 Associate Professor, San Jose State University
	1978 Associate Professor, Michigan State
	1983 Professor at University of Southern California
	1987–1993 Editor of *Communication Research*
	1997 ICA President
	2002 ICA Fellow

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Peter Monge

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?
My childhood was very ordinary and not particularly special, except that I was able to grow up on the beaches in Southern California. I don't really remember very much about aspirations. For my high school yearbook, I selected "educator" for what I wanted to be when I grew up, but I have no idea why. Maybe it was the only thing I knew and was good at. A group of doctors in my church offered me financial support to go to medical school, but I didn't want to do that.

What did your parents do for a living?
There is not much to say about them. My father was a photographer and pilot, and I guess my mother would say she was a secretary.

Were there any university graduates in your family?
No. I was the first one to go to college. I grew up in Southern California surfing and playing baseball, doing all the things kids do when they live on the beach. I suppose the only notable thing is that I was president of my senior class in high school.

Do you still remember why you chose to study theology at Pacific Union?
I did a lot of speaking in the church that I grew up in, and a lot of people there said I would be a good minister. I was 16 when I went to college, and I really didn't have a clue what I wanted to do. I just knew that I liked school and usually did pretty well in it.

Why did you change your subject to communication?
I almost completed a second major in English, and communication was part of it back then. The classes that I found most interesting were classes in rhetoric, debate, argumentation, and to some extent, public speaking. I also enjoyed English and American literature, creative writing, and the communication aspects of English, like drama.

How would you compare the student Peter Monge with your students today?
The students of today are much better [laughing]. Communication also has become well-established. When I went to graduate school, there wasn't much of a discipline. There was not nearly the number of departments that we have today. Michigan State was clearly considered to be one of the top programs in the country, if not the best.

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers?
My adviser was David Berlo, a very bright and very dynamic guy. His book *The Process of Communication* was a definitive book in the field (Berlo, 1960). I also had classes with Everett Rogers, Dan Wackman, Gerald Miller, and Vincent Farace, who became my adviser after Berlo left to become president of Illinois State University. I never took a formal class from Don Cushman, but we talked a great deal (Cappella et al., 1986).

Back to Table of Contents

A lot of people mentioned him.

Don went to the library every day, brought back 10 articles that he had photocopied, stuck them in the face of his favorite students, and said, "You have to read this before tomorrow." He did that every day. Don was very influential on a number of people. Another influential person was Randall Harrison.

When did you know that you wanted to become a communication scientist?

For my master's degree, I did an experimental study on perceived audience feedback based on dissonance theory, and I really enjoyed it. That was a lot of fun, and it got me hooked on communication science and research.

Was there a crucial experience that led you to study networks in organizations (Monge & Contractor, 2003)?

I went to Michigan State to study persuasion and attitude change. I still enjoy that area, but I became interested in organizations while I was there. I was working with David Berlo on a research project. We studied the communication patterns of what was then called the Office of Civil Defense. As a part of the study, we asked people in the Pentagon and in six regional offices who they communicated with, about what, and how. In an empty room, we taped graph paper together covering the wall and floor to make a "who-to-whom" communication matrix for the 146 people we had interviewed. After doing several row-and-column adjustments by hand, we said, "This is insane." We were spending all of our time hand-copying the same numbers just trying to get them in a position where we could see the network. Then Bill Richards began working on our team. He was a computer science major with a communication minor and later earned a doctorate in communication at Stanford. Within three months, we had a rough draft of a computer program that would do in an hour what had taken us weeks to do. The program was called Negopy (for negative entropy, the equivalent of structure), and it became extensively used in the communication and organizational fields (Susskind et al., 2005).

So you were part of the process that created network research within communication.

Yes. Once we had a computer program that worked, it was natural to continue to study large-scale organizational communication networks. We learned that networks tended to explain a lot of what was going on in organizations. They are certainly not the only factor, but if you leave them out in any kind of organizational analyses, you have left out something that is really important. We ended up theorizing about and studying communication networks, and incorporating some of those ideas in my first book on organizational communication (Farace, Monge, & Russell, 1977).

How would you rate the academic position of OrgComm scholars within communication?

Top-notch. They are excellent, but I don't see any hierarchy of scholars across sub-disciplines in the field. The talent is pretty evenly distributed across all the communication fields.

Some of my interviewees had a point of view focusing on grants and described health communication, for example, as a rising star, and interpersonal as a falling one.

That has not always been true. Even though they have more funds, I don't think that people in health communication are necessarily better or worse than people in interpersonal or in any other areas. Over

Back to Table of Contents

the years, I've been funded by NSF, the Office of Naval Research, NASA, and a number of other institutions. I think if you approach funding agencies with good ideas, people will support that.

Does it make a difference to work at an institution like USC?
Absolutely. The Annenberg School has wonderful resources, a fabulous faculty, and it attracts first-rate students. A number of my colleagues criticized my decision in the early 1980s to leave Michigan State to come to USC, but it was clear to me at the time that Annenberg had the resources to build a first-rate program. The opportunity to contribute to that was very attractive. All those factors have combined over the years to make my work a lot easier and better.

Mark Knapp observed "a misplaced emphasis on getting government grants or any kind of grant." Could you understand this standpoint?
Yes. There are people who attempt to do what a donor wants done, so I understand Mark's position. But that is not the entire story. I've never been supported by a private foundation, and I've almost never had private money from an outside institute. I have never done any of that as academic work, because I deeply believe you cannot mix consulting activities with your scholarship. I've always received money from places where I put in a proposal for what I wanted to do. I've had a dozen different grants from NSF and other federal funding agencies. All of them take your proposal through a rigorous, blinded faculty peer-review process. If you get awarded the grant, then you are free to do what you proposed. All they ask is for an annual report explaining what you have done and where you have published your results. I've never seen one of them attempt to exert influence over me or my research. In this case, I don't see the problem that Mark sees.

You served as an editor of a major journal in the field, and of course, as a reviewer of journal and book manuscripts. Could you put your main criteria of evaluation in some keywords?
I felt that the articles I accepted for publication should work out of a theoretical framework and use high-quality data. The hypotheses should be interesting and based on the latest, current literature. The data analyses must be done correctly, and it needs to be interestingly written. Most of the articles that I published were empirical research, but I enjoy theoretical pieces as well, and I tried to include them in the journal when I was editor of *Communication Research*. I guess every Fellow you talk to says almost the same thing.

Not really. Bob Craig, for example, first looks for an idea in the work.
That's why he was editor of *Communication Theory*, rather than *Communication Research*. Empirical research typically works within an established theoretical tradition, i.e., a set of ideas about how things work. Theory articles often break new conceptual ground, offering new ideas about how things should work.

Apart from networks, methods seem to be your passion. Can you understand colleagues who criticize the concentration on this craft?
I would deny the premise. I don't think that methods are my passion, though I do feel comfortable with many of them. Take my book with Noshir Contractor, *Theories of Communication Networks*. There, we

Back to Table of Contents

examined seven families of social theories to study their implications for social and communicative relations. The entire book is about theory (Monge & Contractor, 2003).

I found the book on multivariate techniques (Monge & Capella, 1980; Williams & Monge, 2001).
Methods are a toolkit that enables you to think theoretically, and then discover whether your theories are correct. Polanyi makes the point that it was Einstein's training in the new field of non-Euclidean geometry that enabled him to think in more than three dimensions. It is how he came to add a fourth dimension, time, to his formulation of the structure of the universe. When I was finishing graduate school, ICA had just started *Human Communication Research*, and Gerald Miller was the first editor. One day, he came to me with an article that used canonical correlation. Neither of us had ever heard of this technique. In the process of finding out what it was all about, I discovered that there was a whole family of other analytical techniques that I didn't know much about. In graduate school, I took a number of theory courses, but I also had several courses in statistics, including mathematical modeling and computer simulation, but I had never heard anybody talking about multivariate statistics. I wanted to know about all the techniques that were available. Joe Cappella and I are close friends and decided to bring together the communication scholars who were interested in these emerging analytics. We got funding from NASA to put on a conference and invited John Tukey, one of the most eminent statisticians of the 20th century. He spent the whole two-and-a-half days with us and gave us wonderful feedback on all the papers that people presented on the different techniques. It was great to work with him, and he wrote a terrific chapter for our book (Tukey, 1980). Ironically, multivariate statistics have become rather mundane in the current era of big data sets, enormously powerful computers, and highly sophisticated statistical techniques. Life changes in 30 years!

How did you feel when you were asked to run for ICA President?
I was very honored. I felt it was recognition of my scholarly accomplishments from my colleagues, the highest kind of honor you can receive.

Did you succeed in meeting the goals of your presidential agenda?
For the most part, I think I did, but I did it in a rather different way. I actually made a list of all the things that I wanted to accomplish and kept that list on a fairly prominent place in my computer for several years. I thought of the six years that I was on the Board of Directors and the Executive Council as presidential time, not just the year I was actually president.

What was on that list?
I tried to build a top leadership team. ICA presidents are differentially involved. There even have been a couple of presidents who pretty much let the executive director run the association. I wanted a team that would work together because you have only one year as president, and it is very hard to get very much done in that time. We added the president elect-select to the Executive Committee. I also tried to get the issues of the president-select and the president elect-select into that committee before they were presidents. I was fortunate to have a number of people that both preceded and followed me who were very willing to adopt this teamwork philosophy. As a result of that, we did fairly influential things. Among other things, we hired a new executive director; we moved our headquarters from Austin, Texas, to Washington, DC; we restructured the board of directors to reflect our international constituency; we

Back to Table of Contents

created the ICA Awards program; and we bought our own building.[8] That all happened in a short period of time. I'm not taking personal credit for these achievements. The idea was that we all worked together, we supported each other's agendas, and we shared in the collective accomplishments. We collectively shared six years of presidential time. That, I believe, was the big reason why it all succeeded.

Who is Peter Monge: a researcher, a teacher, the chairman of scientific associations? What is the most important part of your academic life?

I don't know that I would break it up in that way, but I'd like to think that I made a number of novel intellectual contributions, both theoretically and analytically. Partnering with my students and my colleagues is the way that I think about myself. I've published a number of things that I've written on my own, but I've also published a lot with both colleagues and present and former students. I would not have accomplished what I have if it had not been for the people I've worked with.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

I've been in the field long enough to know that there is no such definition. You cannot get a group of people in a room to agree. Each has their own unique, and probably equally good, definitions. I think a good communicator will be open to essentially all of them. I certainly don't have a best and final definition.

Some of my interviewees told me about missing respect from old-established subjects. How is the situation here at USC?

I, frankly, have almost never experienced that. I believe the field of communication is very well-respected today. I do know that there have been times in the past when some communication scholars have felt that the respect accorded them may not have been as high as they would have liked. At USC, the Annenberg faculty is very highly regarded. I have a joint appointment in the business school. The faculty there were the ones who initiated that. They came and said they would like me to be on their faculty. I was surprised at the time, and quite honored. It worked really well. I personally do not feel that communication is a second-class area. The discipline is now extremely broad, highly diverse, and in some ways incredibly reflective of the larger academic community and the intensely communicative society in which we live. Look at the Annenberg faculty. We have people who study traditional mass media, but also new media, entertainment, and online communities, as well. Some of us look at entrepreneurial activities or at crises communication; some at all kinds of message systems like Facebook and Twitter; and some at cultural studies, health campaigns, or at power relationships in organizations, media, and society.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where are construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?

A little while ago, we got back from a lecture tour in China. The translation of our *Theories of Communication Networks* book was just published there (Monge & Contractor, 2003). We talked at five major universities. All of them had really good communication programs. China is very much focused on

[8] ICA had been headquartered in Austin, Texas, since 1974. The staff office moved to Washington, DC, in 2001—one year after Michael L. Haley became the new executive director. His predecessor was Robert Cox.

Back to Table of Contents

developing its academic program overall. There are a number of superb programs in Europe, too. Amsterdam is one of them, but there are lots of others as well. Certainly the London School of Economics would be another one. We have a joint program with LSE which has been doing very well. The students are terrific. Last year, I gave a talk in Dubai. A number of the wealthy Middle East countries are trying to build up really good universities. In a couple of weeks, I'll give a keynote speech at the Brazilian Association of Researchers in Organizational Communication and Public Relations. I know there are good programs at the University of São Paolo, as well as in Buenos Aires.

Where do you see the field in 2030?
It will continue to grow, even though there is obviously a carrying capacity. If there is a growth area in academia, it is communication, at least for the foreseeable future.

Are there any scientists whom you would call role models?
The person that I would pick is Steve Chaffee. He was a good friend. I taught a class with him when I was on sabbatical at Stanford. He gave me considerable advice when I was editor of *Communication Research* and was a thoughtful and reliable advisor when I was ICA president. In many ways, he was my mentor. He left us much too early.

What did you learn from Steve Chaffee for your own work?
Try to think widely, ask interesting questions, make sure you do your data analyses right, and spread the good word, which he was very good at.

Looking back on 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?
I'm really proud of my students. They have done very well. Personally, I'm proud of being an ICA Fellow and a former president. I'm also proud of the contributions that I have made to organizational communication and to communication networks. In the last several years, I've been doing a lot of work on evolutionary theory and communication ecology. I think these theoretical perspectives will eventually come to have an enormous impact on the future of the field, as they have throughout all of the social sciences and humanities over the past two decades. As that happens, the study of human communication will change considerably from what we have known it to be, and that will be for the better, I think.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?
There are probably lots of things that I should have done differently, but I don't know what they are now.

No regrets?
No regrets at all. I'm forever thankful that I decided to go into this field. I was at the right place at the right time. I was lucky that faculty at Michigan State in 1969 to 1972 when I was a graduate student were beginning to talk about communication processes in organizations. There were very few people in the field doing that kind of work, so it was an opportunity to be a part of a newly developing field. Not many people get that kind of opportunity in life.

Back to Table of Contents

What will remain when Peter Monge is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
When I'm gone, the students will still be here, and their students after them; and the journal articles and the books, of course, too. The field will continue to change considerably, but I believe organizational communication will be around for a long, long time. We live in such an organized, interconnected world, and communication is such a central part of that organizing that we stop studying it at our own peril. No one is indispensable, and very few ideas dominate for very long. Darwin was an exception, but even his influence was diminished for a while. I have no illusion that my work is going to have great impact on the field or the world, but if people continue to find it interesting while I am still around and able to engage it with them, that is enough for me. And should it continue to be a part of the conversation after I am gone, that would be satisfying, too.

References

Berlo, D. (1960). *The process of communication: An introduction to theory and practice*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Cappella, J. N., Cegala, D. J., Farrell, T. B., McPhee, R. D., Monge, P. R., Poole, M. S., Smith, T. J., & Woelfel, J. N. (1986). Donald Cushman: Larger than life. *Communication Quarterly*, *34*, 379–388.

Farace, R., Monge, P., & Russell, H. (1977). *Communicating and organizing*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Monge, P. R., & Cappella, J. N. (Eds.). (1980). *Multivariate techniques in human communication research*. New York: Academic Press.

Monge, P. R., & Contractor, N. (2003). *Theories of communication networks*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Susskind, A. M., Schwartz, D. F., Richards, W. D., & Johnson, J. D. (2005). Evolution and diffusion of the Michigan State University tradition of organizational communication network research. *Communication Studies*, *56*, 397–418.

Tukey, J. W. (1980). Methodological comments focused on opportunities. In P. Monge & J. N. Cappella (Eds.), *Multivariate techniques in human communication research* (pp. 489–528). New York: Academic Press.

Williams, F., & Monge, P. R. (2001). *Reasoning with statistics: How to read quantitative research*. (5th ed.). New York: Harcourt.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1755–1761 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

JON NUSSBAUM

"I've given my academic life to ICA."

Jon Nussbaum, January 25, 2011.
State College, PA. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1954 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Education:	1976 B.A. in experimental psychology, Marquette University
	1978 M.A. in psychology and communication, West Virginia University
	1981 Ph.D., Purdue University
Career:	Appointments at the universities of Montana and Oklahoma
	1993 Full Professor at University of Oklahoma
	1999 Penn State University
	2005 ICA President
	2008 ICA Fellow
	2008 President of the International Association of Language and Social Psychology
	2010 B. Aubrey Fisher Mentorship Award
Personal:	Married, three daughters

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Jon Nussbaum

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?
My mother's parents were from Italy and immigrated to the United States in the early 1900s. My father's parents were from Germany and of Jewish descent. They came over about the same time and became Catholic. I was raised Roman Catholic and educated by the Jesuits. It was pretty much a normal childhood in the United States. I had three brothers and a sister.

What did your parents do for a living?
My mother was a nurse. She stayed home, raised the kids, went back to nursing to help pay for our college education. My father had gone to law school but didn't practice law. He graduated from Johns Hopkins University and ran his own business. He worked with architects and engineers. My oldest brother became a lawyer, my sister a consultant, and my youngest brother is a clinical neuropsychologist. I also have a younger brother who is mentally challenged and lives in a group home.

How would you compare the student Jon Nussbaum with your students today?
The students today are much more well-rounded. They seem to enjoy their life a lot more. I think I was much too serious. I was an athlete as well. I played basketball and spent most of my time either studying or training.

When did you know that you wanted to become a scientist, maybe a communication scientist?
I knew that I wanted to become a psychologist since junior high school. The scientific discipline of communication wasn't well-developed in the 1970s. I made the transition to communication in graduate school.

How did this happen?
I had a social scientific education. A mixture between life span psychology, adult development and aging, and interpersonal communication. At West Virginia University, James McCroskey, Michael Scott, Lawrence Wheeless, and Peter Andersen convinced me that I should know something about humans. At that time, as a psychology student, I was studying rats. At Purdue, I had a research assistantship working with Victor Cicirelli in psychology, but also studied and worked in communication with Mark Knapp, Bob Norton, Don Ellis, Linda Putnam, Phil Tompkins, Tom Porter, and Rod Hart. At that time, I became very interested in the lives and interactions of well and frail older adults.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led to that topic?
Yes, in my first year at graduate school. My research assistantship was working with little kids—with two-, three-, and four-year-olds. I couldn't stand it.

And why the elderly?
At that time, the only other individuals who were being studied in the developmental program at West Virginia were older adults. The next year, I started working with older adults and was fascinated, mainly because they had such interesting stories. From that point on, I was interested in their lives, in health issues, and in the environment that affects them. I became very interested in the wisdom of old age and

Back to Table of Contents

the competence and adaptability of their communicative skills. How could you stay married for 40 or 50 years? How do you raise your kids, and how do you behave as a grandma or as a grandpa?

How would you rate the position of scholars who examine verbal and nonverbal behavior within our discipline?
We are quite well respected. What I study would also be categorized as health communication.

I asked because the German community is rooted in mass communication.
If you noticed, here at Penn State, we are separated into different colleges. In this department, we don't have mass communication. Mass communication is located in the next building over there. This goes back to the early 1990s. Here, my colleagues are studying verbal and nonverbal communication in intercultural contexts, interpersonal contexts, family contexts, and in the health context. We have a social scientific focus. We also have rhetorical scholars within the department.

How would you rate the position of communication in the other academic fields you are part of?
Communication scholars are earning respect. It depends on which university you are in, and in which academic field you find yourself. The communication discipline at Penn State is looked upon more favorably now because we just received a very high ranking from the National Research Council. That brought a lot of positive attention. But the more traditional disciplines within the College of Liberal Arts, psychology, economics, anthropology, or sociology, tend to be perceived as more worthy of "scholarly" respect from certain administrators, faculty, and students.

How do you explain this status?
It's just the tradition of this university or a pride in its own scholarly turf. We have a relatively small department, but our scholarly respect is increasing because we have such an excellent, productive faculty.

You served as a president of two international associations. If you had to choose between them, which one is your favorite?
That's a hard one. I've given my academic life to ICA. That is what I first got involved in, and what made me a better scholar. That's why I was so proud of being president. It was a lot of work, too. IALSP is much smaller, with a group of excellent scholars, including several ICA Fellows: Howard Giles, Young Kim, and Cindy Gallois come to mind.

How did it happen that you served your life to ICA?
I fit in with the social scientific emphasis, and I love the international nature of the association. The other communication associations simply did not fit into my ideal of what I do as a scholar. ICA scholars have interests similar to mine. My academic mentors were ICA people. The association is small enough that you know the others. Most ICA members are excellent scholars working in a scientific community that hopes to advance theory and knowledge within communication.

Back to Table of Contents

Apart from life span communication, crossing the borders seems to be your passion—the borders between universities, and the borders between disciplines. Where is the home of Jon Nussbaum?

Right now, it is both communication and human development and family studies at Penn State. I feel much more comfortable with scholars that do similar work to mine. Sometimes that is in ICA, and sometimes it is in human development or psychology. Over the years, it has been in different places. I have had appointments in very different departments. Sometimes, I feel much more at home in Wales or in Australia than I do in the United States because of various social issues here in the U.S. I am uncomfortable when politicians decide to go to war. In the end, there is a community of scholars who are interdisciplinary and international who I feel most at home with. The good thing about Penn State is that they permit me to travel and to have multiple appointments.

What does permission mean?

It's just that they make it easy for me to go abroad, and they respect individuals who are international.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?

That was fantastic. I was humbled. During my entire academic career, I looked at the Fellows as the best scholars and the leaders of the discipline. When I was nominated, I couldn't believe it. That's really the highest honor that can be given to a communication scholar.

Looking at your website, you seem to be very proud of your PhD students. Where does one of the world's leading researchers get the time to advise doctoral dissertations?

That's the best part of my job. Working with the graduate students is actually much more rewarding for me than working with undergraduates. The graduate students I have had the honor to work with are brilliant people. They have influenced my work much more than I have influenced theirs.

Who is Jon Nussbaum: a researcher, a teacher, the chairman of international associations, the promoter of life span within communication? What is the most important part of your academic life?

My academic life is changing dramatically right now. The most important part of my life was to be a researcher and to work with graduate students. Now, I'm becoming a teacher-researcher. That might be part of the lifetime development of scholarship. What I'm finding satisfying now is writing pieces that can be communicated to the masses. My last books have been for a general audience, and not just for scholars (Nussbaum, Federowicz, & Nussbaum, 2009; Nussbaum, Miller-Day, & Fisher, 2009). I'm becoming a translator of communication research. I've given many more talks to groups outside of the laboratory than I used to in the past.

Do you like the role of a public speaker?

Yes, I do. I think I do well, and it's fun. I used to do it for free, but nowadays they are willing to pay money for me to talk. It's still based on my research, and I like the different audiences. I just gave a talk in New Jersey to a large group of physicians and health care providers. Usually, this is a very difficult audience. I have been told that the people really enjoyed it.

Back to Table of Contents

Do you regret this change from a researcher to a kind of teacher-researcher?

I struggled with the process for the last five years because I look at myself as a researcher creating knowledge. I was getting to the point where I was saying I could keep doing this, or I could try something a little bit different. This is actually the first year where I really like this new role.

What is your definition of communication?

I have a very broad definition. First of all, it's a science. We are gathering information and knowledge in systematic and observable ways. Communication, to me, is interaction—any type of interaction, mass communication, as well as dyadic communication and family communication. There is an exchange of messages, and there are meanings that influence people. For me, communication is at the core of any understanding of human behavior.

How is the reputation of the discipline here in the U.S.?

We just overcame a huge hurdle. We fought for about 10 years with the National Research Council having communication accepted as a discipline to be evaluated along with scientific engineering, psychology, and so on. This means that we are now more than just a profession, and more than just teaching undergraduates. ICA was involved in this fight. Communication has not been fully recognized as a unique, important scholarly discipline, and we must continue to work toward this goal.

Why are we not there, yet?

Perhaps because of our diverse background. The discipline has emerged from many different traditions. Skills training in public speaking is a common thread among many college students, and that background is the only connection to our discipline for many individuals.

So there is still a battle.

Yes. I think we are moving quickly and being accepted within the social scientific community. This has to do with the advances in mass communication, interpersonal, family, and in health communication research. Communication scholars are now being awarded funding from the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and many other prestigious external granting agencies. Once a group of scholars starts getting funded, they earn respect.

Sounds like a positive development.

I think it's fantastic. It's the result of hard work and the good scholarship that has been done by many of the members of ICA. And we've been producing hundreds of great graduate students over the last 40 or 50 years who increase our visibility.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?

The social scientific study of communication is strong in the U.S. When I did my Fulbright in Wales in the early 1990s, communication was just beginning in the UK, Spain, Germany, Denmark, and in Amsterdam. There was a small group of people who studied communication, but not in separate departments. Back then, the construction projects were pretty much Europe and the Pacific Rim.

Back to Table of Contents

What about today?
Since then, many students came to the United States, earned their PhDs, and went home. Now, we have strongholds in Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Israel, Australia, Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK, to name a few countries. When I was ICA President, I wanted to expand communication scholarship to areas where it almost didn't exist. South America or Africa is where we need to go next. Now, I often receive e-mails from people in the Arab world or in India who want to read my stuff. That tells me something positive is happening.

Where do you see the field in 2030?
It's going to be much more international, and much more technologically orientated. The way we communicate is changing. One issue is the financial situation within universities. If we can survive the world-wide financial crisis without major cuts, then we are in a position to explode. We have a great future.

In Germany, we survive because of the students.
It's the same thing here. The number of students is the number one criteria for any financial security. We are very rich in students. Some of the traditional disciplines face a difficult time.

Are there any scientists whom you would call role models?
Every ICA Fellow, but especially Mark Knapp and James McCroskey. They did great scholarship, were excellent classroom teachers, and served the discipline as presidents of its associations and editors of its journals. Last but not least, they have heart and cared about their students.

What did you learn from Mark or Jim for your own work?
Work hard. Go to work every day, take it seriously, ask important questions, but you can also have lots of fun.

Looking back on about 35 years in the field, is there anything you are especially proud of?
I'm proud of my graduate students. I feel a responsibility for the next generation of scholars. My proudest moment was to be named as an ICA Fellow.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?
I would have had much more patience. When I was an assistant professor, I don't think that I was a very nice person. You should ask my first graduate students. I was too serious and expected too much. Now, I'm much easier to talk with. Maybe it's the wisdom of age.

What will remain when Jon Nussbaum is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
You leave your kids and you leave your graduate students. Most of the things I've written are pretty much outdated now. Maybe the main point is that we should study individuals across the entire life span—older adults, as well as children, emerging adults, and middle-aged adults! Investigate change and do your part to improve the overall quality of our lives through sound, theoretically grounded research.

Back to Table of Contents

References

Nussbaum, J. F., Federowicz, M., & Nussbaum, P. D. (2009). *Brain health and optimal engagement in older adulthood*. Girona, Spain: Editorial Aresta.

Nussbaum, J. F., Miller-Day, M., & Fisher, C. (2009). *Communication and intimacy in older adulthood*. Girona, Spain: Editoria Aresta.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1762–1768 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

SCOTT POOLE

"The really hard sciences are the social sciences."

Scott Poole, March 10, 2011.
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1951 Texas
Education:	1973 B.A. in communication, University of Wisconsin-Madison
	1976 M.A., Michigan State University
	1979 Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-Madison
Career:	1979 Assistant Professor, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
	1985 Assistant Professor, University of Minnesota
	1987 Associate Professor
	1991 Professor
	1995 Texas A&M
	2006 University of Illinois
	2004 ICA Fellow
	2005 Distinguished Scholar, NCA
	2008 Steven H. Chaffee Career Productivity Award
Personal:	Married, one son

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Scott Poole

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

Both of my parents grew up in the desperate years. They are from a very desolate area in Northern Texas. My father was an attorney. He came out of a family of poor farmers. My mother was an educational tester at colleges. She came out of a family of small-town office-holders who were also pretty poor. What they emphasized was hard work, but they also exposed me to intellectual things. We went to Europe a number of times, and they always took me to museums. There isn't much culture where I grew up, but they did their very best to give me a good education.

Do you still remember why you chose to study communication at Madison?

First, I went to Michigan State for a degree in biochemistry. That was the topic I emphasized all the way through high school. I went to an international science fair twice as a finalist. Basically, I was very interested in dynamic biological processes, but I also was a debater. So I was exposed to communication.

Like Mike Roloff at Northwestern.

A lot of my generation was. It was not uncommon at that time for people to do both humanistic and social scientific approaches. During the Vietnam War protests, science seemed less relevant than human beings. When I was in high school, I read *Foundation and Empire* by Isaac Asimov (1952). The hero of this book, Hari Seldon, applied scientific principles to predict societies. I found a lot of other people who went into social sciences because they were fascinated by this particular character. It became evident to me that people are more interesting than molecules, partly because of the combination of determinism and free will. That makes human beings much harder to predict. I always bring to mind a quotation from the book *Consilience* by E. O. Wilson (1998), "The really hard sciences are the social sciences."

Why did you transfer from Michigan State to Wisconsin?

Wisconsin had a very good balanced program—both rhetoric *and* social science. I came out with my first degree during a major recession. Basically, there were no jobs available. My only choices were graduate school or working with the debaters at Michigan State. After a year as a coach, I applied for graduate school, partly because of the money.

Can you tell me something about your main academic teachers?

At Michigan State, I got involved with Jack Hunter, who did mathematical modelling. I also worked with Joe Woelfel and Ed Fink, as well as with Donald Cushman, who was very influential on me (Cappella et al., 1986). They were all interested in modelling human processes. I had a fairly good mathematical background. So it was easy to apply mathematical concepts to human behavior or attitude changes. Michigan State was one of the foremost training grounds for quantitative social scientists. And it still is. They had actually dispelled all the rhetoricians from the department and were proud of it (Rogers, 2001). After a little time there, I got a little disillusioned with that, because I have always drawn a lot of my inspiration from humanistic scholars. A lot of the work I've done has inched on the intersection between the modes of inquiry.

Back to Table of Contents

That's why you went back to Wisconsin?

There, I could take some seminars in rhetoric, and some in social sciences. I became interested in organizational communication due to the influence of my friend Bob McPhee, and also due to the courses I could take with some of the leading theorists in this area. I came out knowing that I wanted to be a social scientist who took humanistic concepts and figured out ways to measure them. I wanted to find out all of the different perspectives that are on an issue. I almost always take things from multiple theoretical perspectives.

Who was your adviser at Wisconsin?

Joe Cappella and Dean Hewes. Joe was a physics major who became a communication scholar and [was] only a year or two ahead of me. He emphasized modeling and very rigorous approaches. Dean emphasized Markov modeling and direct study of interaction, which influenced my early research approaches. Certainly another person who made a difference in my life was Lloyd Bitzer, who taught a wonderful class on the history of rhetoric. He also introduced many ways of looking at issues, although he believed there was one right way: Aristotle. In my organizational scholarship, I probably was most influenced by Andre Delbecq. He was a management scholar who taught innovation and implementation.

How would you compare the student Scott Poole with your students today?

It's hard to know, because we always overestimate ourselves. When I was young, the proportion of people who went to college wasn't nearly as large as today. There are probably as many smart students now as there were then, but in proportion, there are fewer who are capable of doing the work. I was an unusual communication student because I wasn't scared of math or computers. I could apply mathematics to issues, and not just statistics. I was probably more a generalists than a lot of students were. I tried to be good in all things I was doing. The students I see today tend to be specialists.

Apart from multiple perspectives, group communication seems to be the topic of your life. Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to that topic?

There was actually one. I went also back to Madison to work with the Center of Conflict Resolution. CCR was an alternative organization that worked with cooperatives, emphasized peace studies (which I really believed in), and also provided communication consulting to various community groups around town. I helped write *A Manual for Group Facilitators* (Auvine et al., 1978). It's still reprinted and sold in the tens of thousands of copies. Working at CCR, I read the social scientific theory about groups. It was a fascinating topic. It's very difficult to predict what a group will do.

Is there a link between groups and your interest in organizations or new information technologies?

Yes, there was. I started out at Illinois. The department here wasn't super-open to organizational communication. They were pushing interpersonal and mass communication a lot more. Moreover, this was an extremely boring place to live at the time. Today, it is noticeably improved, and I really enjoy having come back to Illinois. Back then, there weren't many good organizations to study in Central Illinois. Minnesota was one of the top-five U.S. cities in terms of corporative headquarters. All the innovative companies were up there. At Minnesota, Gerardine DeSanctis offered an invitation to me. She was an assistant professor in information systems at that time and interested in group decision support systems

Back to Table of Contents

(DeSanctis & Gallupe, 1987). That's really how that happened. It was a pure accident. If I had stayed at Illinois, I would have never researched technology at all.

How would you rate the position of group scholars within communication?

I'm a little bit prejudiced, of course. It's a very small group of scholars. We are probably more theory-orientated, and more willing to be a little bit adventurous in terms of methodology than any area in our field, except for organizational communication. Most of the other divisions tend to evolve around a methodological paradigm. Interpersonal is always quantitative and often experimental. Mass communication is high theory, cultural studies, or surveys. In the group area, there is a really healthy mix between qualitative or critical and quantitative scholars.

After 20 years in Minnesota and Texas, you finally came back to Illinois. Was there no short-cut?

My wife and I went to Texas because we have two careers. My wife got a PhD in educational psychology. Linda Putnam wanted to build up Texas A&M. We both got very attractive offers. When I was there, I was actually invited to work with PhD students from the information systems program, because they didn't have so many scholars who could do that. So I was in two fields there. And I still am. A lot of my stuff is published in other disciplines.

And why did you leave A&M finally?

I began to get a little bit dissatisfied there because they just didn't have the computer science and technology infrastructures that underpin grant proposals. I was consistently a failure to get things funded. People did not believe that people at A&M had the power to do some of the things I wanted to do. At Illinois, I can work with world-famous computer scientists who can be co-investigators.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?

It made me feel exceptionally proud. This is the highest honor in our discipline.

You got awards and honors from ICA, as well as from NCA. Which association is your favorite?

That's a hard one. They have different purposes. ICA is the more scholarly one except for rhetoric. NCA is different because it mixes research, education, and policy, but it's really an important venue. Probably for scholarship my favorite is ICA, but for world impact, it's NCA.

Who is Scott Poole: a researcher, a teacher, the promoter of group research within communication? What is the most important part of your academic life?

The researcher. If I could make a living doing research only, I would be happy. I have a short attention span. That's why I'm doing so many projects. Being the director of the Institute for Computing in Humanities, Arts, and Social Science (ICHASS) here at Illinois, people wouldn't think about a communication scholar. They think of a sociologist or a psychologist. As a communication scholar, I'm used to looking at it in multiple perspectives and getting people together across intellectual and disciplinary divides. Therefore, I'm natural to work with that organization.

Back to Table of Contents

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

For me, communication is the study of interaction between people that emphasizes messages and their impacts. We are a field that studies processes, and not things. A lot of people in our discipline have taken as their model psychology, which studies the mind, or sociology, which studies society. There isn't such a thing in communication unless you want to consider texts or other dead corpuses as the things we study. I think we study the process of meaning-making, interaction, and how things flow through society. That's why I have done a lot of work on process theory.

How is the reputation of the discipline here?

We are a little further along nationally and here at Illinois. We are able to get grants more easily than people in sociology or psychology. We also have done a huge amount of interdisciplinary research with health or information systems. So other fields are exposed to us and can see the value of what we do. And communication produces great communicators, such as people who can plan and manage things. So a lot of our scholars get university positions. There is nothing like a dean from communication who can understand what's going on in sociology. The third thing is developing good, deep journals like *Human Communication Research* that people from other disciplines want to publish in.

So we are seen as relevant by the other fields?

That isn't always true. In the leading institutions like Illinois, Stanford, Penn, or USC, communication is seen as a pretty important discipline. There is higher variance in the secondary institutions. In some of those, communication is important because frankly, the other disciplines aren't that good. North Dakota State is an example of that. But in a lot of fields, people look down on our discipline. Here at Illinois, our department is one of the top five in the College of Arts and Sciences. There have been three important studies on communication programs, and we belong to the top in all of them.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, battlegrounds?

I can probably do it by country better than anything. The skyscrapers are of course in the U.S. and in Canada. Germany and the Netherlands are both good, too. A little shorter, but excellent. The fastest advances that have been made in the last 10 to 15 years have clearly been in those two countries. In New Zealand and lesser in Australia are middle-size skyscrapers. The places where things seem to be building up fairly well are Brazil, Mexico, Japan, China, and Korea. There they have broken away somewhat from the mass communication dominance that characterized a lot of the Asian programs.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

There are two scenarios. The first one: It remains as it currently is—pretty interdisciplinary, having a balance between social scientific and humanistic approaches, and more mature about getting grants but not insisting that anyone who does good work has to have one. It would be my happy-scenario that we are a network among disciplines. By 2030, there will be much more network to cross disciplines.

What about the bad scenario?

The field becomes self-referencing mostly, like it happened in sociology or in psychology for a while. Once you become a discipline, there is a tendency to build in- and out-groups. It's social identity theory.

Back to Table of Contents

Are there any scientists whom you regard as role models?

Yes, definitely. Don Cushman, certainly. Joe Cappella, in terms of his rigor. Dean Hewes is a role model in focusing on interaction closely, but rigorously. Bob McPhee, my long-time colleague and friend, is just inspirational in his breadth and ability to see to the heart of an idea. Then Lev Vygotsky. I never met him. I just loved the way he married Marxist theory with psychology. As a graduate student, I read his *Thought and Language* (Vygotsky, 1962), and it really influenced me strongly. None of my work reflects on it, but it's like a paradigm.

Looking back on about 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

I believe that I have initiated six distinctively new ideas: the multiple sequence modelling in decision-making (Poole, 1983); the application of structuration theory on organizations (Poole, Seibold, & McPhee, 1985); adaptive structuration theory (Poole & DeScantis, 1990; DeSanctis & Poole, 1994); process theory (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995; Poole, 2007); multiple approaches to managing paradox (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989); and more recently, a synthesis of groups and networks. I haven't published it yet. These six ideas are all pretty different. I feel extremely lucky to have had great colleagues who were really thought-provoking and who really stimulated me.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

I do wonder what would have happened if I persisted in biochemistry. The other thing I regret a little bit, but it's inevitable: There were so many perspectives that I got pulled away from.

What will remain when Scott Poole is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

I hope those six ideas remain. Having a new idea is the most exhilarating thing. Of course, no idea is really new, but there is nothing like putting a formulation together that is original and that combines things in an interesting way.

Back to Table of Contents

References

Asimov, I. (1952). *Foundation and empire.* New York: Gnome Press.

Auvine, B., Densmore, B., Extrom, M., Poole, S. M., & Shanklin, M. (1978). *A manual for group facilitators*. Madison, WI: Center for Conflict Resolution.

Cappella, J. N., Cegala, D. J., Farrell, T. B., McPhee, R. D., Monge, P. R., Poole, M. S., et al. (1986). Donald Cushman: Larger than life. *Communication Quarterly*, *34*, 379–388.

DeSanctis, G., & Gallupe, R. B. (1987). A foundation for the study of group decision support systems. *Management Science*, *33*, 586–609.

DeSanctis, G., & Poole, M. S. (1994). Capturing the complexity in advanced technology use: Adaptive structuration theory. *Organization Science*, *5*, 121–147.

Poole, M. S. (1983). Decision development in small groups II: A study of multiple sequences in decision-making. *Communication Monographs, 50*, 206–232.

Poole, M. S. (2007). Generalization in process theories of communication. *Communication Methods and Measures, 1*, 181–190.

Poole, M. S., & DeSanctis, G. (1990). Understanding the use of group decision support systems: The theory of adaptive structuration. In J. Fulk & C. Steinfield (Eds.) *Organizations and communication technology* (pp. 175–195). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Poole, M. S., & McPhee, R. D. (l983). A structurational analysis of organizational climate. In L. Putnam & M. Pacanowsky (Eds.), *Communication and organizations: An interpretive approach* (pp. 195–220). Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications.

Poole, M. S., Seibold, D. R., & McPhee, R. D. (1985). Group decision-making as a structurational process. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *71*, 74–102.

Poole, M. S., & Van de Ven, A. H. (1989). Using paradox to build management and organization theories. *Academy of Management Review*, *14*, 562–578.

Rogers, E. M. (2001). The department of communication at Michigan State as a seed institution for communication study. *Communication Studies*, *52*, 234–248.

Van de Ven, A. H., & Poole, M. S. (1995). Explaining development and change in organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, *20*, 510–540.

Vygotsky, L. (1962). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Wilson, E. O. (1998). *Consilience: The unity of knowledge*. New York: Knopf.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1769–1777 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

LINDA PUTNAM

"My real love is the field."

Linda Putnam, April 7, 2011.
University of California, Santa Barbara. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1945 Frederick, OK
Education:	1967 B.A. in speech and English, Hardin-Simmons University
	1968 M.A. in Speech, University of Wisconsin
	1977 Ph.D., University of Minnesota
Career:	1968 Instructor, University of Massachusetts
	1977 Assistant Professor, Purdue University
	1983 Associate Professor, Purdue University
	1988 Professor, Purdue University
	1993 Department Head, Texas A&M University
	2007 University of California, Santa Barbara
	2010 Department Chair
	1993 President of the International Association for Conflict Management (IACM)
	1995 ICA Fellow
	1999 ICA President and NCA Distinguished Scholar
	2005 Steven H. Chaffee Career Productivity Award
	2011 IACM Lifetime Achievement Award
Personal:	Married, one daughter

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Linda Putnam

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

I grew up in a small community where my father owned a grocery store. My mother was the bookkeeper and accountant for the business. My family had tough times and increased competition in the grocery business. My parents weren't particularly well-off, and I grew up with a hard-working father and mother.

So your mother was a role model?

She really was. Both of my parents had a kind of optimism. They told me, "You can do it." My first dreams were about a career in theatre and acting. I loved the movies, but I grew up with the reality that becoming a professional actor was not likely to happen.

Were there any university graduates in your family environment?

Yes, my father graduated from Oklahoma Baptist University and was planning to go to medical school. My mother did not go to college. My father wanted to be a doctor, but he was drafted into World War II. He worked in medical units in England, France, and Germany and nursed a number of soldiers as well as concentration camp victims. When he came back after the war, he had two kids and decided not to return to medical school.

Did religion play any role in your childhood?

Yes, it did. Growing up in the conservative South, my family was quite religious. Throughout my upbringing, I was active in my church, attended church camps, and even worked as an assistant church camp director in high school. My brother became a minister and counselor for college students.

How did you do at school?

I enjoyed learning and did well in my classes. I was a bit of a perfectionist. My teachers said, "You've got to get any projects finished. If you don't let go, you will never get the task done." In high school, I was the news editor for the school newspaper, and I wanted to become a journalist.

Why did you go to Hardin-Simmons University?

My brother was a senior at this school, and I wanted a university that was small and personable. I came from a very small town in Oklahoma, and I was afraid that I would get lost at one of the large state schools. At that time, I became involved in many campus leadership positions. I was active in a social club, elected a student senator, and so on.

Why did you major in English, as well as in speech?

I loved studying literature. I liked analyzing poems, writing essays, and learning about grammar. I really enjoyed the analytic aspect of English, but I also liked speech and theatre. The two were combined in my major, and I acted in college plays, worked on theatre sets, and studied theatre history. In the speech area, I enjoyed debate, public speaking, and group communication.

Back to Table of Contents

How would you compare the student Linda Putnam with your students today?

My students today are certainly more knowledgeable about the world than I was. In many ways, they are brighter than I ever was. I wonder if they were as hungry about learning as I was. Hunger grows out of the experience that life doesn't always come to you on a silver platter. You have to make it happen, and you have to work hard. I grew up at a time when women had to work twice as hard as men. I was one of the first women that Purdue hired in a tenure track position, and I think some people questioned whether a woman could get tenure at a major research university. So a career was my cause and my hunger. Today, many students almost need a strong push to get that hunger to succeed.

Why did you apply for graduate school?

I applied without knowing much about graduate school or speech communication at Wisconsin. When I was at Hardin-Simmons, a professor named James Cleary was travelling throughout the South and recruiting bright undergraduates. During the Vietnam War era, there was a real push to get students to pursue graduate degrees.

Can you tell me something about your main academic teachers?

I had some excellent teachers in high school. Mrs. Stanley was my journalism teacher and influenced me to improve my writing. In college, I had a broad liberal arts education. It wasn't just that I had excellent teachers in my major fields; I also had professors in political science that challenged everything I thought, and a faculty member who taught a music appreciation course that became a class on the philosophy of life. In these classes, I became intrigued with ideas.

What about Wisconsin?

There, I encountered a social science and became torn between rhetoric and communication. The department had considerable tension between these two groups of scholars. In a story that circulated among graduate students, one of the rhetoric professors came into the office of a social science faculty member, threw a copy of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* on his desk and exclaimed, "Haven't you read this book? You should read it carefully. It is the foundation of the field!" My adviser was a rhetorician. The program was hard for me, because I really wasn't prepared for it. I completed my degree, and then I went to Massachusetts, where I worked with some terrific faculty members. Faculty in both speech and media studies were open to social science approaches and helped me explore options for PhD work.

Who are you talking about?

Jane Blankenship and Karl Wallace. Both were rhetorical scholars, but they helped me decide what areas of the field were most exciting to me. As you know, I did not go immediately into a doctoral program. First, I went to Minneapolis, where I joined my husband, who worked in the computer business. I accepted a teaching position at a community college. I taught interpersonal communication, small group discussion, public speaking, and debate. I coached debate and started an intercollegiate speech activities program. While I was there, I began working with Ernest Bormann, who was writing a textbook for the basic speech course in the community colleges. His wife, Nancy, was helping him, and they kept asking me, "Why don't you come back to school to get your PhD?"

Back to Table of Contents

Were you not scared of it because of your master's?
Of course I was. At that time, I was a little more mature and had some clear goals for my life. Bormann was not an organizational communication scholar, per se. He studied group communication and was one of the renaissance scholars who worked in rhetoric, public address, small group, and organizational. Bormann was very encouraging to his graduate students. He wanted us to succeed. He and Nancy were both mentors to me, but I was also influenced by George Shapiro and David Smith in speech communication, and by Ellen Bersheid in social psychology.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to conflict management in small groups (Putnam, 1988; Putnam & Roloff, 1992)?
When I was at the community college, I got elected to serve on the negotiating team for the first union contract that was developed for the 18 colleges. Witnessing this difficult negotiation between teachers and administrators was a painful experience. I said to myself, "This process is fully about communication. How can it be so painful, and how could we make it better?" My interest in finding ways to improve negotiation came from this experience. My interest in small groups came from my work with Bormann. We conducted a number of studies about the ways that groups are interconnected and how they become nested in larger organizations (Bormann, Pratt, & Putnam, 1978).

In the book,* Women in Communication, *you named two aims: first, to make your work interdisciplinary, and second, to stretch the limits of the way we think about communication (Signorielli, 1996, p. 457). Was speech communication too narrow for Linda Putnam?
Yes, it was [laughing]. At Purdue, I got very interested in organizational communication. I worked with Charles Redding, taught undergraduate courses in the area, and saw a niche for myself in this specialty. In working with scholars outside my field, it was clear to me that speech, as a discipline, wasn't well-respected. It was treated as a skills area or applied work, and not as a field that developed theories and research of its own. In the organizational area, communication was drawing from work in management, sociology, and industrial psychology. Concepts such as leadership, climate, and networks were not particularly original to communication. The field needed to make its mark. I wanted scholars outside our field to recognize what we could bring to the table, and I wanted to change our image. The first *Handbook of Organizational Communication* (Jablin et al., 1987) was very interdisciplinary.

How would you rate the position of Organizational Communication within communication?
Let me situate this historically. In the late 1970s, organizational communication was a stepchild in the discipline—one heavily linked to practice and consulting. Scholars such as Charles Redding and Richard Farace had done some excellent research, but much of the work, both inside and outside the discipline, favored the interests of managers. I'll never forget a newsletter article that organizational communication called "The Shame of Speech Communication" (Corman, 2006; Ellis, 1982). It addressed how scholars sold their souls to organizations. I wanted to change that image to one grounded in theory that had a respected body of knowledge linked to organizational practice, but not driven by it. Luckily, I wasn't alone. Now, organizational communication is heavily theoretical and crosses all arenas of our field. I view it as a major stronghold.

Back to Table of Contents

Do you like the role of a university administrator?
Not enough to do it for a long time. I do not want to leave the field. That's my real love. It always has been, and it always will be. I like solving practical problems that one encounters in administration, and I like the immediate feedback that can lead to the feeling that "this day made a difference," but I also get saturated with it. Our field has produced some exceptional university leaders because of the knowledge they bring about communication and vision. They're really amazing folks.

Were you ever forced to think about gender questions during your academic career?
Definitely, I was. I entered the academic career when the path for women was not well-developed. I found the academic culture at the time as difficult for women and women's issues. I have many stories that I could tell, including discussions whether or not to give women graduate students who had young children additional time to complete their degrees. I didn't decide to have a child until I was an associate professor with tenure. Today, you can choose to have a family and delay your tenure clock. That was not true when I entered the professoriate. At the time, I sensed a lot of pressure for women to be equal to, or better than, their male counterparts.

Can you give me an example, please?
I had a senior colleague telling me, "That's not a bad looking curriculum vitae, for a woman." I think this colleague thought of a compliment. The word *sexual harassment* didn't exist at the time. I'm a survivor. I was never the leader of a feminist movement in the field, but I always championed it from the background. I worked with a couple of colleagues who directly challenged men about discrimination, hostile work climates, and unacceptable practices, often on a daily basis.

In my interviews, I found a lot of powerful women in ICA. Almost all of these strong women mentioned you as a driving force. Are they right?
I'm not sure what to say about that [laughing]. Throughout the years, I have joined with other leaders to point out that the association had a low proportion of women ICA Fellows or ICA Presidents in comparison with the percentage of top-notch women scholars in the field. This situation is changing. I've never been a leader of the feminist division, but I've always been a supporter. I do see Ellen Wartella or Kathleen Jamieson as driving forces.

How did you feel when you were asked to run for ICA President?
Well, at first, I wasn't sure if I wanted this role. I was very pleased to be asked to run for the office, but I had just ended five years as department head when this invitation occurred. So I was concerned about losing my sabbatical time that I set aside to jump-start my research; however, I decided to run anyway. I was pleased to run against another woman and know that one of us was going to win.

Do you remember your presidential agenda?
Yes, I do. I came into this job at a wonderful time. The changes in ICA that were occurring at this time made the position an exciting one. Specifically, the presidency was transitioning from being primarily individuals who had their own agendas to an executive team that would embrace agendas of the current and past presidents. My tenure on the executive team was with a wonderful group of leaders: Stan Deetz, Peter Monge, Howie Giles, Joe Cappella, and Cindy Gallois. Under my presidency, we worked hard to

Back to Table of Contents

change the elected at-large representatives to five international board positions that would represent regions of the world. This goal was actually a three- or four-year project that crossed presidents and culminated in my term. We also implemented a new set of association-wide awards. Another major agenda for my presidency was altering the association's dues structure and tying the cost of membership to the cost of living for a given country, so that members from developing regions might afford to join the association. Finally, we also recruited a new Executive Director.

What about the new headquarters?[9]
Yes, it was time for ICA to move out of Austin, Texas, to take its place among other major scholarly associations. ICA needed to form partnerships with major granting agencies, other scholarly societies, and international organizations such as the United Nations. It was difficult to leave familiar and comfortable turf in Austin and to orchestrate the move, but ICA needed to advance to the next level.

You served as a president of two international associations. Which one would be your favorite?
This is a hard one. The two associations are very different. ICA will always be my first home, but I joined with several other conflict scholars to help form IACM in the mid-1980s. So IACM holds a special place in my life. With only about a 1000 members, it is much smaller than ICA, but a very interdisciplinary organization comprised of scholars who study the phenomena that directly interest me. We developed a constitution, worked on important infrastructure, and formed association-wide awards. So my experience developing these awards in IACM came in handy for implementing association-wide awards in ICA.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?
It was like receiving the best award of my life. I can't remember when I had been so overjoyed. You never know what others outside your area know what you have contributed, but when you become elected as a Fellow, it is an endorsement by the field.

Who is Linda Putnam: a researcher, a teacher, the chairwoman of international associations? What is the most important part of your academic life?
For someone who has been mostly balanced across the three areas of teaching, research, and service, it is hard to say. I love working with graduate students. I'm less aligned with undergrad teaching, even though I enjoy it. I really like working with students who are interested in theories and ideas. Hence, in terms of my enjoyment, I would put research first, but with service a close second. I really enjoy association leadership, probably more than I do university administration. In association leadership, it is possible to be more innovative, more creative, and have fewer constraints than university service.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?
For me, it is the study of messages, media, interaction patterns, symbols, and meanings, especially as they form processes for enacting, analyzing, and understanding the world. I try to help students see organizations, families, and communities through a communication lens. If they embrace this lens as a

[9] ICA had been headquartered in Austin, Texas, since 1974. The office moved to Washington, DC, in 2001—one year after Michael L. Haley became the new Executive Director. His predecessor was Robert L. Cox.

Back to Table of Contents

perspective, they can capture process, unpack meanings, and dissect messages through focusing on complex, system-wide interactions. This definition aids in improving social systems and provides a rich way to understand complex processes.

How is the reputation of the discipline here at Santa Barbara?
I think communication is one of the top departments at UCSB. From the beginning, it developed a legacy for being a high-calibre research unit. The program doesn't offer training in media or public speaking skills like many other universities do. Because of our legacy, we have a research-oriented image. The department, however, has a narrow niche and resides in the Division of Social Sciences, which I think helps its image in the university setting.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?
How metaphorical! Are we talking about the field as a whole, or about particular institutions?

Most of my interviewees named the U.S. as one skyscraper.
Yes, the U.S. would definitely be one, but I do believe without construction sites, the U.S. would become less significant. There is clearly leading edge work in Germany and in the Netherlands, too. China is on the way up, especially in the study of media and new technologies. In organizational communication, I find England, Australia, and New Zealand academic soul mates, but the scholars are not necessarily in communication departments. Many of them are active in ICA, but they are housed in sociology or in management schools. In the future, I think we are going to see some real changes. China, Japan, and the East Asian countries are going to grow and become taller skyscrapers in the field. They will clearly develop their own brand of communication and subspecialties, as is happening in Brazil. At one time, communication scholars were primarily trained in the U.S.; however, this pattern is changing, and I think the construction sites will become taller skyscrapers.

Where do you see the field in 2030?
In 2030, I think we will see a more internationally-defined field. The field itself will become more multi-vocal and infused by approaches, problems, topics, and ideologies that are developing in non-U.S. settings. As typically occurs over time, we will see areas of the field disappear or merge into new forms. Technology and international perspectives are currently infusing all topics. New arenas of technology are likely to become distinct divisions in their own right; for example, the study of social media could become a separate subspecialty. In the future, we are likely to see divisions that have been strongholds in the field splinter into subareas. At one time, the term mass communication held a central identity with unique boundaries. Now, when we use that term, scholars ask, "What does that mean?" The division of media studies has become too big to be unique and distinctive. The same concerns could reorient political, interpersonal, or organizational, as well.

Are there any scholars whom you regard as role models?
Role models, for me, are people whose work makes a difference in the field. Ellen Wartella would be a good example because of her impact in shaping public policy on the role of children and the media.

Back to Table of Contents

Scholars who craft new frontiers and make a difference in academia are also role models for me—Ernest Bormann, Gerald Miller, Karlyn Campbell, David Zarefsky, and Judee Burgoon.

Looking back on 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?
Definitely. I'm proud of the way that the field has fought its internal battles. At one time, the tensions between rhetoric and social science approaches to communication were very strong. I recall special conferences on "Ferment in the Field," and on the future of the discipline that show how we came together to address our differences. I think the field came out of these periods very well. Now, we are struggling with the breath and depth of this field, particularly through our expansion into so many arenas of academic life. As the field has grown, I lament that we have lost sight of our core and what makes us distinctive. Keeping us all together is more of an institutional endeavor than it is an academic one wedded through concepts and theories. I'm particularly proud of the direction that organizational communication has taken and the research that has developed over the past 40 years. Looking back, I'm really proud of our inclusive community.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?
I would try to find opportunities to pull together scholars in disparate areas to theorize about communication itself. I mentioned this idea in my ICA presidential address (Putnam, 2001). I used the example of communicative framing. It is a concept that is widely developed in media, interpersonal, organizational, and intercultural studies. We have huge bodies of knowledge on framing practices, but we have not collectively theorized about the concept. We have become so splintered into specializations that it is difficult to undertake such a project. When I edited the first *Handbook in Organizational Communication,* I knew the field; I could respond with specific input on multiple topics and theories. Right now, the field has so many threads, even in organizational communication, and it seems impossible to keep up with all of it (Putnam & Krone, 2006).

What will remain when Linda Putnam is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
What I hope would remain is to be open to a variety of approaches to the study of communication. I would hope that organizational communication scholars will continue to track the growth of the field, as we have done through handbooks, state-of-the-art reviews, and theory-building essays. In my view, these projects are the keys to building knowledge in an area. I would hope that scholars aim to make their work transferable. We should convey the implications of our research for developing concepts and applying research. Also, I hope that my career testifies to the value of crossing arenas of research. It is becoming harder and harder to do this. My adviser dabbled in widely different areas. I have worked in organizational studies, small groups, gender, conflict, and discourse. I'm convinced that cross-fertilization occurs and invigorates each area. I would hate to see young scholars become so narrow that the field becomes insular. I see this narrowness in other disciplines, namely psychology, and I would hope that I have influenced scholars to avoid this model of knowledge production.

Back to Table of Contents

References

Bormann, E. G., Pratt, J., & Putnam, L. (1978). Power, authority, and sex: Male response to female leadership. *Communication Monographs*, *45*, 119–155.

Corman, S. R. (2006). On being less theoretical and more technological in organizational communication. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, *20*, 325–338.

Ellis, D. (1982). The shame of speech communication. *Spectra*, *18*, 1–2.

Jablin, F., Putnam, L., Roberts, K., & Porter, L. (Eds.). (1987). *Handbook of organizational communication*. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications.

Putnam, L. L. (1988). Communication and interpersonal conflict in organizations. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *1*, 293–301.

Putnam, L. L. (2001). Shifting voices, oppositional discourse, and new visions for communication studies. *Journal of Communication*, *51*, 38–51.

Putnam, L. L., & Krone, K. J. (Eds.). (2006). *Organizational communication* [5-volume set]. London: SAGE Publications.

Putnam, L. L., & Roloff, M. E. (Eds.). (1992). *Communication and negotiation*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications.

Signorielli, N. D. (Ed.). (1996). *Women in communication: A biographical sourcebook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1778–1783 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

BYRON REEVES

"We were changing how we thought about media messages."

Byron Reeves, April 5, 2011.
Stanford University. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1949 in South Bend, Indiana
Education:	1972 B.F.A. in Graphic Design, Southern Methodist University
	1974 M.A. in communication, Michigan State University
	1976 Ph.D. in communication, Michigan State University
Career:	1976 Assistant Professor at University of Wisconsin-Madison
	1986 Professor, Stanford University
	1997 ICA Fellow
Personal:	Married, one daughter

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Byron Reeves

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

I was born in an industrial area in a working-class family. No one in my family had ever been to college. My dad sold things, and my mother was a homemaker. We moved a lot and lived in different places in the Midwest, such as suburban Chicago, Kansas City, and St. Louis. My professional future was not something that we talked about. I was occasionally asked what I would like to be. My answer to that was always a "pitcher for the Chicago White Sox" or something like that. Doctor, lawyer, or professor was never discussed in the family.

Did religion play any role in your childhood?

I would say it did. We were a Protestant family. When we moved, joining a church was very important for the integration into the community. We joined churches or Boy Scouts in nice places that we didn't live in. My mother wanted to have a bad house in a good school district. I congratulated her for thinking about what that meant.

Do you still remember why you chose to study graphic design at Southern Methodist University?

I went to college to play baseball. I did not have any particular thing I was interested in. I was in the business program for a while, and in some other professional programs. I got to graphic design because I loved making media. I was doing a lot of graphics work for the community and for the university and thought that's what I was going to do.

Why did you abandon this idea?

In my senior year, I took a psychology course on visual perception. That seemed to be even more interesting than making the media, and a better career. I got interested in graduate programs and applied at Michigan State, Wisconsin, Illinois, and also at Stanford. I was rejected here at Stanford. A couple of months ago, I told this story to my faculty colleagues in a speech at the retirement dinner for Don Roberts, who participated in the rejection decision in 1972. I still have his letter.

How would you compare the student Byron Reeves with your students today?

Students today are much better. I really started college in graduate school. The students that are starting now often have relevant work experience. They come from computer science or psychology, and from rigorous programs at top-notch universities. They are just excellently prepared.

Can you tell me something about your main academic teachers at Michigan State?

Some of them are still in the field. I was assigned to Bradley Greenberg when I got there. Chuck Atkin was right across the hall from me. Those two were very active in the media area and the people I interacted with the most. My first seminar was with Everett Rogers. Then there was Joe Woelfel, an interesting assistant professor doing things with multi-dimensional scaling, math, and psychology. He was very influential.

Back to Table of Contents

When did you know that you wanted to become a scientist, maybe a communication scientist?
There was never an exact decision day. In fact, I was always envious of colleagues who discovered on Tuesday, at four o'clock, after a lecture, that they wanted to be a scientist. For me, it was much more gradual. The idea of asking and answering questions in a systematic way was new to me when I got to Michigan State. I remember the first sessions working with Bradley Greenberg. Five or 10 of us met regularly in a research group. I remember being given a deck of computer cards and was asked to calculate a cross-tabulation of data on an IBM counter sorter. It was data from a survey about kids and television. I looked at these numbers and thought, "Wow, now you can say this and that about these children." That seemed powerful and valuable.

The joy of discovery.
Bradley and the other faculty were very good about giving new students visibility into the totality of what they did. You could watch the sausage being made.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to the psychological processing of media?
I don't think there was any crucial experience. I always loved media. As a kid, I loved television, films, and enjoyed all visuals very much. I would think about ways to present messages, and about what was going on in my head—and maybe in yours, as well—when you looked at media. It was very light introspection, but I was as interested in those reactions as in how people were interacting with each other. How do they remember things, why did they like this and not that?

What can the industry learn from games and virtual worlds (Reeves & Read, 2009)?
Industry can learn how to engage people. And not only industry, but all of us. A large number of information jobs are incredibly dull and boring. They are facilitated by software that doesn't allow autonomy or give a sense of mastery and achievement. People want to know how they are doing. There are a lot of entertainment sensibilities that help solve those problems.

Can you understand colleagues who criticize applied research?
Absolutely. I've done it myself. In communication, we have always struggled with applied vs. theoretical, or academic vs. professional. I could probably be a good debater on either side. My most applied times are my senior years [laughing]. Especially in the last 10 years, I've really enjoyed thinking about corporate contexts. These are the organizations and people that are causing a lot of the communication problems today, but they're also the ones that have the means to solve problems. Most of the journal articles we write are destined to the basements of libraries to be read and cited by very few people. That's not an influence that always satisfies me.

How would you rate the position of psychological research within communication?
It's some of the best work. When people first started doing work in communication, there was much to borrow from psychologists who were already doing good experiments. So application was maybe a bit easier, or at least more encouraged. I think that gave the field a good start. Right now, research about psychological processing is one of the strongest areas within communication, partly because there are

Back to Table of Contents

significant connections to psychology. Here at Stanford, it would be hard to be promoted in the area of media psychology in a communication department without psychologists looking at carefully at your work. I think that's increasingly true across the field, as well.

Does it make a difference to be at a university like Stanford?
It's very different to be here. Stanford is an excellent academic institution, but our administrative environment is equally as important. Anybody looking for a job has to pay attention very carefully whether or not they are working in a department, school, or college. The Department of Communication at Stanford is in a social science cluster with psychology, sociology, economics, anthropology, and political science. These are really good departments. We are only one of six, and we report to a social science dean. The standards that we are asked to meet are the same standards that we share broadly in the social sciences. This is hard and can be more challenging than in a communication college where the dean is somebody from your own discipline.

Do you have some examples for those challenges here at Stanford?
Everybody is always asking what communication is and why they don't have communication departments at Harvard, Princeton, and Yale. That's where the peers for most of the other social sciences departments live. I note that we like the fact that Penn has a communication program. Our assistant professors face a hard challenge. They must be the best in a field that is difficult to define and often includes other excellent social science programs.

Is it more of a burden, or more of a delight to you being linked to Michigan State?
It's a good thing. I'm very proud of my affiliation with that program. Since the late 1960s, they have been among the best programs in our field (Rogers, 2001).

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?
I had no idea I was being considered, and I was extremely pleased. I hadn't really paid too much attention to those kinds of academic awards. My ICA Fellow colleagues might be surprised to learn that I really enjoy going and listening to them. We meet for an hour or 90 minutes at ICA. I never say much, but it's really interesting to talk to the other Fellows briefly, and to find out how they fit into their programs and their universities. It's nice to have those connections.

Who is Byron Reeves: a researcher, a teacher, the commuter between university and industry, the pioneer of physiology within communication? What is the most important part of your academic life?
At different times in your career, there are different answers. That's important to say. What I enjoy the most is the intersection between teaching and research, decades ago as well as last week.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?
First of all, I view it very much as a subject, and not as a discipline like psychology or biology. Maybe some colleagues will be sorry to hear this. I view it as a topic and a hell of a topic. It's one that we worry about, that we celebrate, and that's responsible for relationships, political decisions, and childhood

Back to Table of Contents

socialization. It's a topic that different disciplines contribute to. There are biological perspectives, as well as psychological and cultural ones.

Most of my interviewees told me about the preconception that communication is about the training of students first and only secondly about research. How is the situation here at Stanford?

Our faculty is certainly research-orientated. And at the PhD level, our teaching is well integrated into that orientation. That is, students work with faculty on research, and that training constitutes the bulk of their preparation for their own academic careers. So it's hard to separate training and research. I'd say the goal is to hopelessly confuse them.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

I don't see it any bigger. But I see the topics becoming increasingly more important. I bet there is no one department on this campus who doesn't have some interest in media. We concentrate on human-computer interaction and political communication. We don't really have interpersonal, organizational, or international studies represented now. The field will grow because communication and media topics will be included in other areas. The engineers are studying media, the human sciences are studying media, language and literature departments are studying media.

Are there any scientists whom you would call role models?

I think my role models are the ones that I met early on. Chuck Atkin and Brad Greenberg were role models. I tried to do what they had done in the first years of my career.

What did you learn from both of them for your own work?

I learned a lot about media, but also how to make a job at a university work. How do you deal with criticism and intellectual arguments, how do you deal with life's challenges, and how do you teach and write so that your own career is successful?

Looking back on 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

I'm proud of this whole idea of looking at primitive physiological responses to media messages. We were starting at Wisconsin with Annie Lang, Mike Shapiro, and a few other students that were around there at the time. In retrospect, we were radically changing how we thought about media messages (Reeves & Thorson, 1986; Reeves et al., 1989). We established a relationship with a couple of faculty outside of our program. That was hard to do in the late 1970s and early 1980s, but we found financial support and gathered data. I remember a particular data set. We had brainwave responses for 30 women as they watched television, and we had access to the first tape-recorders that could replay and rewind video frame by frame. We could see a signal in the brain and also see what happened in the video at that exact moment. We were redefining what a media stimulus was and talking about it in a way that was new. You can describe media in a million ways. We typically fall back on industrial definitions of television, film, and news. All those definitions may not have much to do with how they are processed psychologically. Constantly redefining media in relation to how it is processed, rather than how it is produced—that is the most interesting stuff I've worked on.

Back to Table of Contents

Is there anything that you would do differently today?
That's a long list. I think about what I might do now if I were these students. There are lots of opportunities in neurosciences right now. That would be a serious attraction.

That's not really an answer to that question.
I would probably spend less time with any specific piece of data, and more time collecting multiple data sets. And trying to answer more questions more quickly, even if that meant a small decrement in the quality of answers. There were times when we just analyzed and reanalyzed. Knowing that you will share all this information with my colleagues, I'm going to stop there [laughing]. I would probably spend more time with students, but I have felt incredibly lucky in my career. Almost every day, there is something interesting happening, even on the days when I'm writing recommendations and doing reports or evaluations.

What will remain when Byron Reeves is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
Are you asking about a legacy? Have fun [laughing]. I don't know. Think creatively. Have fun. The relationships are some of the most important things for me. It would please me if the people that survive me remember them.

References

Reeves, B., Lang, A., Thorson, E., & Rothschild, M. (1989). Emotional television scenes and hemispheric specialization. *Human Communication Research*, *15*, 493–508.

Reeves, B., & Read, J. L. (2009). *Total engagement: Using games and virtual worlds to change the way people work and businesses compete*. Boston: Harvard Business Press.

Reeves, B., & Thorson, E. (1986). Watching television: Experiments on the viewing process. *Communication Research*, *13*, 343–361.

Rogers, E. M. (2001). The department of communication at Michigan State as a seed institution for communication study. *Communication Studies*, *52*, 234–248.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1784–1792 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

RONALD RICE

"Comfortable with both methodology and writing."

Ronald Rice, April 8, 2011.
University of California, Santa Barbara. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1950 in Mechanicsburg, PA
Education:	1971 B.A. in English literature, Columbia
	1978 M.A. in communication, Stanford
	1982 Ph.D. in communication, Stanford
Career:	1982 Assistant Professor at USC
	1989 Associate Professor at Rutgers
	1995 Professor
	2004 Arthur N. Rupe Professor in the Social Effects of Mass Communication at University of California, Santa Barbara
	2006 ICA President
	2010 Honorary Doctorate from University of Montreal
	2011 ICA Fellow
Personal:	Married, one son

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Ronald Rice

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

I'm a good example for public access to education in the U.S. Neither one of my parents went to college. My dad was in the Air Force during the war and was on the GI bill. That allowed me to get some college funding. Both of my parents grew up during the Depression. I was very fortunate. My parents are smart people. They just weren't highly educated, but supportive and encouraging of my brothers and me.

How did you get to Columbia?

I grew up in Richmond, Virginia. In the early 1960s, nobody went out of the area. It was the conservative South, and everybody went either to Virginia or to North Carolina. In public school, I did okay, but I wasn't like the star. The hugest difference was a friend from the year before who had gone to Columbia. He came down and convinced me that I should think about it. I didn't really know what I was getting into, but it changed my life. Columbia is just a world-class university. You get exposed to so many things and learn to appreciate reading, culture, and the world of ideas. That was probably the single most significant factor in my life.

What did your father do for a living after the war?

He was in the insurance industry as a senior vice president. My mom worked as an office manager for a law firm.

Did religion play any role in your childhood?

Not so much. We were Unitarians, and I'm still in the Unitarian Church here. In our family, it was a sort of a joke that we didn't need to be like Protestantism or Jewish because my mom was so highly successful in inducing a sense of responsibility. She was a stronger force than any religion could be. I have three brothers. All of us are very responsible, hard working, and altruistic. That's just how we were raised.

Do you still remember why you chose to study literature at Columbia?

When I first went to college, I actually applied as a math major. I was very good in the sciences. In high school, I took all the advanced math courses, but in my senior year, there I also took a world literature class. It was just wonderful. So early on in college, I switched my major to English. That's one of the reasons why I enjoy being a social scientist. I'm very comfortable with numbers, statistics, and technological stuff, but I'm also very comfortable with reading and writing and critical analysis. Those are the two most important sets of skills that you need.

How would you compare the student Ron Rice with your students today?

It's hard to get outside of your own head. We are fortunate here at UCSB. We have very good students from California, and in our department, they are the best because so many of them want to get into our major that we can require a higher minimum grade point average than any other major on campus. They are smart and very active, but not as involved in conceptual, theoretical, cultural, or historical issues as we were when I remember my fellow students. But it was Columbia in the late 1960s, of course.

Back to Table of Contents

Were you confronted with the students' movement?
I wasn't involved, but I was there during that time. We had strikes in the spring, and I had friends who were activists. It was a very exciting time.

How did you get into communication?
I got accepted into graduate school at Columbia in the Department of Literature, but there you need very good language skills and things like Middle French. I didn't have those. So I decided not to go. I had various jobs and travelled for a couple of years. These were all great experiences, but I realized that I needed graduate school to do the quality of work I wanted to do. I applied to mostly business schools because I had the background, but also to some communication schools. I realized that all the jobs that I had were communication-related. Every job I had, I had never been farther west than Wisconsin, and Stanford gave me a full research fellowship. It was just wonderful.

Have you ever considered working as a journalist?
No, but I like to write and edit and find out things. At least at the newspaper level, journalism is too fast to me. If I were one, I would like to be an investigative journalist.

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers at Stanford?
We just had a retirement party for Don Roberts. Many of us had the same comments about him. When we showed up there, he was immediately supportive. This was also true for my adviser Bill Paisley, and many of the other faculty. Bob Hornik, Ev Rogers, John Mayo, and Dennis Foote were all very open and set the norm. I figured, wow, that's a nice profession where people can be successful and that supportive. We now treat our students the same way. Stanford was a model. My fellow graduate students were all very entertaining and exciting. It was a nice period of my life.

When did you know that you wanted to become a scientist, maybe a communication scientist?
Not until my second year in graduate school. I didn't have any background. A lot of my fellow students had a master's degree. I knew nothing about computers, I knew nothing about statistics, and I knew nothing about economics. When I finished the big exam in the first year, I saw how the various areas fit together and felt comfortable. I wanted to work at a level of detail and quality that I know no one would pay me for. So I had to find a profession that allowed me to do that. Academia does. I like to learn, to share, to collaborate. It's a really good sort of culture.

You started early to work on new media (Rice, 1984; Williams, Rice, & Rogers, 1988). Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to that topic?
There were a couple of things. I was good in math and comfortable in information systems, and I had this great job in a bank two years before I went to graduate school. It was a very forward-thinking bank that had some of the leading technologies, and I learned computer programming and systems analysis. When I was at Stanford, Bill Paisley was also way ahead of the curve. Ed Parker was already publishing research on communication technology (Parker & Paisley, 1966). Ev Rogers got into it later (Rogers, 1986). So it was a combination of good timing, a good environment, and the capabilities I had. I have to say there was a bit of strategy. This was an area that I thought I could get to the frontier of reasonably fast. If you go into many other areas, there is so much material and schools of thought. You can't easily be a leader.

Back to Table of Contents

How would you rate the position of scholars who are interested in information management and technology within communication?

That has changed. When I was starting out, I had people tell me, "Don't go into that area, because it's 'just' technology." Early on there, it was a big criticism that people studying new media were just following technology, and there was no theory. The intention of my 1984 book was to show that there can be serious theoretical and empirical analyses of the new media. Now, of course, it's just pervasive. It's everywhere. There are positions, there are entire departments, whole associations, and dedicated journals.

How do you explain this change? Is it just the environment, or also people like you pushing the issue?

It's both. Somebody has to do it. I never saw myself as a driving force. It was just something that happened to me, I was comfortable with, and like. My dissertation was on that, but there were people that started the interest group in ICA, for example. I got great help from Roxanne Hiltz, one of the pioneers in computer-mediated communication. And then it's a natural thing. Just look around. How could you not think this was an important thing to study?

A third of the biographical statement on your website is about the impact of your work. Could you understand colleagues who don't care whether their work is cited or used?

I actually am like that. I do work that I'm interested in doing. When I was starting out, I didn't get tenure at USC, even though I was very productive and influential. I was doing a lot of this new media stuff, and not everybody thought that was great. So I have paid for it, but in the end, I said, "Look, it's a great profession and you should do what you want to do. It takes a lot of work, and what's the point if you don't enjoy what you are doing?" So I don't do it to get citations, but it just turns out that a lot of my work has been cited. That's great, but some of my best books hardly anybody has read or cited. I have always seen my role as to cross boundaries. I publish in areas like information sciences, information systems, and management. My most recent book on unusual routines (Rice & Cooper, 2010) is totally interdisciplinary, like the one I did on browsing and access (Rice, McCreadie, & Chang, 2001). It's not a traditional communication book, but I did it because I wanted to do it, and no one else was doing it. My goal was to show all the relevant stuff. It's not just communication.

How would you rate the position of communication in the other academic fields you are part of?

That's a tough problem. If you look at the citation patterns, the communication field does not get a lot of in-citations. It's mostly out. Communication is one of the lowest in-cited disciplines. There are at least two reasons. First, it's a relatively new field that started up at new universities and doesn't have the same aura like established disciplines. Secondly, communication is very broad. The social science aspect that would be like these other traditional disciplines is only a quite small component. We say the communication field is big, but in terms of social science research, it is actually pretty small. Also, many communication departments are more professionally oriented, so many people in general, and faculty in particular, think of "communications" as primarily a technical field, not a social science. For those reasons, we constantly have to fight.

Back to Table of Contents

You served as a reviewer of hundreds of journal and book manuscripts. Could you put your main criteria of evaluation in some keywords?

My first point of contribution is always the broader context of literature. You can't just say "this is new" as the justification, because there is always prior related material. My second point is consistency. What's your argument from the start, and do you follow it all way through? It's kind of a rhetorical approach. And the third question is: How is this interesting? It doesn't have to be innovative, but it has to be interesting.

Mark Knapp observed "a misplaced emphasis on getting government grants or any kind of grant." Do you share this standpoint?

It's an emphasis that has to be decided by each person, each department, and each university. There is a great need for funding. All the public universities have terrible budget problems. This could be the end of the golden days of the University of California system. You need money for graduate students and research projects. It has also a symbolic value. People pointed that out to me, because I don't do a lot of funded research. It's very good for the department to get those grants, but some people think it forces you to study something else. There is a lot of stuff that there isn't funding for. I don't like large-scale projects where I end up being primarily an administrator. However, there is lots of very rigorous and important, significantly funded communication research.

I asked because I found some of those projects on your website.

I do some of it, but I remember being at Stanford and seeing some faculty spending most of their time writing status reports. I always want to be able to analyze the data and know what's going on in the project at any time. That's just my personal choice.

How did you feel when you were asked to run for ICA President?

I was pleased and surprised. It seems negatively self-referential to say that one is modest, but I never would have thought about being an ICA President. I was very honored, and then I did the best I could. As president, I really worked hard to help the organization.

Did you succeed in meeting the goals of your agenda?

I think so. It was stuff that was not visible. Each president takes a different thing that he or she wants to focus on. My skills are in looking at how things work and how to make them better. There were a lot of processes at the leadership level that had no procedures or documentation. Since I had been a corporate manager, and since I also teach organizational communication, I decided to apply those principles, making the processes at ICA better. But the ICA staff, especially the Executive Director Michael Haley, are tremendous and make it enjoyable and easier.

Could you give me an example?

I can give you a very obvious example. When you come in as President-Select, in that year you have to organize the conference. Everything is new, and a lot of things are complicated and deadline-driven. When I came in, there was no documentation. After dozens of presidents, there was nothing.

Back to Table of Contents

While most of ICA Fellows have found very prominent places for their plaques, Jim Anderson told me that he doesn't like any awards. Can you understand him?

Yes, I can. The only one I put on the wall here is the honorary doctorate from the University of Montreal. It blew me away. But that doesn't mean I haven't been greatly appreciative of, and honored by, the various awards and their representatives.

Who is Ron Rice: a researcher, a teacher, the president of scientific associations and divisions, a pioneer of new media and network research? What is the most important part of your academic life?

To me, it is very satisfying that I can do all those things. I'm a kind of a research geek. I like to just sit down and analyze data, and write and edit for a couple of hours. That's a great treat, but I also like diversity. I like finding out that I can apply my knowledge and abilities to different areas, and I like learning new areas and methodologies. That's one of the reasons why I'm kind of interdisciplinary.

Reading all the presidential addresses at ICA conferences, one gets a very ambivalent picture of the research field, and about the idea of what communication is all about.

I can imagine. Though I wouldn't say ambivalent—rather, diverse. Mine was a sort of dark black humor looking at dysfunctional organizational processes and unusual routines under the surface (Rice, 2008).

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

There are lots of different definitions. It's certainly a process and not an act. It certainly involves both projection and interpretation of meaning, and it's also the basis of human relations and society. We interact, we are social animals, we create symbolic worlds.

Most of my interviewees told me about missing respect from old-established subjects. How is the situation here at Santa Barbara?

It's better. UCSB is a younger university and also very interdisciplinary. It's aware of that, and they are trying to emphasize that as a strategic advantage. And it's true. When I came here, people would say, "We need to work together." I'm Co-Director of the fast-growing Carsey-Wolf Center here on campus. We work on projects with environmental science, sociology, the humanities.

What about the Department of Communication?

That's the second reason why it's better here. Our department is avowedly a social science department. There is no professional production or anything like that. The campus here is a research campus. There are no professional schools on this campus. People know that you are more likely to be a researcher. We also have all these outstanding, world-class faculty; we get all those top awards, we bring in funding, we have great graduate students, and even a new building. So we have a lot more presence than in a lot of other places, but we still have to fight that. We go to meetings, and some people from the hard sciences think we teach public relations or videotape things.

Back to Table of Contents

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?

Just in the last 10 years, the Dutch have got fantastic programs and do great work. I've been a visitor there and on reading committees for PhDs. The training of the doctoral students there is better than at many U.S. universities. The Germans are taking off. They have a history doing more mass media research, but certainly, in Europe, those are the two places that stand out. In terms of network research, people from Belgium and Scandinavia are leaders in that. The Nanyang Technological University in Singapore is also very good. I've been there as a visiting professor for four summers. China and South Korea are really taking off, again primarily in mass media, but also very much in the quantitative mode. France has a lot of qualitative and critical approaches. In terms of international, those are certainly the construction sites and some of the peaks. Of course, there are a lot of programs in the U.S. The University of Montreal is also very good. They have a tremendous faculty there.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

The first issue is the funding situation in the U.S. This place can be radically different 20 years from now. We have no guarantee that we are able to maintain our size. It's really the end of an era. The second point is the growth of Asian scholars. The Chinese will have a major influence. And thirdly, there is a lot of bio-physiological research, right on the boundary of our field, on brainwave images and communication processing for example. That's great stuff.

Are there any scientists whom you would call role models?

Yes. It can be a model in terms of being the person they are, the kind of research they do, the mentoring they do to others, and the contribution to the field. I'll just give you a few examples. When I wasn't getting tenure at USC, I seriously thought about leaving the field. It was such a shock to me, especially how some were rewarding for philosophies and behaviors that I didn't agree with. I was a firm believer in the ideas of social science, and collegial behavior with faculty and students, and had done so well. Right then at the time, I went to a conference and saw all these energetic und supportive people and especially Russell Bernard. He was like a light to me. I thought, "I want to be in this profession because there are people like this." My advisers Bill Paisley and Don Roberts were very supportive, too. If you had the ability to put your finger to one person's head, I would say Bill Paisley. He just knew everything. He was gentle and careful, but also so powerful. In terms of research, I would also name Joe Walther and Noshir Contractor. They are both just so rigorous, so thoughtful, and so creative in the kinds of things that they do. Ev Rogers was influential when I was a graduate student. There are other people, but those are certainly the ones who stand out.

Looking back on 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

Yes. I'm very pleased with my profession. There are things that I could have done lots better, absolutely. Because of my norms at Stanford, and also because of my parents, I'm very proud of the fact that I've always been very supportive to students and collegial with faculty (well, mostly). I've mentored a lot of graduate students. I'm proud of my books, too. These three (pointing to Rice & Cooper, 2010; Rice, McCreadie, & Chang, 2001; and Johnson & Rice, 1987) are probably the ones that are least read, but they represent the kind of work that I want to be identified with. None is not really communication, per se. I'm also proud that I've been able to follow my own principles. In the end, I seem to have been rewarded for

Back to Table of Contents

them. Every day, I still think I'm very fortunate. I have a great job and profession, great colleagues, and a great university.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

There are some bad things that have happened to me, but I'm where I am now because of those. In the end, things turned out very well. I'm very happy here. The time-travel thing is hard to say. For example, there are certain projects that I would have managed differently. For a while, I really did large-scale projects with amazing research designs. I understood how to do it, but the projects were just too big. So in the end, you can't get a lot out of it. One or two articles only when, in fact, the amount of work would have justified some book volumes. But I learned a lot from them and enjoyed working on them, and some graduate students got publications from them.

What will remain when Ron Rice is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

I've occasionally thought about that. When Ev Rogers died a couple of years ago, the extraordinary amount of influence he had in multiple areas was obvious. There were people who were really known for a whole field of research. Since I'm kind of interdisciplinary, and since I'm not a specialist in one particular issue, I don't really have that. I hope that my primary lingering influence will be the good and supportive relationships I've had with faculty and students.

What about new media?

I certainly was not the founder in any way. I just happened to be one of the early people there and maybe one of the contributors to that. But I did help to diffuse the early research, and help establish the field as serious and significant.

It's a very human legacy.

There was a time when I would have said that my communication network research should remain, but I haven't done a lot of it recently. The network field has totally exploded. Since I don't do things that have easy labels, people don't associate that with me, but I try to do the very best I can.

Back to Table of Contents

References

Johnson, B., & Rice, R. E. (1987). *Managing organizational innovation: The evolution from word processing to office information systems*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Parker, E.*,* & Paisley, W. (1966). Research for psychologists at the interface of the scientist and his information system*. American Psychologist, 21,* 1061-1072.

Rice, R. E. (Ed.). (1984). *The new media: Communication, research and technology*. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications.

Rice, R. E. (2008). Unusual routines: Organizational (non)sensemaking. *Journal of Communication*, *58*, 1-19.

Rice, R. E., & Cooper, S. D. (2010). *Organizations and unusual routines: A systems analysis of dysfunctional feedback processes*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Rice, R. E., McCreadie, M., & Chang, S. J. (2001). *Accessing and browsing information and communication: An interdisciplinary approach*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Rogers, E. M. (1986). *Communication technology: The new media in society*. New York: Free Press.

Williams, F., Rice, R. E., & Rogers, E. M. (Eds.). (1988). *Research methods and the new media*. New York: Free Press.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1793–1799 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

MICHAEL ROLOFF

"I live in the everyday."

Michael Roloff, March 4, 2011.
Evanston, IL. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1950 in Terre Haute, Indiana
Education:	1972 B.A., Indiana State
	1974 M.A. in communication, Michigan State University
	1975 Ph.D. in communication, Michigan State University
Career:	1975 Assistant Professor, University of Kentucky
	1978 Professor, Northwestern University
	2009 ICA Fellow and NCA Distinguished Scholar
Personal:	Married, three daughters

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Michael Roloff

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

I was born and raised in Southern Indiana. My father had German ancestors, and my mother's family was Dutch with some Swiss-German. Some of them were farmers, some steelworkers, and some carpenters. Only my father's mother was a teacher. Her occupational choice took hold. My grandfather was a steelworker who insisted that my father had to become an educator. That's why he became a high school teacher and football coach. I don't think I ever really considered any other occupation.

What did your mother do for a living?

She was a homemaker while I was growing up. She didn't work outside the home until my sister and I left. Then she worked within a public school administration. Growing up, there was always this education connection. I grew up around high school activities. And I'm a Midwesterner, too. I have never moved outside the Midwest. When I was very young, my father pursued better coaching jobs, and we moved from small town to small town, primarily in Indiana.

What did you bring into communication?

I was on debate teams at high schools. This is the background of many American communication types in my cohort, as well as earlier cohorts. Many of us were involved in forensic activities and debating. I had a scholarship to be on a debate team at Indiana State. I became interested in persuasion. My adviser, Sam Mehrley, came from Michigan State, and I conducted a project on attitude change. He encouraged me to go to graduate school. In my senior year of college, I met Gerald Miller, who encouraged me to apply for the doctoral program at Michigan State. That was the way it started.

How did your father react when you went to Michigan State?

Not a problem. He wasn't heavily involved in that decision. He always laughingly noted that the teaching assistantship I received meant that my education did not cost him much.

Did religion play any role in your childhood?

Not much.

How would you compare the student Mike Roloff with your students today?

They know a lot more than I knew at the same age. It's not just that they are exposed to more information. They are exposed to more strategy. There were times when I was just fortunate to be in the right place at the right time, without knowing at the time that I had made the right decision. What I try to do with my students is to describe for them where those decision points are, and how you start thinking about it ahead of time.

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers?

It's a whole bunch of them. If I go back to high school and to college, I remember the debate coaches. Ronald Snell, Don Shields, Ted Walwick. We spent weekends traveling to tournaments. Certainly Sam Mehrley played a key role in generating my interest in research. At Michigan State, I worked with Gerald

Back to Table of Contents

Miller and Brad Greenberg. Brad and I are still very close. After that, I learned a great deal from my senior colleagues.

When did you know that you wanted to become a scientist, maybe a communication scientist?
That would have started when I graduated from college. Prior to that, I could have been a high school speech teacher or an attorney. Most debate people end up either being coaches or going to law school.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to social influence?
Debating is all about influencing each other. That was an easy transition for me to do. The next step was to move beyond understanding how to argue, and actually to go out testing where this stuff works or not. I also was interested in why people can't get along with each other. I grew up in a challenging neighborhood. People often fought. I was always amazed watching how quickly an argument could escalate into a fist fight.

How would you rate the position of relationship and everyday scholars within communication?
There was a time when we had greater status in the field than we have now. There are some who don't view the everyday as being important or interesting. I don't view myself as being in competition with my colleagues who study other things. I try to be open-minded and happy that we study such diverse things. I read research on global and macro processes, but I live in the everyday, and like most people, I need to successfully interact with my family, friends, and coworkers. It is those everyday challenges, opportunities, and activities that interest me. Today, I have to explain more and more why the everyday matters. That's not something I ever had to do in my career.

How do you explain this loss of status?
In some ways, it was due to technological advances that allowed people throughout the world to communicate with each other. Bigger always seems to be more important. I fear that there are some in communication who see everyday processes as less important unless they are tied to technology and involve ties to people who are distant.

While some of your colleagues earn a lot of money as consultants, you received several teaching awards. Did you sometimes regret the decision to go the way of an academic?
I think I made the right decision. If I had to predict where academia might be going, I'm not certain I would do it in the future. The advantage of being an academic is autonomy. We have the freedom to study things that we find interesting. It's great that I can choose to study the everyday. If I worked in business, they could stop me from doing this unless it was profitable. This freedom offsets the fact that we probably don't make as much money as we could if we were doing other things, but the freedom of inquiry is important. I am unsure how much longer that freedom will exist.

What about the teaching?
I have always valued teaching. It keeps me grounded. I also have been able to tie my courses directly to my research interests. So I am providing material that I find very interesting, and I hope that my students will find interesting, too. If I can't explain the importance of what I study to students, then I have a problem. In some respects, the students I deal with are frozen in time. Although the names change, my

Back to Table of Contents

students have remained 18 to 24 years old throughout my career. The cohorts often enter with new ideas that challenge existing views, and that are informative and energizing.

Did you ever consider applying for a position outside Northwestern?
Yes, about nine years ago. I was not happy. Although I teach negotiation, I don't like playing the impression management game of periodically applying for jobs to demonstrate one's value. I know colleagues who apply every five years for a new job. I don't do that as long as I'm treated fairly. I was very angry at that time. I had an extremely good offer from the University of Wisconsin and was very tempted to take it.

Why didn't it work out?
It had much to do with family. My daughters are in the Chicago area, my wife was employed and was very active in the community, and we owned a house. Those are very strong anchors.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?
I was very honored. It means a great deal to be recognized by your colleagues. Very gratifying. This was not something I actively pursued. My father always told me to remain humble, so I have never been self-promotional. Brant Burleson offered to nominate me and noted that he thought I was already a fellow. It meant a great deal to simply be nominated.

You got awards and honors from ICA, as well as from NCA. Which one is your favorite?
I'm tied very much to both. I've done service for both, and I've got friends in both. However, there is not much overlap. There are only a few who are in each. I'm extremely loyal to both associations and don't want to create a false competition.

Who is Michael Roloff: a researcher, a teacher, the promoter of everyday research within communication? What is the most important part of your academic life?
That's another one that creates a false choice for me. I'm all of those things. When I entered this profession, I knew that I had certain tasks to perform. When they said you have to do research, teaching, and service, I did research, teaching, and service. Primarily, I'm a researcher, but I like to teach, too. I perform service in part because it is important to give back to the profession.

What is your definition of communication science? What is the subject all about?
It's increasingly become so diverse that it's difficult to define. It's diverse in several ways. Number one: What is communication? There was a time when we talked exclusively about symbolic and intentional interaction among human beings. Now we have computers talking to each other, nonverbal signals that are not necessarily symbolic at all, and we adopted social psychological research on social cognition that talks about unconscious actions. I am not certain there is a consensus definition of communication.

And number two?
The issue: What constitutes science? When I started, science was exclusively defined by quantitative methods, experiments, and surveys. Even if you had qualitative data, you tried to analyze it statistically.

Back to Table of Contents

Now, some scholars use interpretative methods. In some ways, the boundaries between science and humanities have become blurred.

It's a weird kind of development.

The field has become more diverse. When I started, there were a few primary areas of inquiry, and this was evident in the divisions. Over time, the number of areas has multiplied. NCA has more than 50 divisions, and I am doubtful that a plan was in place for the creation of each one. Sometimes, interest areas emerge as new communication processes emerge. In such cases, the proliferation is fine. Sometimes, I think the proliferation results from pragmatic issues, such as achieving sufficient panels on the convention program. Regardless of the cause, the proliferation of areas could mean that we do not project a coherent image to others. However, some argue that, as long as those researching in a given area produce quality scholarship and they are addressing important issues, the absence of a coherent overall image is not relevant.

How is the reputation of the discipline in the U.S.?

I think it varies across universities. The speech tradition started in the land-grant colleges. Speech departments helped students who had trouble making a public speech. We developed skill-based courses, as a stepchild of English departments. Those communication departments existed because they taught multiple sections of public speaking, and the need to staff those courses allowed us to acquire new faculty positions and to grow our graduate programs. That legacy continues inside some universities. Some colleagues and students look at us as a service department. I don't hear that term as often as I used to, but I think some colleagues from other disciplines note that we don't have a core theory or a set of ideas that define us. In some cases, they view our interdisciplinary ties as overly derivative, offering little that is unique. So we become defined by our teaching role in the university.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?

I don't have a lot of direct contact with international scholars. My understanding of what's happening has to do with my co-editorship of *Communication Research*. We've had a large influx of submissions from Europe and Asia, Germany, and from the Netherlands. In many ways, they are asking some of the same questions we are asking in the U.S.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

It will depend on how long this recession goes in the U.S. I've seen real threats to the field during bad economic times. The university administrations will look at our eclecticism and ask, "Why do we need a department of communication if the faculty has more in common with the colleagues in allied fields than with their colleagues in communication?"

Again, the inability to define ourselves and explain why we all fit together.

Yes, that raises the question: Do we really need this department? I worry about what's going to happen, because I don't think there is any movement toward coherence. The field is a mile wide and an inch deep. That doesn't mean we are superficial. It just means there are not many of us working in any given area. As a journal editor, I have trouble sometimes finding reviewers who are not affiliated with the authors. In

Back to Table of Contents

addition, communication scholars often have stronger interdisciplinary links than with their colleagues in the field. Communication can be viewed as an incoherent umbrella with units that have ties to allied disciplines. In a difficult economic time, an administrator could make a rational decision and say everything this department offers is scattered and duplicated by other departments.

The students ask for us.

They want it. Why? At Northwestern, I think we draw students because many of my colleagues are excellent teachers. We often win teaching awards. We speak well, we are entertaining, and we talk about processes that affect their everyday life. Of course, there has always been an argument that our courses are less challenging, and grades are higher.

Maybe the administrator will know about this.

At Northwestern, we once had one particularly antagonistic provost who said, "I don't get why we need you. Students don't come to this university to study communication. If you didn't exist, their experience would not be as good, but they still would have completed their degrees." There are core disciplines that all universities must have: philosophy, history, English, psychology, classics. Communication isn't always viewed as one of them.

Are there any scientists whom you regard as role models?

I have had different models throughout my life. When I entered the field, I looked to the established scholars. As I got older, I learned to monitor the cohort just ahead of me. I learned that things have changed so fast that the experiences of much earlier cohorts did not fit the current situation very well. Now, I'm watching the experiences of scholars in my age group or just ahead of me. Their experiences are diverse. Some colleagues are incredibly consistent and continue their research activities. Some are planning for retirement, and some are retired. That transition is informative and not one that is often discussed. How can one retire and remain involved in the scholarly process?

Looking back on about 40 years in communication: Is there anything you are especially proud of?

It's a combination of things. I was very honored when I was named a Distinguished Scholar and a Fellow. And I'm especially proud of the students with whom I worked. I stay in touch with most of them. Some of them stayed in the field, some went on to research institutions, and some to small liberal arts colleges or into business and government. All seem to be happy and are making contributions. They have found their niche. If you had talked to me 25 years ago, I would have argued that scholarly activity is the only appropriate path for those with doctorates. I have found that most students enter graduate school with that goal, but that over time, they discover other paths that are fulfilling.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

No. Of course I made mistakes. If you look at the forest, the forest is fine, although there are some broken branches. I'm not certain that I'm a role model that anyone should try to follow in the new unfolding academic world. What I did would not work anymore.

Back to Table of Contents

Why not?

What's working well now in the U.S. is entrepreneurship and self-promotion. Things have become more competitive. Who can blow his own horn really loud is going to be the best. The entrepreneurial part is a function of the economy. At universities, external funding is critical. I, more or less, set my own research agenda and went about pursuing it. My hope was that its value would be self-evident to others.

What will remain when Michael Roloff is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

I tend to be pragmatic and realistic. I have learned [that] scholars and their work is often quickly forgotten. Even after becoming an emeritus, it doesn't take long before the person becomes a dim memory from the past. As interests change and knowledge develops, our direct impact is relatively short-lived. That is the nature of things. My legacy is my students. They are the ones who will remember me, and perhaps their work will reflect some of my ideas and values. They may, in turn, pass on some part of me to their students.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1800–1805 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

ALAN RUBIN

"I'm not just a uses and gratifications person."

Alan Rubin, April 20, 2011.
Sedona, AZ. Photo by M. Meyen

Born:	1949 in New York City
Education:	1969 B.A. in communication and political science, Queens College
	1972 M.A. in communication theory and media, Queens College
	1976 Ph.D. in speech communication, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Career:	1975 Assistant Professor, Georgia Southern College
	1977 University of Wisconsin, Parkside
	1981 Cleveland State
	1982 Associate Professor, Kent State
	1985–1988 Editor, *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*
	1989 Professor
	1997–1999 Editor, *Journal of Communication*
	2001 ICA Fellow
	2004 Retirement
Personal:	Married to Rebecca Boring Rubin

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Alan Rubin

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

My parents were both New Yorkers. During the Second World War, my father was in the army, and then he worked in the insurance industry. My mother was a homemaker most of the time. My aspirations were born around that era and because of the media environment in New York. I grew up in a bustling and crowded area where something was always going on. Radio, television, and music became very important in one's life, and the world started to shrink in those days. As a child, I was a participant at TV shows. So I got to see early television in a studio, as well as from the box at home.

What kind of show was it?

It was the *Howdy Doody Show*, one of those famous children's shows. I haven't owned up to this to too many people before. When I was four or five years old, I was a member of the Peanut Gallery.

Were there any university graduates in your family?

My mother went to college for a year or so. My father didn't go. I was first generation.

Did religion play any role in your childhood?

A lot more as a child than it does now. We were conservative Jewish people. I went to Hebrew school, as a lot of people did back in that era. I finished there just around the time I got bar mitzvahed. Then, I started to see the separation between me and religion from that point forward.

Do you still remember why you chose to study at Queens College?

The City University of New York was a very good university then. It also had free tuition. I think it cost me $24, and then $34 a semester, and it was still in the New York environment. I looked at several other colleges, but I wasn't that anxious to leave the city at that point. My undergraduate degree was in both communication and political science. Communication was a pretty new field back then. At Queens College, they had a very good department which was more traditional and more in the areas of rhetoric and public address, as well as political communication and media. It just ran the gamut.

Did you stay there for your master's because of this widespread department?

I was going to go to a law school. That's what I intended to do. After I graduated, I was looking for an apartment in Connecticut, but I didn't find one. They had a pretty new and well-regarded law program up there at the time. The next day back on campus, some of my old professors asked me whether or not I would accept an assistantship for the master's program at Queens. So I decided to do that. If I found a place to live in Connecticut the day or two before that, I probably would have done law school. I knew there was always a connection with societal issues in both areas.

How would you compare the student Alan Rubin with today's students?

My image of today's students is grounded in the occasional lectures I do in somebody else's classes nowadays, and the few years ago before I retired. The students were good in my day. I'm not sure if we were more serious than students today, but we certainly accepted things easier. Even the elementary

Back to Table of Contents

school education was more rigorous. I never remember anybody arguing that there was too much homework. I remember days having to answer 50 essay questions, knowing it was a lot to do, but never blinking twice about doing that. When I started college, the environment was very different than today. We had not to worry as much about tuition. Today, even at public universities, the expenses are high. There is a duality of education and support that the students have to earn themselves. Students today have to work hard in the classroom and out of it.

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers?

In high school, I had an influential teacher. He was a social studies teacher who opened our eyes to the world around us—to human relations and societal issues. When I started college, it was an evolution from that background. Queens had a very good faculty, both in communication and political science. They were very good scholars in a multitude of areas. Even at the undergraduate level, we were introduced to research. My focus back then was in public address and in public speaking. I was president of the debate society for a year or two.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to media uses and effects (Rubin, 2009)?

My interest in debate was always an interest in public affairs. You couldn't look at public affairs without looking at the media. That interest obviously started when I was a child. It was a pretty scary world into the 1960s. I grew up in the shadows of all the news reports of the Iron Curtain, potential nuclear disasters, and people building bomb shelters. It was also the era of the co-evolution between television and politics. I remember the time around the John F. Kennedy inauguration. There was a snow storm and my brother and I were out shovelling snow. My parents made certain that we took a break from doing that to watch the inauguration on TV. Media were important, both in society and in my own life growing up.

What about media uses?

I was introduced to the literature on media effects in my master's program. I wondered why people played such a small role in that process and started to question the tremendous impact that media might have. I was never saying that media didn't have any impact. I was saying that we have to temper the impact of the media with realizing how people were using them. In my dissertation, I was looking at children and adolescents and how they learned about politics. Political science was looking at peers, at parents, or at education, but it wasn't looking at the media. My interest back then was evolving from political communication and socialization.

How would you rate the position of media effects scholars within communication?

Research in media effects is very, very important to the field, but it's foolish to look at it without considering the broad spectrum of communication. I've also done research with a lot of people from other areas of the field, including my spouse and some of my graduate students. Taking a broader approach to communication, I was realizing that we have to look at the people who are using the mass media, and therefore, at the natural connection between personal, group, and social communication. What we consider media effects now is much broader than what we looked at years ago.

Back to Table of Contents

You took a bit of a ride from Illinois to Kent State. Was it so difficult to find a home?

There were reasons for all the moves. We were both looking for positions. At Georgia Southern College, I had the opportunity to teach areas like TV production or programming courses that I hadn't taught before. So the move was strategic to broaden my background for other positions elsewhere. Our early jobs were more with bachelor's programs and working with undergraduates. So the moves were also an evolution into graduate programs.

Have you ever considered applying for a position outside Kent State?

Yes, we did. We looked around from time to time, but not very often. At Kent State, we were both basically recruited for positions in two different programs in the same school. From the time we moved there, to the time we retired from Kent State, there was a continual evolution. The programs merged together, I got a joint position between that program and the journalism program, but then I moved back full-time to communication studies because that's where the doctoral program was. We eventually created a College of Communication with four different schools. It was continuously growing there.

You retired very early from Kent State. Was there nothing to do any more?

It was a small program that required us to do an awful lot. We had to work pretty hard internally, as well as externally. At the same time, I was editing two substantial journals, and throughout my career, I wrote a few books, published a few articles, and introduced some graduate students into the field. I think it was just time. We weren't brain-dead and continued to do academic work after we retired from Kent State. I also continue to do a bit of consulting. This is important to me because of the application of the research into the professional world. It was more leaving the constraints of the organization. Now, we focus on what we want to do. We could probably find jobs elsewhere, but we really haven't looked.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?

Honored and privileged. I did not even know about the nomination, so it was a surprise. As it turned out, it was one of my former doctoral students who took it upon himself to nominate me. Most of the nominations seem to come from other Fellows. I don't quite understand that. Mine was more of a bottom-up process. I think I was the only one elected that year. So you have to feel honored.

Who is Alan Rubin: a researcher, a teacher, the promoter of uses and gratifications research? What is the most important part of your academic life?

It is dealing with knowledge. It's not searching for what's right and what's wrong. I'm trying to understand the environment from a realistic point of view: What are the roles and effects of media in the lives of the people and in the society? From day one, I saw the connection between being a teacher and being a researcher. It's not only at the graduate level. To this day, I sometimes get notes from former undergraduate students. We used to do research projects, even in those classes. The research just happened to be in a certain area that was of interest. It could have been in other areas, such as in political science. The path of the research that I did took me in that particular direction. I don't regard myself to be just a uses and gratifications person. I regard myself as a teacher and a researcher who hopefully introduced others to do similar things.

Back to Table of Contents

Reading all the presidential addresses at ICA conferences, one gets a very ambivalent picture of the research field and the idea of what communication is all about.
That's an interesting interpretation of those addresses. Did all the presidents agree with that characterization?

Not all of them.
When I was editor of the *Journal of Communication,* I thought it was important to share those addresses with the field. That hadn't been done before. I always asked the presidents to send me an edited version to put in the journal that represented the organization. What the presidents had to say should be somewhat important to the field.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?
I guess the earliest definition of communication we had was symbolic interaction. We are still looking at that whole notion. We deal with symbols, we deal with interaction. If we go back and look at the research, we mostly focused on the individual person and the medium that he or she used. Usually, it was the media that evolved over the time.

Some of my interviewees told me about missing respect from old-established subjects. How was the situation at Kent State?
In my last five years on campus, I was also an administrator. From that point of view, it's always fighting for limited resources in academic circles. A lot of the traditional disciplines that have lost students to a discipline like communication also saw some of the resources going other ways. At least in the U.S., communication research has a type of chip on the shoulder. It has always been difficult to get respect from others.

Was there any improvement at Kent State from 1982 to 2006?
Yes, of course. We were not only able to survive in very tough economic times. Every time when there is a budget cut, they point to the non-traditional departments. Throughout the discipline, we have seen doctoral programs and departments fight for their existence. At Kent State, we were able to establish a new organizational structure that brought together visual communication design, library and information sciences, journalism, and the whole realm of communication studies. It's not easy to establish a new college on a campus these days. There has to be some respect to get it through every campus organizational structure that exists.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?
That's a political hot cake. One of the things that we do that hurts the discipline is to point at programs that are better or worse than others. I'm not willing to go too far with this. There are a lot of very good programs out there that have done an awful lot for the discipline. They have produced a wealth of good people, of our knowledge, and of educated students, but they don't get recognition because of those skyscrapers. I don't like to play that game.

Back to Table of Contents

Where do you see the field in 2030?

The evolution of the field has emphasized certain areas, but I don't think we can approach those areas without subjects like interpersonal and group communication. Those areas have been around for a long time and are instrumentally important to the study of any other areas. Health communication, for example, has emerged as a societal issue. Therefore, it has become, by itself, important. We can address many of the needs of the society if we do that, but you can't talk about it without talking about organizations, media, or people. Other examples of topics that match the concerns of the society are intercultural and all the evolving technologies we use to communicate throughout the world.

Are there any scholars whom you regard as role models?

I'm not sure if "role model" is a proper term for the fact that there are people who have been important in one's own evolution. Some of those are your early teachers or the advisers you have. My interest in politics and in mass media goes back to some of the professors at Queens College. Illinois was an interesting place to be for the PhD at the time, because the program allowed me to take courses in other fields, and to mold a program that made sense to me. Without naming names, there were important people that helped me find my way at many levels.

Looking back on 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

I'm probably most proud of colleagues and students I've worked with, and the mark that many of my students have made on the field. That's what everybody should be most proud of. I helped in some small way that they could find the light for themselves.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

I'm not sure if other institutions would have been a better path for us. Everybody has certain values and constraints they work within. As things evolved, they worked out just fine for us.

What will remain when Alan Rubin is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

What will remain are the students of the students of the students, and with them, hopefully, some of the values that we helped to create and to share with others.

Reference

Rubin, A. M. (2009). Uses and gratifications: An evolving perspective on media effects. In R. L. Nabe & M. B. Oliver (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of mass media effects* (pp. 147-159). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1806–1812 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

DAVID SEIBOLD

"I've always had a passion for bridging theory and practice."

David Seibold, April 6, 2011.
University of California, Santa Barbara. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1949 in New Jersey
Education:	1971 B.A. in speech, Iona College
	1972 M.A. in speech communication, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor
	1975 Ph.D. in communication, Michigan State University
Career:	1975 Assistant Professor at Purdue University
	1976 University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
	1990 University of California, Santa Barbara
	1997–1999 Editor, *Journal of Applied Communication Research*
	2004 Distinguished Scholar, NCA
	2009 ICA Fellow
Personal:	Remarried, one child

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews David Seibold

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

I'm a child of working-class parents. My father was an iron worker, as his father was before him after emigrating from Germany. My mother finished her high school education and became a bookkeeper. Both of my parents were quite supportive of education. I went through the Catholic school system, so I was pushed to be a better student. It was an aunt who was an editor for a publishing company that really encouraged me to think about writing and writing well. So I thought all along that I might want to be an educator.

Do you still remember why you chose to study at Iona?

Iona College is an Irish Christian Brothers' school, and I had graduated from one of the Brothers' high schools in New Jersey. I was offered a scholarship, and I started out studying history and political science.

How did you get into communication?

I became involved in debate, thinking that would be a good skill for a lawyer to have—and how I might use my major in political science. As a result of forensics, I went to the communication program, but I remained interested in going to law school. Instead, I pursued an MA in communication at the University of Michigan, which also had an extraordinary social science program in the Institute for Social Research. I took all of my methods classes there. From there, I moved to Michigan State for a PhD because it was the best social scientific communication program at the time.

How would you compare the student Dave Seibold with your students today?

They are far brighter today because they have had a better education. They have traveled so much more widely, and there is so much more complexity in the world. Even if they don't understand it, they have been exposed to it. Their parents tend to have higher aspirations for them and have offered them more attention. I don't know if the students today work any harder; probably not quite as hard. Coming out of a blue-collar family and growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, I might have had a little bit more achievement motivation than many students have today.

How did your parents react when you went to grad school?

My mother had died by that time, unfortunately. I think my father was pleased that I went to grad school. Along the way, I was married and had a child. So I left school for a while and was a long-haul truck driver. My father got me a job as a worker at the World Trade Center so that I would not need to be away from my young family. When I told him I was going to go back to school and might become a teacher, he said that was great: "The hours are good, and there is not much heavy lifting." That was his way of expressing pleasure and pride.

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers?

At the University of Michigan, I had several classes with Howard Martin—a scholar of public address history and a wonderful man. Since I had a background in history, he was somebody that I resonated to very much. His passion, his inspiration, and his concern for students were a marvellous example. Even

Back to Table of Contents

though I moved away from his area of scholarship, he always stayed with me as a model. There were others, too, especially my adviser at Michigan State, Don Cushman.

I've heard about him.

He was a remarkably bright fellow. I can imagine that Bob Craig and Scott Poole spoke about him (Cappella et al., 1986). I just happened to be one of several people who were drawn to him because of the power of his mind. Given our common backgrounds in debate, I liked the way he analyzed issues and argued positions. "Cush" took me under his wing, and it was easy for me to think in the same ways he approached work. I viewed myself as more theoretically oriented, just as what he was.

When did you know that you wanted to become a scientist, maybe a communication scientist?

Mainly, when I was in the middle of the program at the University of Michigan. I liked the methods courses that I was taking in ISR there, and there also were a couple of faculty in communication who studied groups, influence, and persuasion. One of them was William Donaghy, and the other one, Thomas Steinfatt. Tom encouraged me to move to Michigan State because they already had a much bigger program there.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to small groups (Seibold, 1979, 1996; Seibold & Meyers, 2007)?

Not necessarily. The way Donaghy taught groups was an influential combination: What is the cutting-edge research, but who were the great theorists? The part of me that was still into history was interested in Cooley, Mead, or Simmel, who were also focused on the group. Then it became very easy to think in terms of those constructs for contemporary research problems. Faculty at Michigan State didn't offer classes in group communication, but Purdue hired me in my first job partly because I could teach groups, based on my MA work at the University of Michigan.

How would you rate the position of group scholars within communication?

That's a difficult question. Like Scott Poole, I think that the group should be the central unit of analysis in our field because so many larger structures communication scholars study are instantiated at that level and modified there. Since I work in the organizational area, I find it very fruitful to think of organizations as groups of groups—albeit in a very simplistic and heuristic sense. Research on groups is not as central as it should be. It's not because of the lack of intellectual power. It's more the lack of critical mass of enough group researchers. It also is very difficult to do group research if one wishes to study interaction patterns over time in large numbers of groups. That's changing now, with innovative tools by Poole, Contractor, and others who are developing automated methods for studying messages and interaction in massive data sets. Finally, group scholars routinely are invited by technology researchers, org scholars, and community workers to apply their expertise to those domains. I would like to see even more of that.

How would you rate the position of OrgComm?

That is a very prominent area of the field because organizational structures and symbolic actions have become increasingly complex. They also interpenetrate with many institutional factors that are of interest to other areas of our discipline. Furthermore, many societal issues of power and control, marginalization, decision making, and participation get worked out in the institutions that we know as "organizations."

Back to Table of Contents

OrgComm is probably one of our most prominent areas after media, at least from the standpoint of division size in our professional associations.

In your CV, I found lots of activities outside the field, such as a long list of businesses and government organizations you worked with. Is communication too small for Dave Seibold?
No, not at all. This was a function of different things. I've always had a passion for bridging theory and practice. I like working at public universities because they have a large outreach and are engaged with the problems of people who are our stakeholders. There were also practical reasons why I needed to do so many of those things. When I went to Michigan State, I only had a small number of classes and experiences in the organizational area. Many of the consulting opportunities and service engagements listed in my CV simply became my crucible for learning the things that I increasingly was being asked to teach. My students needed opportunities to do field research. I also found many of these engagements to be intellectually provocative. There are projects in my CV that only emerged because I was involved with these organizations and their problems.

Mark Knapp observed "a misplaced emphasis on getting government grants or any kind of grant." Do you share this standpoint?
Yes and no. It's unfortunate that this pressure is placed so strongly on junior faculty as a basis for tenure. Sometimes, their ideas are not formed well enough yet to compete for external support. We were always chasing grants at Michigan State, some of which were for projects that weren't of a high order, theoretically. I worry that funding for its own sake has been an impulse in the field, and perhaps that is what Mark means. However, I also feel that not enough senior faculty have committed themselves to securing the large-scale funding that would enable them to test and extend theory. I had a wonderful experience with a NSF project.

The Center for Nanotechnology in Society that was funded with almost $5 million dollars?
Yes, and it was an interdisciplinary effort to create that. There were eight of us from a variety of science and social science disciplines. That required considerable thought before we ever got to the point of proposal writing. More generally, I would argue that some of the people who have done the most influential work in communication are scholars who have received the big grants. The scope, rigor, and prominence of their projects and resultant publications increasingly have put us on the map among other disciplines in the academy.

Methods seem to be another one of your passions. Can you understand colleagues who criticize the concentration on this craft?
Absolutely. It's funny you ask me this, because I don't think of myself as being a methodologist, even if I have had a number of publications focused on research methods. As a senior scholar, I find myself reflecting more on methods, because they are the tools I need to answer questions that interest me. I also feel a responsibility to keep alive the social science ideals. Unfortunately, the field has taken a turn away from some of the traditional quantitative methods, although I hasten to add that their have been major advances, too. At the same time, I'm very multi-method, and not strictly committed to functionalist analysis, nor to only quantitative methods. Although there is so much I admired about Michigan State, at times, we seemed to put method over question or theory (Rogers, 2001).

Back to Table of Contents

You served as a reviewer of hundreds of manuscripts. Could you put your main criteria of evaluation in some keywords?

Creativity comes first. The work should be something innovative, theoretically, or new, methodologically. This creativity should be tied to a body of knowledge, and should recognize what steps might occur after it. I'm also really tied to the notion of programmatic research. I attend to the narrative and look for incontestable evidence. These (pointing to journal issues on the table) become venues for the strongest claims that we have as a field. Anybody reviewing for journals has to safeguard them as a repository for what our knowledge claims are.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?

I felt wonderful! It was a real surprise to me. These were people that I had idolized. Many of the Fellows were more senior than me. Even the people who were peers, I saw as having much greater capabilities. So it was a true honor to be recognized by them.

You have served both for ICA and NCA. Which one is your favorite association?

That's a difficult question. Parts of me have a home in NCA, where there are divisions that have no counterpart in ICA. One example is the group division in NCA. On the other hand, I identify a little bit more with ICA because it is smaller and more focused, because it is more closely tied to research, and because I have such high regard for the scholars in it. I have been asked on several occasions whether I would consider running for president of both organizations. If I were to respond affirmatively, and if electable, I probably would prefer to use my efforts and skills in the service of ICA.

Who is Dave Seibold: a researcher, a teacher, the commuter between university and business, the promoter of group communication research? What is the most important part of your academic life?

I'm not sure if I could pick just one of those identities. I am all of the above. At different points in my career, I might have emphasized certain things over others, but all along, they all have been important. It was unsatisfying when I could do only one or two of these to the exclusion of others. In some senses, we are required to do all those things here at Santa Barbara. We are evaluated on four criteria: research, teaching, and service—but also our professional activities, which include grants, editorships, or technical consultations. As you might imagine, these evaluation criteria animate many of our actions here. Behavior creates structures, but structures also enable behavior.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

I continue to go back to the centrality of symbols and symbol use, which implies interaction and the creation of meanings out of those interactions within communities of symbol users.

Most of my interviewees told me about missing respect from old-established subjects. How is the situation here at Santa Barbara?

It's somewhat different here. That is one of the reasons that I moved here. This is obviously a younger university and a relatively small major research institution. There has been a necessary interdependence built into the system. It's a system in which every department needs help and cooperation of others. As a

Back to Table of Contents

result, there is an awareness of strengths and limitations of disciplines that aren't just stereotypes. They are lived experiences with interdisciplinary. Look at our faculty. Nearly every one of us has some type of joint or affiliated appointments with other departments or research centers on campus. I'm spending more time in the College of Engineering right now. Depending on the local circumstances, those barriers between discipline and others may fall by the wayside. This is my first point. Secondly, the good works that we do are the works by which all of us become known as a discipline. For example, OrgComm scholars and ICA Fellows like Scott Poole, Linda Putnam, and Peter Monge are so well-recognized in the Academy of Management. As a sub-field, all of us in OrgComm bask in their reflected glory.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?

Clearly, the United States will have to be where there are skyscrapers, but obviously there are major sights in and across Europe, too: England and Germany primarily, but also Scandinavia, particularly in the OrgComm area. I'm also fascinated by the cranes in Japan and especially in China. Certain Latin American countries are building rapidly, too. To me, Brazil is exciting because of the collaborative relationships between universities and the exchanges of faculty they created there. I would like to see even more of that happening in the Middle East and in Africa, where strides have been made.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

There will be a number of impulses. First, there will be a lot more micro-level research. We are getting into physiology or evolutionary theory. There will be more scholars from the cognitive and brain sciences coming to us, and us going to them. My second point relates to the implications that globalization will have for our field. All of the macro areas, like political, mass, intercultural, and organizational communication will become much more globally focused. Third, while the information and technology division will skyrocket in size and influence, areas now in that division are likely to become embedded in most of the other divisions, too. And last, but not least, health communication will draw people away from other areas to that context as we see the aging of the world population. In part, the answer to your question will be found in the responses to this question: What are the predominant social problems worldwide to which communication scholars are likely to be drawn?

Are there any scientists whom you regard as role models?

I tend to think of Joe Cappella and Chuck Berger as role models, even though each of them has moved out of micro-level questions in the interpersonal area to political, media, and health questions. I also consider Scott Poole in this way. He is impressive as a multi-method and theory-building social scientist, rather than an investigator focused only on a narrow program of research.

What did you learn from Joe Cappella, Chuck Berger, and Scott Poole for your own work?

I admire Joe's facility with experimental design and rigorous tests of hypotheses. From Chuck, I learned the importance of strong theoretical questions that are guided by original and communication-based theories. Scott has long impressed me for his ability to build powerful theories and models, and to gather and analyze complex data sets.

Back to Table of Contents

Looking back on 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?
I'm proud that I've bridged theory and practice, when, for a long time, application was almost a dirty word. Now, I'm proud to be part of a group of scholars that has created a space for people to discuss how we can really be of help to others with our research, and how we enhance our practice of doing so. We have a conference each summer in Aspen, Colorado. Second, I am proud to have encouraged many graduate students and junior faculty to develop larger questions and projects than the more narrow ones with which they first started. I've sought to be a good mentor, and to offer assistance to anybody who would be pleased to have my advice and my support.

Then again: Is there anything that you would do differently today?
There is. I was almost through a PhD at the University of Michigan before I moved to Michigan State. In fact, I applied for a postdoctoral fellowship back at Ann Arbor and was unsuccessful. I would like to have had more time for focused thought and research. Second, I would have liked to study more about economics, which is foundational to so many of the institutional questions with which we deal.

What will remain when Dave Seibold is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
I'd like to think that people will remember me as a good scholar and teacher, and also a good person who tried to help in the ways he was able to. I hope that all of my graduate advisees will flourish and will nurture their own students. If I had an opportunity to influence it, I would be pleased if I could draw stronger connections between the engineering disciplines or the sciences and communication, because I see some powerful issues that they are dealing with, and I don't see enough communication scholars addressing them. Finally, I hope that the strong programs at Illinois and Santa Barbara, to which I contributed much, but from which I received even more, will endure and become yet stronger sites of communication scholarship.

References

Cappella, J. N., Cegala, D. J., Farrell, T. B., McPhee, R. D., Monge, P. R., Poole, M. S., et al. (1986). Donald Cushman: Larger than life. *Communication Quarterly*, *34*, 379–388.

Rogers, E. M. (2001). The department of communication at Michigan State as a seed institution for communication study. *Communication Studies*, *52*, 234–248.

Seibold, D. R. (1979). Making meetings more successful: Plans, formats, and procedures for group problem-solving. *Journal of Business Communication, 16*, 3–20.

Seibold, D. R. (1996). More reflection or more research? To (re)vitalize small group communication research, let's "just do it." *Communication Studies*, *45*, 103–110.

Seibold, D. R., & Meyers, R. A. (2007). Group argument: A structuration perspective and research program. *Small Group Research*, *38*, 312–336.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1813–1820 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

MICHAEL SLATER

"A model of an intellectual community."

Michael Slater, March 16, 2011.
Ohio State University. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1953 in Minneapolis, Minnesota
Education:	1974 B.A. in anthropology, Columbia University
	1982 M.P.A. in public administration (urban affairs and development administration), New York University
	1988 Ph.D. in communication, Stanford University
Career:	1988 Assistant Professor at Colorado State University
	1993 Associate Professor
	1999 Full Professor
	2005 Ohio State
	2010 ICA Fellow
Personal:	Married, two children

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Michael Slater

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

I was born next door, I'm told, to a small brothel. My parents were both from the New York City area. They had grown up during the Depression. My mother was a social worker. My father did vocational training and placement work with refugees, so contributing socially was part of my make-up. Growing up in Minnesota was a congenial kind of place. I felt a bit like an outsider—not being Nordic and Lutheran—but an accepted, welcomed one. When I was 10 or 11, we moved to Englewood, New Jersey, a suburb of New York. That was very different: a much bigger spread of incomes and racially mixed. The civil rights movement was alive there. There were sit-ins, protests, a riot. I was learning to see the world through the eyes of people who were different than I. As I got older, Vietnam emerged, and I got involved with anti-war activities a bit. In my early teens, I wanted to be a theoretical physicist, but as I got older, the world more immediately around me got increasingly interesting.

Do you still remember why you chose to study anthropology at Columbia?

Do you want the real story? I was young when I started at Columbia; I had just turned 17. My high school was pretty dysfunctional, so I left early. Initially, I studied psychology, but my adviser died of a drug overdose in my freshman year. They lost track of me, and I didn't get assigned an adviser again. So I did what any young man would do at that point of time: I had lots of fun, in and out of the classroom, and forgot all about majors, adviser, and so on. During my senior year, the dean sent me a letter asking me what my major was. We sat down in the dean's office and went through everything I had done. It turned out that the only thing I could possibly graduate in on time would be anthropology. Anthropology did closely tie to my experience I had moving to New Jersey. I loved the perspective that each culture had its own worldview, its own way of experiencing and believing, and of trying to look at my own culture from the outside. I think that attracted me.

Did religion play any role in your family environment?

No, it was a very secular upbringing.

Why did the writer, publisher, and film producer Michael Slater start to deal with communication?

In my early 20s, I was mostly interested in poetry, journalism, theatre, and that whole East Village scene. I started to realize that I had a kind of intellectual, analytic energy that didn't have an adequate outlet in what I was doing. The only way you could do serious analytical thinking in the creative world was to go into criticism, which didn't appeal to me. I also found myself in public relations and was starting to make a living. I was good at it and was getting recruited by big companies, but I didn't want to spend my life writing stuff under other people's names, being a hired pen. I became intrigued with the relationship between social and media reality, and how media could shape perceptions regarding elements of social reality. Sometimes, it was frightening that I was being effective in influencing perceptions and beliefs as a 25-year-old banging away at a typewriter.

Back to Table of Contents

What about the social contribution conscience piece of you?

It was still there. So I wanted to do more. I decided to do a master's degree in the evening. I was interested in communication and international development. I wanted to go off to Africa or venture in South America, but I realized that what I could do with a master's was limited, and I wanted to combine my interest in development with my background in communication. The most interesting work I'd seen in development communication was from Stanford. I applied to it and got offered a fellowship.

At that time, you were already in your early 30s.

I was working with a couple of start-up companies with the possibility of equity participation and the prospect of making some serious money. I had just gotten married, and my wife was pregnant. So I told myself going back to grad school would be crazy. My wife, though, encouraged me to apply and attend. Once at Stanford, I realized quickly that people get paid in academia for following up their own ideas. You can write about whatever interests you and make a living at it? Within a year, I was totally sold.

How would you compare the graduate student Michael Slater with your students today?

I didn't come in with an academic perspective or set of ambitions. Most of the grad students now enter with more prior research experience and a more traditional set of academic-track aspirations. I thought I was going off and doing a development communication career when I went to Stanford. It was not until my second year that I got socialized into academia, that an academic career looked desirable, whereas almost everybody here is thinking academically from the beginning. In a way, they are much more sophisticated about academia and research than I was. It took me a few years to catch up to where a lot of them are, although I had a lot of worldly experience—how to actually get something done, and how to manage time. I also knew how to write. These were big advantages.

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers in communication?

Sure. Steve Chaffee, Byron Reeves, Don Roberts, Everett Rogers. It was a wonderful group. They had created an extraordinary graduate environment. The day you walked in the door, you were accepted. You were a junior colleague. The pressure was that they expected you, and you expected yourself, to do really good things. It was an environment of minimal external and tremendous internal pressure: very stimulating and very motivating. The expectation was also that you learn at least as much from your graduate colleagues as you do from your faculty. It was an exceptional group of students, many very well-known people now. I think the faculty consciously built that kind of atmosphere. And those of us who went through the Stanford program of that era have continued to value this kind of intellectual community. Many of us have tried to re-create that in whatever programs we have moved to. In a way, that's the reason why I left Colorado State. I really enjoyed my time there and loved the mountains, but I had gotten so much from my own doctoral training that I wanted to repay the debt. I was not really thinking about Ohio State as an option initially, but it was clear when I came out on a visit that faculty here were committed to creating the kind of student-centered graduate program and culture I valued. That drew me.

Back to Table of Contents

What was on top of your list?

The one thing that I had always been missing and kind of grumbled about with my wife was the opportunity to help build a doctoral program that was a dynamic intellectual community in which students could grow into creative, independent scholars. She said, "If you feel like this is what you need to do, I'll support that."

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to public health research?

No. What I do is a hybrid between the fundamental questions that I started with: how communication shapes what we think and believe about the world, and as a result, how it influences behavior; and my interest in contributing to social well-being. When I got there, Stanford had been the place for developmental communication. However, when I arrived, I found a shrinking sub-discipline with narrowing options. Health communication, in contrast, was just getting off the ground. It was a lot like developmental communication, except it was based in the U.S. It was still focused on improving well-being, serving communities, and addressing population differences and needs. So it was a natural fit. What is health communication? What kind of behaviors are we talking about when we talk about health behavior? We are talking about what we eat, whom we sleep with, what you do for fun, basically much of your entire everyday life. So it's about communication and how we live our lives. Health is part of that and a place where you can make a difference.

How would you rate the position of health communication scholars within the discipline?

It varies. I think it is important to consider what health communication is. If you are highly applied, and if you do the equivalent of public health work, you likely are focused primarily on developing and evaluating interventions and may not be so much interested in the underlying intellectual questions. Some programs value such work more than others. Work that focuses solely on applied questions, on using theory without extending it, while it is important socially, doesn't impact the discipline, and thus isn't valued as much in most academic settings. But there is also a unique opportunity through health communication to look at basic questions of media shaping people's beliefs about themselves and their world—the role of media in everyday life in a way that is both of service and has the potential to develop both theory and methodology. Health communication can draw research resources that allow us to look at these central questions with a very high degree of rigor and sophistication. Empirical social science is only as good as the quality of the data we can collect, and in health communication, we can justify the expense of developing data sets of considerable quality and sophistication.

Health is closer to most people than the political sphere.

That's the exciting part of it. It is a socially relevant area, and you can make a difference in people's lives. You can work in communities; you can see effects that mean greater health and well-being. It is a form of communication that matters, and one in which an academic can directly contribute to the lives of others, as well as indirectly, through the process of building knowledge.

Because of the external support?

You can pursue research with a kind of sophistication that we often do not have. You also get to work with cutting-edge methodologists and statisticians. Part of my role has been to promote methodologies, approaches, or ways of working with data sets. I'm far from being the only person doing that, but it's one

Back to Table of Contents

of the things I try to do to contribute to the field. These approaches not only help you to do a methodologically sophisticated study, they also enable you to study theory better. For example, the work I've done on the reinforcing spirals model was made possible by collecting four-wave panel data with adolescents, and by learning about new statistical techniques from experts I met through the public health-oriented work (Slater, 2007). There is another point.

Just go ahead, please.

In funded research, you are competing against everyone—sociologists, psychologists, and political scientists. When you get funded as a PI, that is an indication recognized by university administrators. That's important for a relatively new field such as communication. We have been comfortable because it has been a small but growing field, and we haven't always had to compete at the highest level. This will ultimately be dangerous, both in an intellectual sense, since methodological innovation and data set quality is important to theoretical development, and in a practical sense, since it impacts the institutional place of communication in academia. We have to do work that compares favorably in sophistication to the other social sciences to maintain the support of senior university administrators. Health communication has the potential to help move the discipline as a whole in that regard—it's not the only venue for such efforts, but it is a major one.

Are you talking about institutional capital?

Yes. The future of the discipline may ultimately be under threat because we have been riding on an economic growth bloom, and an area happens to be hot because of the explosion of communication and technology. That will plateau eventually, perhaps soon. It's what we bring to the table that will allow us to continue to thrive as a discipline in an increasingly high-pressure, budget-cutting environment. I do care about this field. I think it matters. It's really important that people continue to raise our game for the sake of the well-being of the discipline.

You worked in national campaigns against drugs, violent crime, and alcohol. Do you like the role of the government's adviser?

It depends on the situation. It can vary a lot. If you are consulting with public health agencies, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it can be very satisfying. They are very professional, data-driven organizations. There are other campaigns run by the executive branch that are more political in their origins. There, you have different players at work. I actually enjoy that a lot, too. It is scientifically more frustrating, but in terms of understanding the larger world, it was wonderfully instructive. I found myself tremendously challenged by the kind of questions that arose in the course of such campaigns.

Some people look down upon applied work.

The divide into theory and application exists in theory, not in practice. Theory arises from asking questions about the social world, developing hypotheses and models, then testing them. When you do applied work, unexpected questions crop up, and the limitations of existing theories become all too apparent. When you try to apply theory in practice, you realize theory is like a desert with a few isolated towers with respect to its ability to encompass the full complexity of the social world. Instead of just finding small gaps to fill to advance theory, one finds wide open spaces. So, when confronting applied problems, you become aware

Back to Table of Contents

of the questions that are not answered, or the boundary conditions that are not being examined in existing theories.

Is there any evidence that politicians or people in charge use your knowledge?
They do, sometimes. Interestingly, probably the major use was not credited, because I resigned from the national anti-drug media campaign advisory panel. I did resign because I wasn't happy with some of the decisions that were made in 2004, but in 2005, a campaign called *Above the Influence* used the same basic notion as Kathleen Kelly and me (Slater et al., 2011). Our idea was that drug use is a form of experimentation. Risk-taking is normal, a healthy part of adolescence—the issue is what kinds of risks do youth choose to take? Focusing on marijuana and alcohol in terms of risk is likely to have limited success. So our focus was to reframe drugs and alcohol use as behaviors that reduce, rather than increase, autonomy. Even users will agree that drugs might be fun on the occasion, but they don't make you more autonomous. So you can counter one of the main motives for drug use. The national campaign turned an unsuccessful national campaign (on which over a billion dollars had been spent) to what appears to be a successful one when they undertook using this new strategy.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?
That was the one honor that meant a whole lot to me. I've got a soft spot for ICA. It was ICA that helped hook me on an academic career. The first years, I was in sessions from morning to night, soaking up the excitement about work in many different areas. I have missed maybe one ICA conference in the past 25 years. I have no interest in fame, but recognition and acknowledgment by people I respect a great deal is deeply meaningful.

Who is Michael Slater: a researcher, a teacher, the artist and community worker who became a communication scientist? What is the most important part of your academic life?
One of the great delights of being an academic is the fact that you can be so many different things within this career. You could be an engaged researcher trying to impact public health and well-being, a scientist full of ideas, and a mentor of young scholars. How many careers give you that range of options and the freedom to be entrepreneurial enough to develop an identity that works for you?

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?
My fundamental interests are in media communication—the world inside our heads and how that gets expressed in our behavior. I'm interested in the processes by which media may influence our experience of ourselves and our understanding of the world around us. Definitions that attempt to embrace all of communication, in my view, become so broad as to have little functional value.

How is the reputation of the discipline at Ohio State?
We have an outstanding program, one that is seen as a significant asset to the university. It wasn't historically always strong. There has been a lot of work over the last 10 years in order to build an identity within the institution, as well as within the discipline. Obviously, both go hand-in-hand. The institutional support is essential to have an effect on the field. Ohio State has exceptional social sciences. We have earned a substantial degree of respect from the people here. But being a top-five program in a small field is not like being a top-five program in psychology.

Back to Table of Contents

So you constantly feel like you have to prove your worth.

Yes. In many universities, you see deans holding the communication budget to a minimum and the student numbers to a maximum, with the idea that we will tolerate communication because it helps pay the bill for the departments we care about. That has not been the case here. We have had exceptional support in the past 10 years that has permitted us to achieve excellence. A department has to continually demonstrate excellence to maintain such support, especially during challenging times economically.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

From a distance. Twenty years from now—that's too distant a window.

Are there any scientists whom you regard as role models?

There are different people for different things. Steve Chaffee was one model in terms of commitment to the discipline and to mentoring. Looking back, you realize that the man lived for the field. Everything he did was designed to strengthen the field. In a funny way, a lot of us who worked with him in various ways internalized his passion for the discipline. That's something I'm grateful for. Being an academic is so much about self-credit, publication, and recognition. Steve put mentoring, building the field, first. From Byron Reeves, I learned that new methods bring new theory. He was always looking for new ways to do things and trying to push the envelope. From Don Roberts, I learned that you can be a first-rate researcher and enjoy it. You can be just a decent, warm human being who enjoys the beauty of living, and research—elegant research—is beautiful.

Looking back on about 25 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

I feel like I'm getting people to start to think about dynamic processes that link selectivity and effects. I think it would have happened without me sooner or later, but I do feel as though I've moved thinking forward in the field on this topic. I feel very happy about that. I'm also happy about my contribution in that campaign I mentioned. I'm pleased with my role in the study of narrative and persuasion, doing some of the foundational studies and theory-building efforts in this growing research area. I'm happy about the book that I edited with Andrew Hayes and Leslie Snyder (Hayes et al., 2008), and our efforts to bring greater attention to advanced methods that can build and test theory in new ways.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

If I knew then what I know now, there are probably lots of things I would have done smarter, but nothing I have real regrets about. I have been blessed with good colleagues and good support. The cost of the kind of battles within departments that often happen in communication and journalism is tragic. There's an enormous human and intellectual toll. We could be 30% more productive and 100% happier if those things weren't going on. I have been fortunate not to have gone through them. Starting out now, the advice for the quantitatively minded is to learn the methodological and statistical tools. It's like an architect. If you have good ideas, you also have to find a way to realize them, at least on paper. Those are the tools that make it possible. They are getting increasingly sophisticated, so it takes increasing commitment to stay on top of that learning curve.

Back to Table of Contents

Is this your one and only advice?

Play two hands at once. One hand is low-risk, more conventional research to build a CV, especially in one's early career. On the other hand, don't be afraid of doing big-question, innovative, high-risk work. Have lots of irons in the fire. Don't become narrow and boring and bored. And in fact, when you do both conventional and innovative work, they feed off each other.

What will remain when Michael Slater is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

I take pleasure in the contributions I've made and in the ways I've helped move the field forward, but it would be self-deceiving to think similar ideas would not have emerged from others in time. I'm coming to believe that the more durable contributions are cultural and institutional: helping build an intellectually exciting graduate program and creating an environment in which young scholars can go through an experience as enriching as the one I had. In turn, they take with them that model of what an intellectual community can and should be—an environment of intellectual openness, curiosity, and mutual respect—and then seek to recreate that where they are. Continuance of this tradition is what I would most like to see as a legacy. Whether or not my name will remain or be associated with some particular set of ideas or some program doesn't have importance beyond my personal satisfaction.

References

Hayes, A., Slater, M. D., & Snyder, L. (2008). *Sage guide to advanced data analysis methods in communication research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Slater, M. D. (2007). Reinforcing spirals: The mutual influence of media selectivity and media effects and their impact on individual behavior and social identity. *Communication Theory*, *17*, 281–303.

Slater, M. D., Kelly, K. J., Stanley, L., Lawrence, F., & Comello, M. L. G. (2011). Assessing media campaigns linking marijuana non-use with autonomy and aspirations: "Be Under Your Own Influence" and ONDCP's "Above the Influence." *Prevention Science, 12*, 12–22.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1821–1828 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

JAMES TAYLOR

"Organizations are n-person games without any unique solution."

James (Jim) Taylor, May 26, 2011.
Boston, MA. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1928 in New Brunswick
Education:	1949 B.A. in literature, Mount Allison University at Sackville, New Brunswick
	1950 M.A. in literature, Mount Alison University
	1951 A.B.D. in literature, University of London
	1978 PhD. in communication, University of Pennsylvania
Career:	1956 Radio and TV Producer in Ottawa
	1966 Lecturer at the Annenberg School of Communication, University of Pennsylvania
	1970 Professor and founder, Département de Communication, Université de Montréal
	1999 Emeritus
	2006 ICA Fellow
Personal:	Married to Elizabeth Van Every, two sons

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews James Taylor

Can you tell me something about your childhood?

I was born in the eastern part of Canada in the province of New Brunswick, out in the country. I was an only child. From about November until May, there was very little travel on the roads because of the mud and the snow. I grew up on a farm where there was no electricity and hardly any radio or telephones. It was lonely at times as an only child. Since the wood fires always went out in the middle of the night in winter, when you woke up in the morning, the house was freezing cold, and I mean *cold*. I went to a small school a mile away that had one wood stove in the middle. The average level of education in the village was grade three or four. All the grades, one to eight, were taught by one teacher. There were no more than a dozen students all together. Only once, in all the time I was there, was there anybody else in my class. One thing the isolation did encourage me to do was that I read everything in sight, even a 2000-page history of the Boer War. I read, and read, and read.

What about your parents?

They were extremely fine people, kind and intelligent. Wise, even. And brave. On my mother's side were seven generations in the U.S. and seven in Canada. So I'm a 14th-generation North American. My father's family went back to 1759. We were, I guess, old Canadians from away back.

What did your parents do for a living?

They were farmers, although my mother was also a school teacher. My father and his father before him raised foxes. Dad was really one of the world's experts on fox farming, and it was the heyday of the fox industry. At that time, foxes were very highly prized. Anyway, they put me through college. Later, in the 1940s, the fox industry went completely cold because mink had replaced them.

Were there any university graduates in your family or in your environment?

My uncle was an agriculturalist, graduated from McGill. He later became the deputy minister of agriculture for New Brunswick. My Aunt Vessie, who moved to Alberta, graduated from Mount Allison in music. Mother was trained to be a teacher. Aunt Louise was a trained nurse. My father studied to be a medical doctor. He had finished premedical studies, but then his father developed an illness, and he had to come home. There was never any doubt I would go to university.

Did religion play any role in that place?

It did, but it wasn't a big thing.

Do you still remember why you chose to study literature at Mount Allison?

I actually did my first two years of high school by correspondence. I stayed at home and spent only the last year in high school in a local town about 10 miles away. When the final exams were posted, however, I was among the top eight that year in New Brunswick. At Mount A, there were two courses that really fascinated me. I was pretty good in both math and in literature. The math teacher wasn't inspiring. The literature professor was flamboyant and fun. Perhaps for no better reason than that, I specialized in literature. Perhaps also all the reading I had done had some influence. That was a long time ago.

Back to Table of Contents

How did you get to the University of London?

I received a Beaverbrook scholarship to study in Britain. It was the first year that Mount Allison University had those overseas scholarships, and I won the one for my year. I had a great year in London, only a few years after the war, but when I got home again, I had lost interest in going further in literature. Instead, I stayed home and farmed for four years. It was quite a big farm, we had about 400 acres, maybe 300 clear, with 200 sheep, about 20 cows, 3,000 chickens, horses, and, of course, foxes. You know, when I think back on that time, all that time I spent working with animals probably had a big influence on how I think about organizational communication now. You work with animals that long, what you see is patterns. I still see it that way, even though now the animals are human.

Why did you finally leave farming?

It's a very poor country for farming; the season was too short, and the soil wasn't great. Everybody was leaving for jobs in what we called "Upper Canada"—Ontario. When I left, I was the last person under the age of 37 in the whole village. So I went to Toronto. For several months, I didn't have a job. A couple of months later, I did get one working as a stagehand in TV, but in the meantime, I had applied to be a CBC radio producer in public affairs. Eventually, they hired me and sent me to Ottawa.

Producing programs was something you had to learn from the bottom-up.

It was a really exciting time. I discovered I was very good at doing radio documentaries—we won the Ohio State prize for a couple of our programs. We did documentaries, for example, on the decline of fishing in the North Atlantic 40 years before the cod industry collapsed, and on oil sands in Alberta decades before they became economically viable, and on the rise of organized crime in Canada. Those documentaries, I now realize, profoundly affected the way I think today about doing research. I guess you could say that was the second thing that pushed me into organizational communication research. You go out with the microphone, try to get into people's lives and learn the way they say things, and then make sense of what you've heard. Hours and hours of going through the recorded conversations, cutting and pasting, finding a thread in them that will make sense to people, listeners.

In your CV, you also mention TV.

Yes. I was too successful; I got transferred to television. I became a supervising producer without ever having produced a single show, which was absurd. But I did recruit and build a team of producers, including two network shows. Altogether, I spent 10 years in Ottawa.

Why did you leave CBC?

I was no longer happy there, because it was a time when the corporation was going through a major crisis, and my department, public affairs, was at the center of it. Luckily for me, at the beginning of 1965, I had a call from Peter Jennings' father, Charles Jennings, a vice-president of the CBC, asking me if I would take leave to work for the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. The rise of Quebec nationalism was a huge issue in Canada by that time, and the Royal Commission had been set up to hold hearings to advise the government on how to respond to demands for a greater recognition of French-Canadian demands for an affirmation of, especially, Quebec individuality. I accepted on the spot.

Back to Table of Contents

Did you ever regret that decision?

You know, I guess I'd have to say my own involvement in the unhappy relationships in the CBC was probably the most important influence of all in steering me into organizational communication studies, because that problem was a serious breakdown in internal communication, and at several levels, from top management down to the people actually doing the work. It was still very much on my mind when I began doctoral studies at Penn.

How did this call to work with the Royal Commission fit in with your professional experiences?

TV had become the window on the world. I knew something about what was happening in Quebec. In the 1950s, I talked to producers from Montreal. They kept telling me at that time that television, more than any other single thing, was transforming what had been an extremely Catholic and conventional society into what is now: one of the least Catholic areas in the world. TV impelled people to think differently about their world. It "opened the window," was how they put it. That's why the Royal Commission really interested me. I spent a year-and-a-half there, and as it happened, this is where I met my wife. And I got involved in research for the first time. One of my colleagues at the Commission was also doing his doctorate at Penn. I went down to Philadelphia to work with him. One of his friends who taught political science there invited me to talk about the Canadian scene. Then I met Sol Worth, and he hired me to direct the TV labs at Annenberg. He knew that I wanted to go back in doctoral work.

That's how you got into communication.

I didn't even know that there was any such academic field. I had never heard of it; at the Commission, it was all sociology and political science. In fact, Annenberg had gone through a big shift about two years before I went there. Previously, the focus had been on culture, but when George Gerbner came in, he said we do science. Looking back, it now seems to be that I entered a very strange world. Social science must be disciplined, etc. Now, I think it was unbelievable. Anyway, I studied under Klaus Krippendorff and became fascinated by cybernetics. But then, more and more, I crossed the campus to the Wharton School, not because I was less interested in communication, although mass media didn't interest me at all, but because I was getting more and more into organizational questions.

Cybernetics has to do with organizations, too.

Cybernetics is very much the science of organizing, yes. But Gerbner was media all the way. I just wasn't, even though I later became fascinated by media in an organizational context. As a graduate student myself, I was also directing master's theses. One of my students did an analysis of family dynamics. He was very much influenced by the Bateson group, the Palo Alto school, which, you know, was an offshoot of cybernetic thinking about communication. We brought the family into the TV studio, and then tried to understand the patterns.

Why did you abandon the world of cybernetics?

Perhaps because of my training in literature, I was very conscious of the structures of language. At a certain moment, I became convinced that cybernetics had no way to deal with more complex human organizations, which are not only material, but also discursive. Cybernetics never took account of language. And so it led to an impasse, because organizational communication is an n-person game with no

Back to Table of Contents

exact solution unless people construct one in their communication. That was where I really started from. 1968. I'm still trying to solve that puzzle (Taylor, 1993; Taylor & Van Every, 2000)!

How did you become the founder of Montreal's communication department?

That's interesting. I had not yet finished my doctorate. My first proposal was refused in 1970. So I had nothing. No PhD and no job, and a family with two young sons. At that moment, I received a call from Montreal, out of the blue. They came down to Philadelphia, interviewed me, and offered me a job the next morning—asked me to come up and set up a new communication department.

It was in French.

My French was okay, but not very fluent. Elizabeth and I thought about it and said, no, we can't do this. It was at the point where there were bombs in mailboxes in Montreal. They had kidnapped people and killed one of them. Then the university offered to hire me as an associate professor. I couldn't turn it down. I have never been an assistant professor. Because I didn't have tenure, however, I continued to work on my doctoral thesis. My first big challenge was to recruit staff and set up a research program in Montreal. I was very fortunate in being offered major funding, close to a million dollars, mostly from the federal government in Ottawa, and that allowed me, among other things, to progress on my dissertation.

According to your CV, the dissertation still took some years.

I remember arriving home on Christmas Eve in 1977, when I just had finished it. Before that, I had spent a month in Philadelphia at the home of a friend, retyping the whole dissertation at night in his office. By this point, I had a text running 500 pages based on a set of experiments that I had organized using my research grants. It had to be cut into a half, of course. Looking back, it was an interesting idea. It was an iteration of quite a long tradition of research into the communication patterns of five-person groups, but with this difference—that, in my case, they communicated through television channels. At Montreal, I had got funding for a lab where I could analyze networks of television positions. I wrote it up as an instance of organizing that emerges out of spontaneous interaction (Taylor, 1978). Maybe that's what started me thinking about the relationship of technology and organizing. I don't know. Anyway, two of my students in Montreal were studying the very first implementation of e-mail into ordinary organizational practice anywhere in the world. What we found was that the hierarchical system that existed before the technology was implemented became more diffused afterwards. It was harder to track down where any decision actually got made. I later wrote this up (Taylor, 1982) using the reflections of Harold Innis on the relationship of communication technologies and political structure. And I went on during that decade working on that theme, especially after my detachment to the federal Department of Communication. It was a fascinating time.

So Canada was ahead of the times.

In the early 1970s, Canada was one of the few countries in the world that actually had a federal Department of Communication. Canada had been really advanced during the 1950s and 1960s in communication. The very first domestic satellite ever used was here, and not in the U.S. By the 1960s, Canada was about 60% cabled. The closest of any other countries was Belgium, with about 8%. In other words, there was an enormous attention to communication.

Back to Table of Contents

It's probably a function of geography.

It was an extraordinary environment to go into. In 1972, I became the departmental planner at an assistant deputy minister level. I spent three years there in Ottawa. In the meantime, I had suggested a research center which would be based on the implementation of office technology. It was set up in Laval, a suburb of Montreal. To my great disappointment, it never spent much time looking at the relationship between organization and technology. It got into building more technology. Too often, I'm afraid, technologists don't want to hear about how their technology is being used.

Did you have a doctoral program at Montreal?

It started in 1987. Altogether, I personally have graduated 14 doctoral students. Among those are François Cooren, Daniel Robichaud, Jo Katambwe, and Hélène Giroux, all now professors in their own right. Over the years, I had some 50 master's theses. But I had no contact to speak of with the American branch of organizational communication until about 1988. At Annenberg, they had no tradition of it. Organizational communication grew up in the Midwest and in California.

You seem to be very sure about that year.

I sat in on a debate at the 1988 ICA, one that involved two people who took the critical perspective and two from the interpretative side. Stan Deetz, Dennis Mumby on one side, John van Maanen and Charles Bantz on the other (Putnam, 1993). I was fascinated by that and wrote an article about why neither approach really supplies the solution to how communication produces organization. In 1988, I also put together a collection of essays that I had written in French (Taylor, 1988). The 1993 book was a collection of the stuff I had written, but not published (Taylor, 1993). It was all on the same theme, the relationship of communication and organization. I also think the work we did on new technologies and organization was highly original at that time (Taylor & Van Every, 1993).

In your CV, you mention that you ran for ICA President in 2002.

They said, "Would you run, Jim?" I did so without much conviction. It's not especially my thing. I was already retired.

Would the association today be different with a winning Jim Taylor?

No. I'm a pure academic and have no desire to change or to lead associations. I'm still that kid from rural New Brunswick, get right down to it, someone who reads and writes.

You are one of the few foreigners in ICA's leadership. Was Canada too small for you?

No. Canada was a blessing. Not just Canada, but being in a French world. I learned a lot. In the U.S., there is a very strong tradition in graduate schools. It's supposed to make people rigorous, but it's a danger, too. You can be too disciplined, not always open to new approaches. I think the field of communication has to go international. It has to open up to other traditions.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?

It was nice [laughing]. What can I say? It was gratifying, and I especially appreciated the support I had from my friends at ICA. It wasn't the number one thing on my mind.

Back to Table of Contents

Who is Jim Taylor: a researcher, a teacher, the icon of Montreal's communication department? What is the most important part of your academic life?

Teaching and mentoring. I'm still fascinated by the work that is going on. The greatest thrill of all is to work things through with people, to influence the way they think, to be influenced by them, and to keep in touch with them.

What is your idea of communication? What is the subject all about?

That's a big question. In fact, all communication is not primarily about diffusion of information or ideas. I'm still, I guess, a farmer at heart. I can tell you one thing. All forms of life must find a way to establish authority. In human terms, that is not just fitting people into a hierarchy. It has to be conducted discursively. To me, communication is about organizing and about the establishment of order. It's an ability of people to work together. Who goes first is a huge issue.

How was the reputation of the discipline at Montreal?

When? It didn't exist. When I came to Montreal, there *was* no communication program. I built [it] from zero. Now, there are 20 professors. At the beginning, we weren't even a department. We were a section in psychology. So communication had to build a reputation. I'm proud of the fact that it has done so. Now, it is recognized as a world-class department. That is an enormous tribute to François Cooren, Boris Brummans, Daniel Robichaud, Carole Groleau, Chantal Benoit-Barné, André Caron, and to all the people who have really invested in this. And the new graduates, Consuelo Vasquez, Lissette Marroquin. I'm proud to have been there at the beginning.

Are there any scholars whom you would call role models?

Heavens. Klaus Krippendorff, for one. I have an enormous admiration for François, Boris, and Daniel in my own department. I also think very, very highly of Linda Putnam, and of all the other people at Santa Barbara, including our next president. I've great admiration and affection for Gail Fairhurst and the people at Texas or Colorado, too. Larry Browning, for example, Bob Craig, Charlie Conrad, Michele Jackson, Timothy Kuhn. Everybody at Waikato, in New Zealand! There are many more, but I don't want to rank them in any way.

Looking back on about 45 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

Yes. I'm proud of having worked so closely with Elizabeth. It is just incredible to live together, but at the same time, to be able to work together. Beyond that, I'm so proud of all my students. I've been extremely fortunate. It was a great gift to have worked in a field that I'm now comfortable in, and where I have so many friends.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

That's a little late. That's another question that would never occur to me. You live life as it's given to you and try to be as positive about it as you can.

Back to Table of Contents

What will remain when Jim Taylor is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

I look very much forward to Montreal's department continuing to be strong. I would also love to think that I've done something toward establishing a more international field of study. Since I retired, I have spent time in the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, France, Spain, Brazil, Costa Rica, Australia, and in New Zealand. And of course, the U.S. To me, that has been most gratifying. What I would hope is that the field of organizational communication continues to grow in the future.

References

Putnam, L. L., Bantz, C., Deetz, S., Mumby, D., & van Maanen, J. (1993). Ethnography versus critical theory: Debating organizational research. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *3*, 214–238.

Taylor, J. R. (1978). *A method for the recording of data and analysis of structure in task groups*. Ann Arbor, MI: University Micro-films.

Taylor, J. R. (1982). Office communications: Reshaping our society? *Computer communications*, *5*(4), 176–180.

Taylor, J. R. (1988). *Une organisation n´est qu´un tissu de communications: Essais théoriques*. Département de communication, Université de Montréal: Cahiers de recherche en communication.

Taylor, J. R. (1993). *Rethinking the theory of organizational communication: How to read an organization*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Taylor, J. R., & Van Every, E. J. (1993). *The vulnerable fortress: Bureaucratic organization and management in the information age*. Toronto: The University of Toronto Press.

Taylor, J. R., & Van Every, E. J. (2000). *The emergent organization: Communication as its site and surface*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1829–1835 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

PHIL TOMPKINS

"I'm continuing to understand risk."

Phil Tompkins, March 29, 2011.
Denver, CO. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1933
Education:	M.A. in speech, University of Nebraska
	1962 Ph.D., Purdue University
Career:	Instructor, University of Kansas
	1962, Assistant Professor at Purdue
	1965 Wayne State University
	1967–1968 Consultant to Wernher von Braun at NASA
	1968 Professor at Kent State University
	1986 Chair of the Department of Rhetoric and Communication, State University of New York at Albany
	1980 return to Purdue
	1986 University of Colorado at Boulder
	1988 ICA President
	1989 ICA Fellow
	1998 retirement
	Volunteer at the St. Francis Center, a homeless shelter in Denver, Colorado
Personal:	Married, four children

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Phil Tompkins

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?
À la Heidegger, I was thrown into this world in a small town in Kansas. I was born at home, and when I came out of my mother's womb, the bed broke. Talk about birth trauma. My father was a music teacher at a small college, then at his own studio in Wichita. Later, he abandoned our family, giving us no financial support. I had three siblings. So my mother went to work and raised four children. She is the heroic figure in my life. The first dream was to be a writer, the next was to be a lawyer and help people, but after getting a master's degree, I took two years off to teach and coach debate at the University of Kansas. It was such a stimulating environment and experience that I said, "I can find no better customers in the world." This was to be my calling.

Did religion play any role in your childhood?
Only the Judeo-Christian values passed along to me by my mother.

What did she do for a living?
Several things. First, she was a salesperson in a women's clothing store. Then, she became a buyer for the store, and late,r a statistician for Boeing. She told me she studied chemistry and mathematics at what is now Oklahoma State University. When I was brought in by OSU as a program consultant, I took a peek at my parents' transcripts. His record was weak. She got high grades in tough subjects.

Do you still remember why you applied at Purdue?
The department chairman at Kansas, Bill Conboy, told me that Purdue was starting a new program called "Business and Industrial Communication" under Charles Redding. I won a fellowship, got my PhD, and stayed on for three more years before moving on to Wayne State.

How would you compare the student Phil Tompkins with today's students?
It would be interesting to know how many students would make the decision I made when I got my PhD. The department head at Purdue, Alan Monroe, asked me to join the faculty as an assistant professor for $7,200. I also got an offer from the department of internal communication at Chrysler: $22,000, a new car every six months, and free gasoline. It was not difficult at all for me to make the choice. I'm sure there are students today who would make the same decision.

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers?
There were two of them. The first was Bruce Kendall, my adviser at Nebraska who taught persuasion. He helped me become critical of my own writing and introduced me to *The New Yorker,* Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms. He used to play a game called "drop the needle" on a classical LP record. The other person had to name the composer, work, and so on.

Didn't you learn the classical composers from your father?
No, I avoided classical music until I met Bruce because of my negative attitude toward my father. Kendall was an outstanding teacher and a man of culture I admired. He became my mentor and later a faculty colleague when he moved to Purdue. The other important teacher was W. Charles Redding, the founder of

Back to Table of Contents

what is now called organizational communication (Redding & Tompkins, 1988). Redding was a student here at the University of Denver. He majored in Latin and speech. So he was very much a classical rhetorician. I had to know Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian very well, and my approach to organizational communication is often called the "rhetorical approach" because I stress identification, the new enthymeme, and decision making. I took it to be a persuasive phenomenon. It's not just information, but influence and control (Tompkins, 1993).

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to organizational communication?

Many of us thought that moving from speech to communication would be exciting and could increase the complexity and status of the field. The idea that Redding was working with intrigued me. I wanted to study complex organizations as communication systems, and by studying persuasion and rhetorical theory, I could see it was much more than just passing information, important though that is. We came to know that communication created the structure, formal and informal, that *constituted* organization. Redding did not like being in a Department of Speech. He bought a sign to put outside his office: Communication Research Center. He helped found an organization to compete with the Speech Association of America. It was called the National Society for the Study of Communication, NSSC, and eventually became ICA.

Do you like the grown child OrgComm?

Well, yes, but I like neither a pro-management bias nor the theory-wolves' discourse about post-post-postmodernism. The older I grew, the less interested I became in theory qua theory unless it has an ultimate application to the real world. Later, I decided it had to benefit the city or community, as well as the organization and the individuals within them. When I retired, I was looking for another calling and had no idea that I was going to do communication research (Tompkins, 2011). Almost 13 years ago, I found the St. Francis Center, a homeless shelter eight blocks from here. Once there, I discovered communication practices, hypotheses, and implications all over the place. I thought I needed to report this back to the people in the field of communication. Shelters provide a great opportunity for students, both to volunteer and to do research projects that the shelter and the city need to have done (Tompkins, 2009a).

How would you rate the position of OrgComm scholars within communication?

I'm less interested in the academic society as society than I used to be because of this change that came over me. I went to Colorado in 1986 because the Dean of Arts and Sciences, Ev Fleischer, offered me 13 academic lines to rebuild the department. What we were trying to do in Boulder was not a comprehensive department, but a place that did interpersonal and organizational communication backed by an emphasis on rhetorical and communication theory. After we recruited the full faculty and developed a new curriculum, Boulder showed up in a list of top 10 departments, and one of the top two or three in organizational communication. Quality can emerge in most aspects of our field.

You wrote "An Autobiography of Scholarly Engagement" (Tompkins, 2009b). Can a single professor fix the world?

One can try. I was asked to prepare that paper for the Organizational Engagement Conference held in Aspen, Colorado. There is an essay in the *Western Journal* in which Stephen Hartnett discusses my homeless book (Tompkins, 2009a) and asks, "Why did he wait until he had retired?" (Hartnett, 2010).

Back to Table of Contents

Why did you wait?

Answer number one: It took me 10 years to get the book written. I don't think the tenure and promotion committees would have given me that much time. Answer number two, you already know: I really didn't intend to write that book when I first began volunteering. "Disciplined compassion" was enough to experience on its own, but then I discovered that social scientific concepts such as social capital are extremely helpful in understanding and fixing the problem. Denver is cited as a model city by HUD because of what we are trying to do: end homelessness. It may look bad at the moment, but it is much better than it was eight years ago.

Could you please tell me why the German Wernher von Braun and NASA have got such prominent places in your autobiographical piece (Tompkins, 2009b)?

I went to the moon—well, figuratively speaking. I deeply identified with the success of the communication and cooperation called the Apollo Project. I discovered creative, amazing communication practices. I also wrote two books (Tompkins, 1993, 2005) contrasting it with the communication failures we call *Challenger* and *Columbia.* The Apollo Program seduced me into studying organizational identification and "conceptive" control as theoretical and empirical problems of importance.

How did you feel when you were nominated to run for ICA President?

Surprised. I had no expectation of winning, either, because I ran against a faculty member from Michigan State. In those days, the quantitative logical positivists at State and other places had a tremendous amount of influence within ICA. So it was a second surprise to be honored by the election.

Did you have a presidential agenda?

Oh yes, I did. I was newly arrived in Boulder and invited Kenneth Boulding to give the keynote address on the theme of communication and peace. Boulding was in the economics department at CU and had a big influence on the field of communication with his essay on the image (Boulding, 1956). I still have my ICA tee shirt with the theme of that convention.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?

It was gratifying. It had not been a goal of my life, but I worked hard as president-elect and president of the organization.

You have served both ICA and NCA, and you got honors from both. Which one is your favorite?

I attended more NCA conventions than ICA over the years. ICA did have a scientific orientation, positivism, that excluded people whose work I respected and relied on, in rhetorical theory for example. NCA was more inclusive than ICA, but ICA has changed in recent years in this regard, becoming more open.

Who is Phil Tompkins: a researcher, a teacher, the communication scholar who worked with Wernher von Braun, the friend of the homeless in Denver? What is the most important part of your academic life?

I think I have to put the NASA work and the homeless work together at the top, along with my literary-rhetorical criticism. I'm continuing to understand risk, how to identify it, how to analyze it, and how to

Back to Table of Contents

reduce it. I've spent my career studying NASA and even literary works as a way of understanding risk. In the homeless shelter, there is a social and an individual risk to be confronted. As I went to work there, I felt the same process of identification again. Did you know that the NASA work continues to live and grow in new forms?

I read it in your CV, yes.

I was approached by a manager at Ball Aerospace after the second space book (Tompkins, 2005a), because they were using some of von Braun's amazing communication practices, and [also] because they wanted me to give a paper on risk as communication, since they had reached the limits of their mathematical approach. The paper was given to a convention of systems engineers. After the 2005 book came out, NASA has invited me twice to address international conventions at the Ronald Reagan Center in Washington, DC. The reason they gave me was that they wanted the young engineers and managers to learn how we did things during the glory years of Apollo. I doubt that the academic community knows that I have been kept this busy doing communication work in the real world since retirement.

In your ICA presidential address, you talked about James Joyce—in San Francisco (Tompkins, 1991).

The upcoming convention was to be held in Dublin. So I showed how Marshall McLuhan got his ideas from the novels of that great Irish writer. McLuhan was an expert on Joyce, as was I (Tompkins, 1968), and I quoted from the novels to prove how the "ineluctable modality of the audible" and the "visible" inspired McLuhan to see the differences between the oral and written media. I later heard from a colleague of his in Canada that I was dead right. In short, we can use the insights of our greatest novelists to talk about the media and open it up for analytical work.

How was the reputation of the discipline here at Colorado?

First, I must tell you I was very happy and settled at Purdue. I was asked to be a referee in a tenure case at Boulder. I said to CU, "You might give the person tenure on the basis of teaching, but the person's record on research would not gain tenure at Purdue." The dean at CU agreed with me. He had taken away the department's doctoral program because there was little or no scholarship being done by the faculty. He thought about eliminating the department, but the undergraduate students resisted that mightily. He asked me to move to CU and bring in people who had a good research record. That is what we did, and there is no doubt, improving the quality of research also improved the quality of teaching. The graduate program was reinstituted, and we were off on a new trajectory.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

Can I see it in 2030? I see something happening right now: the social media as creating new rhetorical networks of ideas and influence-organizations. Print and television tell me that the change has begun in Egypt, Libya, and in other countries.

Are there any scientists whom you would call role models?

Oh, of course, there are Aristotle and Max Weber, the rhetorical sociologist, at the top; Herbert Simon in economics would be another. A scholar such as Charles Redding was one because he made me learn statistics. He learned Latin and then learned statistics later in life because they were important to

Back to Table of Contents

understanding organizations as communication systems. He was a bit pedantic because he took teaching seriously and wanted to get even small things exactly right. A scholar such as Kenneth Burke became a family friend and inspired a lot of my ideas. I exploited his definition of man, the new rhetoric, identification, his principles of criticism, and used his concept of the "degrees of being" in the book about homelessness, or houselessness as I call it, following Heidegger's sense that we are all homeless because we are thrown into existence. Burke's translation of *Death in Venice*, done as a teenager, by the way, is still the best one rendered from the German into English (Mann, 1970).

Looking back on 50 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?
I think the field is much stronger today than it was 50 years ago. I have some personal pride for having taken rhetorical and communicative ideas into the *James Joyce Quarterly* to explain to literature scholars what was going on in *Ulysses* (Tompkins, 1968). I'm also proud of an article in *Esquire* magazine in which I did a rhetorical criticism of Capote's book *In Cold Blood* (Tompkins, 1966). A relative said recently that it gets more hits on Google than my books do. I'm proud of my contribution to the communicative approach to risk (Tompkins, 1990, 2005b), and that I am still invited to help people in the real world.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?
Yes, but that would get into personal matters and personalities. We all make mistakes.

What will remain when Phil Tompkins is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
There are my students and their students. People will read some of my work as long as they read Joyce and Capote. I would like for people to study this book about houselessness and the books about NASA. They contain ideas and leads that can help avoid disasters and make human lives better, longer, and happier. Those are the contributions that will last. People will be able to read how it was that 42 business people, politicians, social welfare people, and those down-and-out could come together in Denver to recommend unanimously a model program to end homelessness.

Back to Table of Contents

References

Boulding, K. (1956). *The image: Knowledge in life and society*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Hartnett, S. J. (2010). Communication, social justice, and joyful commitment. *Western Journal of Communication*, *74*, 68–93.

Mann, T. (1970). *Death in Venice* (K. Burke, Trans.) New York: McGraw-Hill.

Redding, W. C., & Tompkins, P. K. (1988). Organizational communication—Past and present tenses. In G. M. Goldhaber & G. A. Barnett (Eds.), *Handbook of organizational communication* (pp. 5–34). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Tompkins, P. K. (1966, June). In cold fact. *Esquire*, *391*, 166–171.

Tompkins, P. K. (1968). James Joyce and the enthymeme: The seventh episode of *Ulysses*. *James Joyce Quarterly, 5*(3), 199–205.

Tompkins, P. K. (1990). On risk communication as interorganizational control: The case of the aviation safety reporting system. In A. Kirby (Ed.), *Nothing to fear: Risks and hazards in American life* (pp. 203–239). Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press.

Tompkins, P. K. (1991). Invitation to ICA '90: Rejoyce in Dublin. *Communication Theory*, *1*, 36–43.

Tompkins, P. K. (1993). *Organizational communication imperatives: Lessons of the space program.* Los Angeles: Oxford University Press.

Tompkins, P. K. (2005a). *Apollo*, *Challenger*, *Columbia*. *The decline of the space program: A study in organizational communication*. New York: Roxbury.

Tompkins, P. K. (2005b). *Communication as the geometry of organization: A rhetorical analysis of risk.* Las Vegas, NV: International Conference of Systems Engineers.

Tompkins, P. K. (2009a). *Who is my neighbor? Communicating and organizing to end homelessness*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm.

Tompkins, P. K. (2009b). *An autobiography of scholarly engagement*. Aspen, CO: Aspen Conference on Organizational Engagement.

Tompkins, P. K. (2011, May). Using communication research to mitigate homelessness: Emergence from outreach work. *Spectra*, 7–10.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1836–1844 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

JOSEPH TUROW

"My role is to ask critical questions."

Joseph (Joe) Turow, January 12, 2011.
University of Pennsylvania. Photo by M. Meyen.

Education:	1971 B.A. in English, University of Pennsylvania
	1973 M.A. in communication, Annenberg School of Communication
	1976 Ph.D. in communication, University of Pennsylvania
Career:	1976 Assistant Professor, Purdue University
	1981 Associate Professor
	1986 Return to University of Pennsylvania
	1990 Professor, University of Pennsylvania
	2010 NCA Distinguished Scholar and ICA Fellow
Personal:	Married, three children

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Joseph (Joe) Turow

Can you tell me something about your parents?

My parents were both from Eastern Europe. My mother was born in Vilnius. My father's family also came from Vilnius, but they had to leave when the Germans came during the First World War. His father was in the Russian army. Both of my parents came to the U.S. after World War II. My mother had been in a slave labor camp in Poland. My father was sent to Siberia. He was a chemist and became a technical director of light industry in central Siberia when he was released from prison. Because he was a Polish citizen, the Soviets allowed him to leave Russia for Poland after the war. After working for the government there as a trade representative, he and my mother (newly married) decided to migrate to the U.S. My mother's mother had a brother in New York. So they came over by ship in 1947. I was raised not too far from where Elihu Katz was brought up. We went to the same elementary school, but we didn't know one another because he was a bit older than I was [laughing].

What about your first professional dreams?

To truncate things, my parents always expected that I would be a lawyer. Probably because of that, in elementary school, I borrowed a law book from the library to see what the law is about. I found it terribly boring. I began to wonder what I was really going to do with myself. To my parents' consternation, I watched a lot of TV, and I liked ads. So I said, "Somebody has to write this stuff." I began to read as many titles about the history and the social psychology of advertising that I could find in my neighborhood branch of the Brooklyn public library.

As a teenager?

Beginning from when I was about 12, I read every book on the shelf about advertising. I remember, when I was in eighth grade, giving a class speech on *The Hidden Persuaders* (Packard, 1957). A friend of my father who worked for Crain Communications told him about *Advertising Age,* which his company published. My father got a subscription for me. I started reading it when I was 17 and have been reading it since. So I got interested in it as a vocation. I suspect that was partly because, in high school, I was quite good in writing and not as good in the sciences.

That's why you started out as English major.

I figured that the people who were writing the ads had to get creative and be widely tied into popular culture. Literature, I thought, was a good way to encourage creativity. Once, one of my professors found a copy of my *Ad Age* in a seminar room and started a polemic against advertising. Today, I would never do that to a student. It's not right to impose your moral views on a student as boldly as that, but she did. I ended up sort of agreeing with her. Plus, my parents thought I didn't have the personality for the advertising industry. My father was worried that I was not tough enough for that.

What did he do for a living?

He had a small chemical factory in Brooklyn that made leather finishes and liquid rubber. He did okay in the U.S. He was sort of upper-middle class. In Russia, he had won a Stalin prize for saving the military millions of rubles by finding a way to chemically treat bad leather so it could be used for boots and not thrown away.

Back to Table of Contents

How did you come to Annenberg?

When I was an undergraduate, Penn had very few classes in media studies. I took a freshman seminar in history of the mass media by Garth Jowett, and he told me about Annenberg, which at the time, offered only graduate courses. I also had an American Civilization class by Anthony Garvan that was incredible. He had a dialectical view of American culture that traced the interconnections between architecture, social norms, or painting. We read mainly original source materials—diaries, memoirs, and the like. So I said, "If people can do this with high culture, maybe I can do this with popular culture." I went over to Annenberg, where I met Larry Gross.

How would you compare the student Joseph Turow with your students today?

The Annenberg School was very different back then. For one thing, not everyone was supported financially; I had to pay the first semester. For another, there were very few courses that involved readings, discussions of the readings, or lectures. The focus of the school back then was on students doing their own research through the class. Almost every class centered on an individual research project. The philosophy was that you would read in the field through finding literature related to your project. At the same time, nobody pushed students to publish their works. The faculty didn't emphasize the students to publish. In fact, there was no routine for giving students money to attend conferences. When I got my first paper accepted to ICA, I wrote a letter asking George Gerbner if the school would support the trip. He wrote back that he would pay my flight to New Orleans, but I would have to find my own money for the way back. I still have the note. He would give me an extra $50 if I agreed to sit at a booth to promote the *Journal of Communication* at the conference.

Sounds like a very different world.

At the time, many in the field considered Annenberg a world unto itself. People didn't understand what we were doing here. Annenberg used a very distinctive language of codes and modes to describe the curriculum, and much of the faculty had little to do with the communication field. When they hired me at Purdue, they did it despite their sense that Annenberg was not in the mainstream of the field.

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers?

George Gerbner was my advisor. I also worked with Robert Lewis Shayon. He was a television critic and an important radio producer before that, a very kind person with a difficult personal and professional past. He helped students understand how the broadcast system worked. He would invite executives from the TV industry to his classes. He was also interested in public policy. Larry Gross was influential through his course in social psychology and because he has ideals which I respect. From George Gerbner, I learned how to think about media almost like industrial folklore. He didn't put it that way, but the connection is there because he studied folklore in Hungary as an undergraduate. Gerbner's perspective on the nature of media systems is, in some ways, more interesting than his cultivation theory. Both are interconnected. Michael Morgan has done a great service in collecting George's writings. They deserve to be read with an eye to his perspective on media systems. Too bad he never wrote a book to elucidate these ideas.

Do you have any explanation for that?

Maybe it had to do with his comfort with English, though I never noticed that as a problem. He was probably too busy being a dean, but I think that's kind of a shame. His definition of entertainment as "the

Back to Table of Contents

celebration of conventional morality" has stayed with me. George insisted that studying media industries must start with the realization that a primary function of mainstream media storytelling is the reinforcement and extension of the cultural values of those with social power. He certainly wasn't the only academic to link media to social power, but he went further than many in tying the proposition to the particulars of media-produced stories. His views certainly inform some of the perspectives I have used in my research on the organizational and industrial forces that shape storytelling in the children's book, news, television, and advertising industries.

When did you know that you wanted to be a communication scientist?

I have never thought of myself as a "scientist," but more as a social researcher. When I finished my master's, I already had two articles published. The first one involved a kind of beginner's luck (Turow, 1974a). I had carried out research for Jack Lyle's class on the reasons people phone a talk-radio station. After presenting the paper at an ICA student conference in Athens, Ohio, I sent it on a whim to the *Journal of Broadcasting*. Chris Sterling, the editor, wrote back asking if I could make it a little shorter, and that was it. Then Gerbner published an article based on my master's thesis in the *Journal of Communication* (Turow, 1974b). So I was being reinforced for my interests. After my master's, I thought a bit about advertising again, but my parents encouraged me to go on for the PhD. At the time, I didn't think about jobs. If I were at all practical, I would have realized how ridiculous the whole thing was.

Ridiculous?

Yes. It was difficult to get a good job at university, and it wasn't that easy to find out about positions. Annenberg didn't even have a job board at the time. When I started looking, I simply took the ICA directory and wrote to almost every department head. Out of 54, I got back four affirmative replies. I had a phone interview with Joanne Cantor at Wisconsin who doesn't remember it, an interview at Ohio State, and one at Purdue. Ohio State and Purdue were also interviewing Ellen Wartella and Chuck Whitney at the time. They went to Ohio State, so Purdue hired me. Out of 54 schools, that was the only job I got.

Did you like the place in the middle of nowhere?

When I came to Purdue, my parents said they had never heard of it. I spelled it wrong in the beginning: "Perdue," like the chicken company. But going to the Midwest was the greatest thing that ever happened to me. It was a different world. I was brought up in a cloistered environment in Brooklyn and Penn. Big Ten universities are undergraduate factories, and in that sense, very different from an Ivy League school. Purdue also had a different tradition in communication from Annenberg. When I was offered the job, I told the head, David Berg, that I wasn't familiar with some of the programs in the department; for example, rhetoric and OrgComm. He said wisely, "We ask the same questions, but use a different language. You'll be fine." At that time, Purdue was a hotbed of really smart people. We had Charles Redding, Phil Tompkins, Mark Knapp, Rod Hart, Linda Putnam, Don Ellis, Peter Miller, Carl Bybee, John Daly, Jon Nussbaum, Patrice Buzzanell, Cynthia Stohl, Barry Brummett and Brant Burleson. I learned an enormous amount from all of them. It was like earning another advanced degree. Then I got married. My wife is a pediatrician and found a job in Indianapolis. So, I had to drive 65 miles each way. I did it for seven years. It was getting pretty old. By 1984 or 1985, we were beginning to look around.

Back to Table of Contents

So you came back to Penn.

UCLA made overtures, and I was offered a position at Santa Barbara. I was also talking with Northwestern, but then Annenberg just called out of the blue. Bob Shayon was heading toward retirement, and they needed someone who carried out research on media industries. Rutgers was also trying to hire me at exactly the same time. I had just been promoted to full professor at Purdue. Penn was offering me only an associate professorship, while Rutgers was offering me a full-professor position. My wife and I discussed it, and we decided that we would nevertheless go with Penn's offer.

Does it matter to work at an Ivy League university?

Penn is a terrific place with an enormously talented faculty and very good students. Annenberg has an endowment that makes us very fortunate. The graduate students are astonishingly bright, and many are very creative. Most important, I feel fortunate to be working with incredibly talented colleagues. We genuinely like and respect one another, even when we disagree. This is the best Annenberg School that ever existed at Penn. Our challenge now is to develop a next generation of faculty that will be as good or better.

In 2005,* The New York Times Magazine *called you the "reigning academic expert in media fragmentation." What does it feel like to be a king?

It's nice to see something like that in print, particularly so my dad and other relatives can see it. It's also nice from a public relations standpoint, but one can't take such assertions too seriously. I just want to do my work and hope that people will acknowledge it. Obviously, some people have, especially my work on the transforming media world (Turow, 1997, 2006, 2011). It has plugged me into interesting debates on public policy. That has been gratifying.

Some years ago, you called for critical scholarly examination of the persuasion industries and for public debate (McAllister & Turow, 2002, p. 505). Did your colleagues take notice of this call?

There is still very little sociology of production in the ad and public relations industries. More generally relating to the sociology of production, though, things have changed for the better. Research on the production of culture in media industries went through a downturn for about 10 or 15 years. From the early 1980s on, the focus was really slim. A couple of years ago, I wrote an article with Laura Grindstaff on "television sociology" (Grindstaff & Turow, 2006). We were struck how little research was out there. It's only now that people are beginning to reexamine this. When *Playing Doctor* (Turow, 1989, 2010) came out the first time, the field paid little attention to it. People tell me now that they read it, but few people quoted it and understood what I was trying to do. A reviewer in a British journal was quite negative about the book. She said that the author doesn't take into account that the people are active viewers. The logic was: Why study the production process when there is an active audience that determines meaning? To me, while individual interpretations do certainly exist, it is important to understand the forces that shape the patterned presentations of institutional realities that entertainment industries circulate. Clearly, George Gerbner's influence shines through here.

Back to Table of Contents

There are collective interpretations in society.

Yes. It is very interesting that the existence of agenda-setting in the news has always been accepted, even by cultural studies people and other social researchers who privilege individual interpretation and emphasize "resistance" to mainstream presentations. Many haven't accepted the notion that agenda-setting takes place when it comes to entertainment. But now, there are people like David Hesmondalgh (2002) who have been trying to make peace between cultural studies and production studies people.

What about the academic position of scholars who examine media systems and media production?

I don't think we have been as important as people who work on effects research, particularly in health and political communication. No one at Annenberg has made me feel marginalized by any means, but until recently, there was no core group of researchers on media industries here. Now I have several colleagues with often converging approaches to media systems and policies: Monroe Price, Marwan Kraidy, and Victor Pickard. Also, an increasing number of graduate students see that there are fascinating questions to ask.

You have a lot of articles in the popular press. Do you like the role of public speaker?

I can't say I don't like it. I'm not an active blogger, but I certainly don't mind talking to journalists and policy makers. We work in a field that is so connected to everyday life that it would be a shame if at least some of our questions didn't inform public concerns. I prefer to do research that will engage people's attention. My role is to ask critical questions. Otherwise, I could work as a marketing person.

You received major grants from industrial foundations like the Kaiser Family Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the MacArthur Foundation.

Those are separate from the industries I study. I've been fortunate to receive funding from them, but it must be said that foundations more readily fund effects research than industry research. There are media companies that would give me money; Microsoft, for example. But the academy would rightfully worry about it, and the press and policymakers wouldn't take it seriously. As director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center, Kathleen Jamieson helped me a lot in this regard. In 1999, she asked me to head its Information & Society division. It came with a substantial amount of money to do research. That marked the beginning of several national surveys of the American public on issues relating to marketing, new media, and society.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?

It was very nice. I greatly respect several previously chosen Fellows. It was nice to be in that company. I feel the same way about the NCA Award.

Who is Joseph Turow: a scholar, a teacher, a researcher, the promoter of Gerbner's ideas?

I would call myself a researcher, an academic, a professor. I don't use the term scholar about myself. I was an English major and worry about words, sometimes too much. In my opinion, one doesn't deem oneself a scholar; it is up to others to decide if you are one. I consider myself a teacher in the broadest sense—through my writings, as well as in class. Mainly, I am a social researcher who tries to look critically at the subjects I study. That is the most joy and the most pain. I always worry that I won't come up with a new idea.

Back to Table of Contents

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

I guess George Gerbner's definition was social interaction through messages. Certainly, that perspective is at the core of thinking about society, going back to John Dewey and before that. Here at Annenberg, we differ on so many levels in terms of what we do, but I believe everybody agrees that we study media, in one way or another. We study the processes, the nature, and the consequences of media. To me, media are fundamental aspects of contemporary society. I'm interested in how media function collectively, as an institution. By institution, I mean entities in a society that hold power over key aspects of life. One crucial social role of media is to shed light on what other institutions are doing. I firmly believe that entertainment tales help people understand their world at least as well as news stories do. The two are interconnected on a number of levels.

Sonia Livingstone told me about the lack of reputation in the UK, and about the preconception that communication is about the training of students first. How is the situation in the U.S.?

It certainly was the same. Communication started as the study of public speaking (and the rhetoric connected to it) and was considered an instrumental activity. The large public universities particularly focused on that. European immigrants, especially, wanted their kids to learn English well. Speech and rhetoric became part of what it meant to be an educated American. When the elite universities in the early 1900s repositioned themselves along the lines of science, instrumental tasking was left out. Places like Penn got rid of it. When I was an undergraduate, there was not a single course called rhetoric. Over the last couple of decades, communication and media studies have gained a much greater academic respectability. Even Harvard has a kind of communication program. It's part of the Kennedy School. It may not have the same status as the political science department, but it is seen as critical. You have to have academics who understand media and their impact, and a communication department or school is one way to ensure such research takes place. In the last few decades, certainly, I've noticed an increasing sense of pride at Penn in the Annenberg School and what we do.

Could you draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where are constructions sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?

I don't know enough about it to present such particulars. I am pleased to see that the field is growing in China, India, and even Russia. We have students now going to teach in places like Hong Kong, Barcelona, and Singapore because the jobs around here are not so plentiful. I do worry about the future of American academia. People of my generation are continuing to teach far beyond the age people thought they would. The growth of adjuncts is a devastating problem.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

I don't know what it will be like. I literally have not thought about it that far out. The field is important, but what is more important to me is what the world is going to be like. What are my kids and grandchildren going to be? What kind of social life and what media are they going to face? My interest is in the future of media and democracy, and the little part I can play to push people in a direction I consider socially healthy.

Back to Table of Contents

Are there any researchers whom you regard as role models?
George Gerbner was one. Bob Shayon and Larry Gross. Those are the three that I think of right offhand, but there are so many people that I have learned from. I have also learned from graduate students.

Looking back on 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?
I am proud of the research I did on doctors in television. I am proud of the books about the Internet and targeting in America. I am proud of the surveys I have done since 1999. We really helped ignite a public debate which influenced the way regulators think about the Internet.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?
No. I have been really fortunate. I wish I had written my dissertation so that it was more readable, but aside from that, no.

What will remain when Joseph Turow is gone? What would remain if you could influence it?
I don't know how much people remember of anybody. The footprints that most academics place are like footprints in the sand. There are very few people whose names we remember prominently long after they are gone: Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx. The rest of us are footnotes, if we're fortunate.

George Gerbner?
I wonder about that. Cultivation is his dominant issue, but what people ignore is George's underlying philosophy. I personally don't have any grand expectations. I hope that people think of me as someone who tried to have some impact and get under the hood of media systems to expose their dynamics of power. It will be nice if students see connections between the ideas of past faculty and those of the present. It's a cliché, but we do stand on the shoulders of others. I have been trying to tell my Annenberg colleagues for years that we need photographs of Annenberg faculty that have gone. It is important for students to look at those photos and ask: Who were these people? What did they do? Is there anything I might learn from them?

Back to Table of Contents

References

Grindstaff, L., & Turow, J. (2006). Television sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *32*, 103–125.

Hesmondhalgh, D. (2002). *The cultural industries*. London: SAGE Publications.

McAllister, M. P., & Turow, J. (Eds.) (2002). *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, Special issue on "New media and the commercial sphere," *46*(4).

Packard, V. (1957). *The hidden persuaders*. New York: David McKay.

Turow, J. (1974a). Talk show radio as interpersonal communication. *Journal of Broadcasting*, *18*, 171–191.

Turow, J. (1974b). Advising and ordering: Daytime, prime time. *Journal of Communication*, *24*, 138–140.

Turow, J. (1989). *Playing doctor: Television, storytelling, and medical power*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Turow, J. (1997). *Breaking up America: Advertising and the new media world*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Turow, J. (2006). *Niche envy: Marketing discrimination in the digital age*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Turow, J. (2010). *Playing doctor: Television, storytelling, and medical power*. (Expanded ed.). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1845–1851 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

PATTI VALKENBURG

"I'm a self-made woman."

Patti Valkenburg, February 3, 2011.
Amsterdam. Photo by M. Meyen.

.

Born:	1951 in Delft, Netherlands
Education:	Teaching degrees in language and health education
	1995 Ph.D., Leiden University
Career:	1990 Research Trainee, Leiden University
	1995 Assistant Professor at University of Amsterdam
	1998 Professor, Amsterdam School of Communication Research (ASCoR)
	2008 ICA Fellow
	2010 ERC Advanced Investigators Grant
	2011 Spinoza Award (highest scientific award in the Netherlands)

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Patti Valkenburg

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

I come from a middle class background, but not very highly educated. My first dream was to become a stewardess [laughing]. Actually, it never happened because I'm too tall.

They have very tall girls on the planes today.

I was an exception back then. My academic career started only when I was 30 years old. First, I became a nurse in a psychiatric hospital. It was really tough. I couldn't handle all these painful things. So I switched to secretary after a few years. That was okay, but then I went to college and became a teacher for nurses. I wrote some textbooks and liked to design courses, but after two or three classes, it was not exciting any more. One day, the editor of the publishing house said, "Why don't you go to the university?" Because of my background, that was never my aspiration. Then my career went very fast. I graduated "cum laude" within two years. That didn't go unnoticed. They offered me a PhD position at the Center of Child and Family Studies at Leiden University. During my PhD, I wanted to become a communication scholar.

At Leiden?

Actually, I tried to enter the communication department at Amsterdam as a student in 1988, but at the time, this department had 1,500 BA and MA students and only one professor. There was hardly any time to coach the students. My master's thesis at Leiden was on cultivation theory, and my PhD on the influence of television on creative imagination. At Leiden, I was in an education department. Their topics were quite different from the topics I loved to do. They dealt with the influence of background media on homework, for example. But I wanted to know: How is it possible to become frightened from fiction? How do kids from different ages differ in their preferences for media content? How can you be influenced by advertising? I was more interested in the effects of everyday media. The people I admired were all in communication, and they were all media psychologists: Dolf Zillmann, Joanne Cantor, Ellen Wartella, Barb Wilson, Jennings Bryant.

That's why you moved to a communication department.

In this new discipline at the time, I felt free to choose my own topics and my own methods. Where I came from, the use of theories and methods was more dominated by the discipline. Here, I could carve out my own research line. When I came here in 1995, I was on my own. My passion was investigating the effects of media on youth from a media psychological perspective, but in the Netherlands, there was no media psychology. Communication here developed out of political science. So initially, the department did not want me. They told me that if I wanted to stay, I had to change my topic. Children and the media did not belong to communication. I actually tried to change topics. I did some studies on framing. But it did not work. After two or three studies, I got bored.

Let's go one step back. What did your parents do for a living?

My father was the youngest son of a [family-owned] plumbing company, but he died when I was four. I had two younger sisters. If my father hadn't died, I would probably have 12 [laughing]. We were very strict Catholics. My mother is Italian. Her father was the first Italian immigrant in Delft. She was raised in

Back to Table of Contents

a Spartan way, and was not allowed to marry a Dutchman. She flew away with my father. After he died, my mother turned back to the Italian community.

Were there any university graduates in your family?
Not at all. I was the first one.

How would you compare the student Patti Valkenburg with your students today?
I don't like generalizations about youth. I believe in individual differences. If you look at individual cases, the differences are still as big as they were when I was young. There was, and there is, a very small group of students who are really talented. But there are lots of communication scholars who do not belong at the university. We are too popular. At the time, we have about 1,400 BA students and 300 MA students. That's too many, in my view.

Could you tell me something about your main academic teachers in communication?
I have actually never had a real academic teacher in communication. I got my degree in education, and there was no real interest in communication and media psychology. When I moved from Leiden to Amsterdam, I felt very lonely. In the Netherlands, there were no colleagues with whom I could talk about my interests. At my first ICA conference, I met Joanne Cantor. We e-mailed each other at the time at least once a week. That went on for years. We still have close contact, although we now both get hundreds of e-mails a day. In the 1990s, an e-mail from the U.S. was very special and exciting. Joanne was my mentor right from the start. At ICA, I felt home. In 1995, I was the only person from the Netherlands there. ASCoR didn't even exist. Now we go with 30 or 40 colleagues to ICA.

Are the Netherlands too small for Patti Valkenburg?
I've not so many international activities. I rarely travel. I am only quite loyal to ICA. I told you the history. I got friends in ICA. I spent several years on the formation of this interest group which is now a division: Children, Adolescents, and the Media. I got reputation for that. ICA is actually the only conference I go to every year. I'm not a traveller, and I feel most happy when I write. I always feel distracted from my work. I want to be with my own group, so I decline 80% of all invitations, if not more. Together with Moniek Buijzen and Jochen Peter, I founded the CCAM, our Center of Research on Children, Adolescents and the Media. We are very successful. We received so many prestigious grants that CCAM now hosts 23 researchers, all focusing on youth and the media.

Why did you found that interest group at ICA?
The youth and media researchers had no home. We were dispersed across many disciplines: psychology, education, and anthropology. I wanted to create a division where we could exchange ideas and present our work to each other. The youth and media researchers were not taken seriously enough at ICA. We were talking about it and talking about it, but nothing happened. One person had to do it. It was a great success. In less than two years, we received division status. That is unprecedented. We now meet each other yearly, and we have our own *Journal of Children and Media*, founded by Dafna Lemish. These are great developments!

Back to Table of Contents

Why did you, of all the others, create this division?
I wanted to create an infrastructure. I wanted to fight for my passion, my field. I wanted to see and meet the names that I knew from the literature and bring them to ICA. I wanted to see our research in the conference program.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to children and media?
No. Actually, I don't like kids so much [laughing]. I don't even have kids myself. I like to do research with children because it's both theoretically and methodologically a challenge. Kids are spontaneous. If you can make good questions for them, you are a good survey researcher. You should be certain that they understand what you want to know. You have to know about cognitive theories, about effect theories, and about developmental theories. I accidentally came across kids. At Leiden, I chose a minor on that topic. From that time on, it was my passion. At the time, it was not such an important topic, but I always had a sense for new developments. For example, well before the social media hype started, I thought, this will become important; this is what is going to influence adolescents. This is what is going to influence our whole society. So I spent months to familiarize myself with interpersonal communication theories, wrote a grant proposal, and it was awarded with $1.5 million. Now we are seen as a top-notch group on adolescents and social media.

Will you ever grow out of that passion?
Now, I'm in a certain stage of my career. I have developed a bird's-eye view. My focus is kids, but I'm interested in many, many topics and theories. I now can transfer theories from one topic to the other. It's an exciting stage. Right now, we will switch and use more implicit methods to investigate explanatory mechanisms of media effects. Communication used to be very survey-oriented, but we are moving more to the experimental paradigm, and to reaction time measures.

Were you ever forced to think about gender questions during your academic career?
I'm not sure what to say about it. I've actually reached all the career steps in a short period. So I never have had much time to think of gender questions. At this stage of my career, it is difficult sometimes. I'm European, I'm a woman, and I'm successful. In academia, only 5% of the full professors are female. So, to create gender-balance in committees and so on, women likely need to be asked 20 times more than men. Women, in general, have more difficulties than men to say no [laughing].

Can you name the main goal of your ICA activities?
It is to see my friends and what's going on in the community. Sometimes, I'm inspired by content, but a 10-minute presentation is not the ideal format to get inspired. I get ideas by reading.

You have gotten a lot of competitive academic grants. Would you also like to work for the industry?
No. I'm in a luxurious position. I've always declined offers from companies because I'm concerned that I will confront difficulties. Of course, you can make good agreements. Actually, I tried it once with a big conglomerate. After a few weeks, they started to interfere with a press release about social media use in the Netherlands. Fortunately, I have always received academic grants, so it was never necessary to go for industry grants. I'm not at all negative about it, but it's difficult. If you work for them and you find

Back to Table of Contents

negative effects, there would be a lot of social and emotional pressure form the people you work with. The implicit agreement is that you don't want to offend them.

2.5 million euros: Why would the EU spend so much money for a project on the entertainization of childhood?

It's an individual grant based on my past performance. Past performance is even more important than content. I worked four full-time months on this grant proposal, and I had it read by 15 people. All the blind spots were out of the proposal. I believe in that procedure; it was rated with the highest mark. I do not write so many proposals, but when I do it, I really invest a lot of effort.

You are one of the 15 most prolific communication scholars in the world (Hicksen et al., 2003) and the most productive communication scholar in Europe (Masip, 2005). How did you become a record writer?

We are a special discipline. If you compare my publications to psychologists, they have three or four times as many. In communication, it's very difficult to get accepted in the top journals. I work with an interdisciplinary group. They don't get their papers published in communication journals. That is a weakness of our discipline. Our theoretical introductions are longer, and it is more difficult than in other disciplines to get our work published. I don't have the feeling that I'm already there. Hopefully, I'm on my way. This new project could really become my lifework. I created a new media effects model, and for the first time, I think, yes, there is a possibility to make a bigger step.

Did you ever consider applying for a position in a foreign country, in the U.S., for example?

I sometimes get job offers in the U.S., [although] I've never actually wanted it because of my private life here. With that ERC grant, I have the most luxurious position a scientist can imagine for the next five years. But after that, I am quite open to new experiences in Europe or the U.S.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?

I was very happy. I'm actually quite young for an ICA Fellow. It's a great honor in our discipline, but here in the Netherlands? Who cares? You are famous on a square meter. Here, no one knows that a Fellow in ICA is very special [laughing].

Who is Patti Valkenburg: a scientist, a teacher, a research manager, the founder of a large ICA division? What is the most important part of your academic life?

It's research. CCAM now hosts 23 people, and I'm very involved. It can take us months to create a survey or to design a new study. We work very closely in different teams, and we have appointments all day. There is the advertising team, the social media team, there is the pornography team, and there is the entertainization team. It's very inspiring. I also love to write, and I can't wait to start with a new article.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

That's a difficult question. To be honest, I think we are in a development right now. At a certain point, a group of influential scholars have to come up with a framework of how we are going to define and organize ourselves. In ICA, there are far too many divisions. In psychology, there is an agreement that they always have departments of developmental, organizational, clinical, and social psychology. In

Back to Table of Contents

communication, we are growing fast, but we need to structure ourselves. This is a challenge for ICA, as well. At ASCoR, we have now 150 researchers. What is communication science, and what is it not?

Do you have any answer?
We are shifting from mass to more individual communication. Interpersonal theories should now be integrated with media-effects theories. We are on the move. Maybe it's not the time yet for an answer. But we definitively need to define ourselves.

How would you rate the academic position of scholars like you in our discipline?
What do you think?

I guess psychologists are at the center of power.
That's also the case in the Netherlands.

How is the reputation of the discipline in the Netherlands and here in Amsterdam?
We are in a difficult period. There are cuts again, all over Europe. ASCoR is an exception. In the Netherlands and Europe, communication scientists are not competing with each other, but with all other social scientists, including psychologists and economists. In ASCoR, we are extremely successful. We got many very, very prestigious grants which demand respect. So it's good for the discipline in the Netherlands, too. But still, many people from science look down on us.

How do you explain this situation?
We are quite dispersed and lack the critical mass. We are struggling with all these students. So there is not enough energy to make a proposal and to lobby for it at ministries, in your university, or wherever. We lack that power. When I moved from pedagogy to communication, everyone said, "She is lost." By the traditional disciplines, my move to communication was considered as a misstep in my career. Now, we have very high standards of doing research, but when I came here, there was no such standard. Communication initially also attracted freewheelers, and we were late in defining quality criteria.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?
I think Ohio State is currently the top in my field. ASCoR is also seen as very good, but there are several schools at that level, especially in the U.S.

Where do you see the field in 2030?
Where do you see it? Are we still communication? In the medical sciences, for example, they are taking over important topics. Other fields are now very interested in social media. We have to fight for our discipline. Take topics like obesity, ADHD, or aggression. They appear now more and more in medical journals. The discipline has to reorient in that respect. We have too few top journals. The acceptance rate is lower than in many other disciplines. So we don't create the best opportunities to grow into a very good discipline. In most science disciplines, you get accepted in 85% of the chances. If we don't professionalize ourselves to the level of other disciplines, then we don't get the power to lobby for us. That's even worse when there are cuts.

Back to Table of Contents

Are there any scientists whom you regard as role models?

Actually, I have not had one role model, but I've learned very much from several different people. I never saw my adviser after finishing my dissertation. I'm a self-made woman.

Looking back on 20 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

I have the world's biggest academic research group on youth and the media. I formed it on my own. I've not received any money from the university; it's all by external grants. CCAM is considered highly prestigious. I'm also proud of the ICA division. I will never forget our first meeting. There were over 150 people, and all of them were cheering. That was a milestone in my career.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

In some periods, work dominated my whole life. Life is short, and there are more things than work. Do I regret it? No. There is nothing to regret. If you become an academic, you have to get used to the fact that there are not successes only. We give a course about hurdles in the publication process and show the PhD students our own rejection letters. We begin with the nasty ones. Sometimes, I got five rejections for one paper. The students see that this is inherent to our work, and they are relieved that this also happens to successful academics. I have a high frustration tolerance. When I get rejected, I am, of course, disappointed, but then I wait a while and start again, trying in it another way. That's the first question I ask students: Do you have a high frustration tolerance? We were so often offended by these anonymous reviewers. They simply don't see that I'm very good [laughing].

What will remain when Patti Valkenburg is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

In the dynamics of a discipline, you can see that people are very important. When these people are gone, other researchers come up. I hope that I'll have successors in my discipline. I like to work with strong people. I don't want to stay as big as now. We got many grants at once. Fifteen researchers on youth and the media would be okay. And when I'm gone, hopefully 10 to 15 [laughing].

References

Hickson, M., Turner, J., & Bodon, J. (2003). Research productivity in communication: An analysis, 1996–2001. *Communication Research Reports*, *20*, 308–319.

Masip, P. (2005). *European research in communication during the years 1994–2004: A bibliometric approach.* Paper presented at the 1st European Communication Conference, Amsterdam, 24–26 November.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1852–1857 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

ELLEN WARTELLA

"I wanted to know something deeply and well."

Ellen Wartella, March 4, 2011.
Northwestern University. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1949 in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania
Education:	1971 B.A., University of Pittsburgh
	1974 M.A., University of Minnesota
	1977 Ph.D., University of Minnesota
Career:	1976 Assistant Professor, Ohio State
	1979 Assistant Professor, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
	1983 Associate Professor
	1989 Professor
	1993 Professor, University of Texas, Austin
	2004 Professor, University of California, Riverside
	2010 Professor, Northwestern
	1991 ICA Fellow
	1992 ICA President
	2000 Distinguished Scholar, NCA
	2004 Steven H. Chaffee Career Productivity Award
Personal:	Married to Charles Whitney, two sons

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Ellen Wartella

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

I was the fourth of four children. When I was born, my mother was in her 40s, and my father was nearly 50. He was so pleased to have another girl. My sister is 16 years older than I. My christening was bigger than her wedding. In the family, I felt absolutely adored. My father, in particular, would light up when I entered the room. I grew up thinking that I could be anything that I wanted to be. I was identified young as being bright. In public schools, I was in special classes. Although there was an unspoken pressure from my sister and her husband that I was supposed to stay home, my father would never have stood for that. I was the one who went off to college when my siblings stayed in the hometown. Once I was in Pittsburgh, I was on my way.

What did your father do for a living?

He had a grocery store and apartment buildings. I grew up in the complex where the apartments were, helping my parents in the store. This was expected. It wasn't a wealthy neighborhood, lower-middle class. But we were the rich people there.

Were there any university graduates in your environment?

Not at my parents' level. The older siblings of my father were born in Russia. I'm second generation. I, of course, have cousins who are doctors and lawyers. My father's siblings were all shopkeepers.

Did religion play any role in your childhood?

I grew up in a very Russian Orthodox environment. There were some priests in the family. I'm the youngest of 50 cousins. Some of them are almost 90 now. We had huge Christmas and Easter parties. In the summer, we went to the farm of one of my uncles and had big parties every weekend. There, I was always the "little" Ellen.

Did your siblings graduate, too?

Yes. My sister has a nursing degree. One brother was a teacher with several masters', and the other one was an engineer. We all had degrees. My PhD was unusual. We were more in the professional areas. No one quite understood why I was getting a PhD. Should I tell you a cute story about this?

Yes, please.

When I came home with my husband, my oldest cousin had a party for us. I was working on my dissertation, and so was [husband] Chuck. At this party, my cousin said, "Oh, Ellen, you are so lucky. Chuck is such a nice person and has a PhD. Now you won't have to work any more."

Do you still remember why you chose to study communication in Pittsburgh?

Actually, I didn't choose to study it. I was active as a student radical. In my second year, the head of the history department had a year-long seminar for all those activists on campus. He was a social historian. Each of us had to choose an aspect of the progressive movement that changed American life in the early 20th century to study. Mine was the communication industry. My degree was actually in economics, with a self-designed major in communication.

Back to Table of Contents

Once you got interested in it, you stayed in the field.

First, I wanted to stay with the activists. I applied for the position of the first community organizer in Pittsburgh. I graduated early and thought I wanted to stay in Pittsburgh, but to be safe, I applied as well to graduate programs in communication. At this time, Minnesota offered me full funding if I would agree to get a PhD. I had only applied for a master's degree and was sure that I would never really do that. But as things worked out, I wanted to get out of Pittsburgh and accepted Minnesota's offer. When I was offered the community organizer position a few months later back in Pittsburgh, I was already in a new life in Minnesota.

When did you know that you wanted to become a communication scientist?

It wasn't planned. I started studying communication because I wanted to understand progressiveness. Then, I thought it might be useful to become a community organizer. At graduate school, my very first class was on research methods. Dan Wackman was my adviser. He picked me out and said, "I want you to be a research assistant." That was the year when I started studying children and media.

How would you compare the student Ellen Wartella with your students today?

Today, they are much more serious in studying communication than I was when I entered the field. And they are better prepared. In social sciences, you have to be much better trained in methods than I was. They expect the graduate students to work on original research. This was not the case in my time.

Can you tell me something about your main academic teachers?

At the undergraduate level, the most important faculty member that I had was Samuel Hays, the social historian. He had a vast knowledge and the ability to ask very important questions of the readings and of us. Then there was an urban economist, Dave Bramhall, whom I did work with and who cared very deeply about people. In graduate school, Dan Wackman gave me license to try things. He taught me to be generous to my students. One of the other faculties that I had at Minnesota was Andrew Collins, a professor in the Institute of Human Development and a fine experimentalist, whom I admired for his research designs.

Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to children and media?

When Dan asked me to be his research assistant, he had a grant with Scott Ward that became the book *How Children Learn to Buy* (Ward et al., 1977). The first thing he told me to do was to discover Piaget. I started reading developmental psychology, helped to design the study, and just found it a fascinating topic.

Can you put this fascination in two or three keywords?

First of all, if you study adult behavior, it's helpful to have a perspective on how children develop. Secondly, you can learn a lot about the multiple factors that influence the changes over time. When I began to work on consumer behavior, we just became aware of the fact that American families were giving over to their children an enormous influence in choices about products or TV shows. The model of looking at children growing up and becoming adult consumers seemed to be very useful. It was the same time when there was public controversy about television's influence on kids.

Back to Table of Contents

Violence and so on.
I avoided studying violence in the media as long as I could, but it was quite clear that much of the public discussion about media was centered on the effects of media violence on children. I felt that studying media's influence on children was an important topic that responded to public questions. If there is any translation of my former activist stages, it is to study questions that address public issues. I haven't quite understood why there aren't more people studying kids.

Crossing the borders seems to be your second passion—the borders between universities and between academic disciplines. Where is the home of Ellen Wartella?
That's a good question. I'm so clearly in communication, but I'm in developmental psychology, as well. My appointment here is in three colleges: communication, psychology, and education. I feel comfortable in all those places.

On the map of your academic career, there are a lot of famous institutions of the field: Ohio State, Urbana-Champaign, Austin, Riverside, and now Northwestern. Which one is your favorite?
I won't answer that. That could get me into trouble [laughing]. All are my favorite. It's like a mother with her children. I like change. I get bored easily.

How would you rate the position of scholars who study children within our discipline?
Until you just showed me the list with ICA Fellows, I really thought it was a devalued area. I'll tell you another little story about me. When I was on my way to be a full professor, a very famous man came up to me at an ICA meeting and said, "You know, Ellen, you seem really bright. Why do you do research on kids and media?" I remember being furious. I did not have a real retort.

At least it did not influence you.
There is another point. When I was starting out, there hadn't been enough people in our field who had sustained study of an area so that they could become an expert in it. People would jump around. That's not the career I wanted. I wanted to know something deeply and well.

You have gotten major academic grants, as well as grants from the National Cable Television Association (NCTA) or private foundations, and you worked as consultant for a lot of different organizations. Can you understand colleagues who reject money from the media industry or from a government?
In the United States, rejecting money from the government doesn't make any sense at all. It's really hands-off. The money that I had from the NCTA was almost the same case. The idea to monitor TV violence came from federal pressure. Congress said to the NCTA, "You must fund studies."

Were you ever forced to think about gender questions during your academic career?
I don't know how to answer that. Early on in my career, I was frequently the only woman at a meeting. That's not the case any more. I never felt particularly singled out because I was a woman. Maybe I was just too much focused on my work.

Back to Table of Contents

Is there anything that one should do to improve the situation?
I think we need to support women and minorities. I nominate women for Fellows and positions. I take that very seriously. It makes a healthier field when you have diverse people who come with different vantage points.

How did you feel when you were asked to run for ICA President?
It was in Ireland, at the same meeting where I was named as an ICA Fellow. I was flattered by all of that and a little frightened. I thought I was going to peak early, and then it would be all over. Then, the next year, I was named a dean. So things changed. In Ireland, I was rather shocked that I would be named a fellow and nominated for president at that stage of my career.

Did you have a presidential agenda?
The meeting that I organized was in Miami, at the 500th anniversary of Columbus coming to the New World. I wanted to reach out to Latin America and parts of the world that we hadn't been reaching out to. And I really wanted to see us have much more of a presence in Washington on policy issues. We have never quite done that. All the large social science organizations, like APSA or ASA, do take policy positions. We're starting to do more of that. It's problematic that we don't get more involved in the Washington definition of policy issues.

Do you like the role of a decision maker at universities?
I did. I had fun. I loved being a dean at Texas. You are still close to your discipline, and you can deal with the policies at the campus level. Now, I'm glad that I'm off that track. Right now, it's a very difficult time to be a money manager in a public university. It's more than just the economic crises. It's also what public universities are all about today.

Who is Ellen Wartella: a researcher, a teacher, a university manager, a chairwoman of international organizations and meetings? What is the most important part of your academic life?
I have been all of those things, but mostly because I'm a researcher. Even as a provost, I never gave up my research. That's who I am.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?
I'm studying media, its influence, and its role in social life. I know that there are communication scholars who study other things, but I don't have to be a definer of the field.

How is the reputation of the discipline in the U.S.?
I have mostly been at universities where communication is a very strong discipline on the campus. Urbana-Champaign's communication research program was founded by Wilbur Schramm and goes back to the 1940s. Texas has one of the largest communication schools in the country. I was considered a dean of a very influential college because of our size and the quality of our students. Here at Northwestern, the school is doing wonderfully, too. I have never felt that I was in a discipline that was not taken seriously. In the same regard, in my work at a national level, I never felt second rate.

Back to Table of Contents

Can you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?
I'm not sure I can. I have been paying less attention to the field since I left Texas.

Where do you see the field in 2030?
Students still very much want to study communication. I can't see that changing. Clearly, media are so much implicated in the social questions about our lives. I can't imagine that public interest will be diminished. If you really want to study media, it's a great time to be starting out.

Are there any scientists whom you regard as role models?
When I was going through, George Gerbner was a big person in my mind. He was a dean, he always did research, he edited a journal for all those years, and he testified at government hearings. I was never close to him, but I observed him from afar. Another person who was really important for me was Gerald Lesser. He was one of the people who designed *Sesame Street*. He demonstrated that you could be a full-time academic at a first-grade institution studying media's influence in children's education and also consult with the industry to make better TV shows. I remember reading his book and it having a profound impact on me (Lesser & Cooney, 1974). He was a kind of inspirational model. Everett Rogers was remarkable too. He was in the policy arena and did research.

Looking back on 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?
I'm still around. I think I have given shape to what a developmental perspective in communication would be like. I've had some students who are wonderful and who do wonderful things. I'm proud of the fact that I'm one of the few communication researchers that get their seats at some of those policy tables. And I'm proud that I have a wonderful husband, wonderful kids, and wonderful friends.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?
I would have stayed at Texas as a dean longer.

What will remain when Ellen Wartella is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
I have no idea. I expect that there are people who will remember me, such as my students and colleagues I have worked with.

References

Lesser, G. S., & Cooney, J. G. (1974). *Children and television: Lessons from* Sesame Street. New York: Vintage Books.

Ward, S., Wackman, D. B., & Wartella, E. (1977). *How children learn to buy: The development of consumer information processing skills*. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1858–1865 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

DAVID WEAVER

"A bridge between journalists and media agenda-setting."

David Weaver, March 7, 2011.
Indiana University, Bloomington. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1946 in Hammond, Indiana
Education:	1968 B.A. in journalism and sociology, Indiana University
	1969 M.A. in journalism
	1974 Ph.D. in mass communication, University of North Carolina
Career:	1974 Assistant Professor, Indiana University
	1983 AEJMC Krieghbaum Under 40 Award
	1986 MAPOR President
	1987 AEJMC President
	1988 Roy W. Howard Research Professor
	2000 ICA Fellow
	2006 AEJMC Presidential Award
	2009 AEJMC Paul J. Deutschmann Award for Excellence in Research
Personal:	Married, two children

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews David Weaver

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?
I was born near Chicago. My father was an insurance inspector. My mother graduated from the University of Chicago in Romance languages. She was a French teacher at junior high and high school. Her family came from Alsace-Lorraine and from Krakow in Poland. My father's family was from Germany. I think our family's name was Weber. Growing up, my mother always encouraged me to write. I was pretty good at writing. She used to take me to the University of Chicago campus and inspired me to become a college professor. She had a very high regard for professors.

What about journalism?
She was also interested in journalists. She had a kind of romantic view about journalism because some of the great writers like Hemingway started out as journalists.

Did religion play any role in your childhood?
Not much. We were Presbyterians, but not very devout.

Do you still remember why you chose to study at Indiana and not at Chicago?
That was mainly because of money, and also because Chicago did not have a journalism program. Chicago was much more expensive than a state school like Indiana. At the time I came to Indiana University as a student in 1964, the tuition was very low—a few hundred dollars a year or something like that.

Was there anything like the students' movement here at Indiana?
Yes, there was, in the late 1960s, but nothing like Wisconsin, where they were bombing buildings. I remember some of the rallies here. There were students who wanted to burn down the library.

Did the protesters hit the School of Journalism, too?
Yes, they did. Some of them came into the student newspaper. They wanted their demands printed in the *Indiana Daily Student*. There was some tension between the editors and the protesters. I worked on the student's paper from 1966 to 1968 and had a similar experience, not with the protesters, but with the Ku Klux Klan. After a story I wrote about this group, one of them came to the newsroom looking for me. Afterward, the editor told me this man had a gun.

How would you compare the student David Weaver with your students today?
I think I was more serious and maybe more worried about doing well than a lot of the students are today. I still have samples of the work that I did in the School of Journalism. I got some C's and mostly B's. Today, I think this would be A- work. The standards have changed.

How do you explain this change?
It changed gradually. In journalism, there is now more tolerance for informal writing and putting your own opinions into the reporting than there used to be. In the 1960s, the faculty here was really strict about that. No evaluation, facts only, unless you were a columnist. That has changed. The faculty were strict

Back to Table of Contents

about writing concisely, too. As few words as possible. I see a lot of very wordy and redundant writing today.

Can you tell me something about your main academic teachers?
John Stempel was head of the Department of Journalism from 1938 to 1968. He was one of these old editors, tough and rough. He used to give news quizzes to see if we were reading the newspapers. It was incredible. He went to page 22 of the *Indianapolis Star* and picked out a name. Nobody would know it. Then, he asked how we could be journalists when we didn't know what was going on. My adviser was Gretchen Kemp, who was the head of the High School Journalism Institute here. She was tough, too. She always had a cigarette. The faculty was proud of being both tough and hard graders.

You can be a hard grader when the tuition is low.
Exactly. Now, the students are paying so much. And they know that they are paying your salary. That's why the relationship between you and them changes. They are the customers, and you are providing the service.

Why did you abandon journalism and your beginning journalistic career in the Midwest?
I always had this love of universities, going back to my mother in Chicago. The other thing was that I realized you have to work in big cities to be successful in journalism. I generally don't like big cities. In Bloomington, I don't have to put up with so much traffic and noise, so many people, and very high housing costs.

What about research?
In graduate school, I learned that I actually liked it. Cleve Wilhoit was one of my mentors who taught me quantitative research methods. In my master's thesis, I analyzed different predictors of the news magazine coverage of U.S. senators. When I met Max McCombs at North Carolina, I found that research is more interesting than just routine journalism. I love discovering things, testing hypotheses, and seeing the data.

Does a communication researcher need inside knowledge about journalism?
I think it often helps, especially if you are studying journalists, journalism, and the production of media messages. If you just study media uses and effects, I don't think it matters as much.

How is your relationship to journalism today?
I have a lot of respect for good journalism and investigative reporters, but there is so much bad journalism today. Especially in TV, there is almost no line anymore between journalism and entertainment. People just interviewing each other and expressing their opinions are not the kind of quality journalism that I grew up with.

Is it your task to criticize journalism?
It's a part of my task, yes. Good journalism is very similar to good research in some ways. You have to be really careful about gathering information systematically and documenting things. Only a few journalists can do that today. Most of them don't have the time and the resources to do it.

Back to Table of Contents

Is communication able to train journalists?

To some extent, yes. But then again, if you train them for things that they are not able to do on the job, this is frustrating and discouraging. In the 1970s, we had more pleasant days with precision journalism and using scientific methods in reporting. Now, many journalists don't have the chance to do much systematic research. There is so much emphasis now on methods of content distribution, rather than on the content itself. We have to train journalists who can prepare their stories, not just for print, but also for online and on-air, and do so very quickly to meet constant 24-hour deadlines.

How would you rate the position of journalism scholars within communication?

That's an interesting question. In the early years of mass communication, there was an argument that focusing only on journalism was too narrow. We needed to think about communication more broadly. Now, you see all of these journals focused on journalism and the journalism studies division of ICA. It's almost paradoxical. Journalism is going through all these problems right now, and there are more and more scholars focusing on journalism.

In your AEJMC presidential address, you called for a balance of academic and professional traditions in the field (Weaver, 1988, p. 824). Do you still believe in this balancing act?

I think so. If you are teaching any kind of skills courses in a journalism school, it's important to have actually used these skills as a journalist. One of the complaints is that people who first go out to work in the editorial offices and then get PhDs are not compensated as well as people who just go straight through. That's one part of the problem. The other one is that some people who are very prominent in journalism, PR, and advertising come back into the university and ask for higher salaries than the academics who have been working there for many years.

You got awards and honors from ICA, as well as from AEJMC. Which is your favorite association?

My strongest attachment is to AEJMC, but in terms of research quality, ICA is sometimes better. It depends on the kind of research, of course. In the AEJMC conventions, there are many sessions that are not based on research.

In addition to journalism research and education, you have a second main topic in media agenda-setting. Were you confronted with a crucial experience that led you to that topic?

Oh, yes. That was in Chapel Hill, when I was in the PhD program at the University of North Carolina. I took a research methods course from Maxwell McCombs and some history courses with Donald Shaw. They had finished the first agenda-setting study (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) and were working on the second one (Shaw & McCombs, 1977). I got involved in that second major study in 1972. McCombs and I presented a paper on the need for orientation at the 1973 ICA conference in Montreal. I have maintained that interest, but I don't think I've been too successful in combining it with the studies of journalists.

Do you see any bridge between your two interests?

These streams of research are somewhat separated, but I'm becoming more and more interested in who or what sets the media agenda. That's a way to combine these two lines of research. Some characteristics, attitudes, values, and working conditions of journalists have much to do with what the

Back to Table of Contents

news agenda is. So there is a bit of a bridge in studying journalists and media agenda-setting, as opposed to public agenda-setting, where the emphasis is on determining the role of the media in setting the public agenda.

Did you ever consider applying for a position outside Indiana?
I have considered it, yes. Actually, Max McCombs tried twice to interest me in coming to Syracuse. He was there from 1973 to 1985.

Why did you stay here?
Partly, it was just because of the location. If you don't like snow, you should not go to Syracuse! Also, my family and my wife's family were both from Indiana and Illinois. We wanted to stay close to them. And Donald Shaw had some good advice about the offer from Syracuse. He said, you have to imagine being in that place without Max, because he may not stay there. And in fact, he didn't. Without Max, Syracuse at that time had little appeal to me. It had a reputation for being a very professional school that was not research-oriented. You have to be careful about doing something just because of a single person.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?
I was very pleased and a little surprised, because I hadn't done as much in ICA as I had in AEJ.

Who is David Weaver: a researcher, a teacher, the journalist who became a scientist, the icon of Indiana's School of Journalism? What is the most important part of your academic life?
I think research has always been a bit more gratifying to me than teaching. So I was very pleased to get the Roy Howard research professorship in 1988. But I take teaching seriously and generally get high marks from students. I try not to miss any classes. In recent years, teaching has become more rewarding to me. I feel less pressure to get involved in many different research projects. When I started out, I was working nights and weekends.

Most of my interviewees mentioned their graduate students as the most rewarding part of the job.
I have published research with about 70 people. Many of them have been former graduate students. To work with them, and to see them being successful in their own careers, has been really rewarding.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?
I think it is about the production, the sending, the receiving, and the effects of messages. This goes back to Harold Lasswell. My emphasis has always been on public communication. I'm not so interested in private matters of people. Now, the line is more blurred between those two types of communication, but being in a journalism school, I still think my main obligation is to study public communication and messages about public issues.

Back to Table of Contents

Sonia Livingstone told me about the preconception that communication is about the training of students first, and only secondly about research. How is the reputation of the discipline at Indiana?

It's better here. We have recognition from the other disciplines. For many years, there was the image that journalism education is mainly vocational. We still don't see journalism departments at Harvard, Princeton, and so on. It's different here at Indiana and at the other Big Ten universities. These land-grant schools were established to help develop the new territories of the U.S. In these universities, practical things are more respected. One indication of our recognition is that I just was named a University Distinguished Professor. It was the first time that anyone from journalism was awarded this rank. There were only five named last year, from all eight of the IU campuses.

How do you explain this improvement? Was it hard work again?

Hard work, going back to people like Cleve Wilhoit, who stressed research as well as the interdisciplinary nature of the field. He pushed our graduate students to take courses in sociology, psychology, and political science. It's important that the faculty in these other fields see that there are people in journalism who know something about research and scientific methods. They are not just teaching writing, reporting, and editing skills. But when Richard Gray was the head of the department from 1968 to 1984, he used to make strong arguments that some of the skills we are teaching are fundamental, no matter what field you are in. Gathering information and writing about it clearly and precisely, for example.

Can you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?

There are certainly other places in addition to the U.S. that have produced a lot of good research: Germany, Poland, Hong Kong, and Singapore come to mind. China is coming along now. We get more and more students from there. It used to be that the Koreans were the biggest international group on this campus. Now, it's China. There are some places in Latin America, like Brazil or Chile, that are also producing much good research. A big deficit is in the countries of Africa, however.

Where do you see the field in 2030?

It's inevitable that there have to be closer ties with library and information science and informatics. We have to study networks—not just the structure, but the content. Just take agenda-setting and Twitter. Analyzing millions of tweets requires people who know something about computer programming and network analysis.

Are there any scientists whom you regard as role models?

Sure. For me, Max McCombs, Donald Shaw, and Cleve Wilhoit have all been important role models.

What did you learn from these people for your own work?

How to think about important problems and issues in journalism and public communication, how to study them, and how to get excited about research. What I also learned from them is persistence. If you want to make a contribution, you have to stick with a topic over a long period of time.

Back to Table of Contents

Looking back on about 40 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?

In addition to my students, I'm proud of our studies of U.S. journalists. And I'm proud of the need for orientation concept that Max McCombs and I introduced in the early 1970s (Weaver, 1977, 1980). It's still being used, tested, and cited (Matthes, 2008).

Is there anything that you would do differently today?

I don't think so. I've been very lucky to have had my whole career here at Indiana. I've been supported really well, and I've had the chance to work with some very talented and interesting people.

What will remain when David Weaver is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?

I hope these studies of U.S. journalists continue here (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986, 1996; Weaver et al., 2007). Lars Willnat and others are interested in keeping them going. I also hope that the agenda-setting studies will keep going, as well. And I hope that the trend to de-emphasize research will not be pushed too far at U.S. universities, including increased hiring of contract faculty who are not expected to do research. I do worry about that.

Back to Table of Contents

References

Matthes, J. (2008). Need for orientation as a predictor of agenda setting effects: Causal evidence from a two-wave panel study. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 20*, 440–453.

McCombs, M., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *36,* 176–187.

Shaw, D. L., & McCombs, M. E. (1977). *The emergence of American political issues: The agenda setting function of the press*. St. Paul, MN: West.

Weaver, D. H*.* (1977). Political issues and voter need for orientation*.* In D. L. Shaw & M. E. McCombs (Eds.), *The emergence of American political issues: The agenda-setting function of the press* (pp. 107–119). St. Paul, MN: West*.*

Weaver, D. H. (1980). Audience need for orientation and media effects*. Communication Research*, *7*, 361–376.

Weaver, D. H. (1988). AEJMC presidential address—Journalism and mass communication educators: Plea for eclectic tradition. *Journalism Quarterly*, *65*, 820–824.

Weaver, D. H., & Wilhoit G. C. (1986). *The American journalist: A portrait of U.S. news people and their work*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Weaver, D. H., & Wilhoit, G. C. (1996). *The American journalist in the 1990s: U.S. news people at the end of an era.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Weaver, D. H., Beam, R. A., Brownlee, B. J., Voakes, P. S., & Wilhoit, G. C. (2007). *The American journalist in the 21st century: U.S. news people at the dawn of a new millennium*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1866–1872 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

OSMO WIIO

"I've been interested in all kinds of communication research."

Osmo Wiio, September 25, 2011.
Helsinki, Finland.

Born:	1928 in Porvoo, Finland
Education:	1954 M.A. in political science, Helsinki University
	1968 Ph.D. in communication studies, University of Tampere
Career:	1971 Personal Assistant to the Prime Minister
	1972 Professor of management and Director of Helsinki Institute for Business Economics (LTT), Helsinki School of Economics
	1974 Member of the ICA Board of Directors
	1975 Member of the Finnish Parliament
	1978 Professor of communication, Helsinki University
	1979 Visiting Distinguished Professor, University at Buffalo
	1982 ICA Fellow
	1991 Retired

Copyright © 2012 (Maria Löblich, loeblich@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Osmo Wiio

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?

My father was an actor. He died very young in the summer 1939. My mother worked as a seamstress. She bought an apartment in the poor section of Helsinki, where I went to school. You have to know that the Finnish school system has been very good. I had to study Swedish, German, Latin, and English. Later on, at the university, I studied French and Spanish and spent several months in England and France, too. The secondary school wasn't free for everybody, but it was relatively easy to get a scholarship, which I did.

It was during the war time.

Helsinki was bombed, and bombs fell around our house, too, but nothing serious happened. The Finnish Air Force Signal Corps ran an ad wanting young volunteers to be their radio operators. The course would begin in April 1944, and I volunteered and was accepted. On that very week in September 1944 when we had our examination, Finland signed the peace treaty with the Soviet Union. So I didn't go to battle duty. I continued school and had to work, too. My mother didn't have much money, and I took jobs during holidays. In 1947, I was accepted to study political science at Helsinki University.

Did you want to become a journalist?

Not really. Before I got my master's degree, I was already writing articles for magazines and appeared in radio programs. I passed the radio amateur exam in 1948. My first book in 1949 was about building radios. It was a great success, and I wrote four other books about electronics. One of the Nokia directors mentioned that many of their engineers got early education from these books.

How did you get into journalism?

When I had my master's degree, I had a phone call from *What, Where, When*. That yearbook is still published. The editor was interested in working with me. I worked there for a couple of years. This employment was critical for my future because [there] I became interested in readability studies.

How did that happen?

The texts in the yearbook had to be short and to the point. It was important that the readers understood what was meant. I began to study the scientific literature about readability and found the books of Rudolf Flesch. He was originally from Austria, but working then in New York, where I met him later in 1958. Flesch had developed readability formulas (1951). You could use them to measure how difficult the language was. I became interested in the matter and went to another school in Helsinki because they taught journalism. In fact, we both went, my editor and I. Then, I was given a scholarship to attend the American seminar in Salzburg, Austria. One of the lecturers was Percy Tannenbaum.

He was at the Annenberg School then.

I told him about my interest in readability. This was a lucky coincidence, because Tannenbaum had been involved in planning an international study during his time at the University of Wisconsin. He helped me in obtaining research material, the list of *Reader's Digest* articles in the study. As a result, I developed the first Finnish readability formula. You cannot apply the formula from another language because the formulas are based on the structure of each language.

Back to Table of Contents

Did the Americans support your research?

Yes, they did. The support was advice, not money. I had texts from *Reader's Digest* and also articles from Finnish magazines. I asked 1,500 students in different schools to read them. The method was very good. We deleted every fifth word, and the reader had to guess the missing word. We then had a direct measure of how people understood the text. It turned out that I was the only one from the 10 international projects who finished the study. It became my doctoral thesis (Wiio, 1968).

Who was your adviser?

The other school had already moved to Tampere and became Tampere University. The head of the communication department there was Raino Vehmas. He knew very little about this kind of research, and Tannenbaum agreed to become my official opponent. He came over from the U.S. We became good friends. He stayed with us when he was in Finland, and we stayed later at their home in California. At that point, my career in communication really started, but not directly at a university. I went to the Finnish Broadcasting Service as a science editor.

How long did you stay there?

It was only for a year. Across the street was the Finnish Employers' Confederation, representing the country's industry. I knew one of their lawyers from the army. He offered me a job as their PR manager, and the salary was much better. I stayed there for eight years. During that time, I ran regular courses about communication and wrote my first communication textbook. My position included quite a lot of foreign travel.

Why did you leave that job?

I was invited to Sitra, the Finnish Innovation Fund, which was just established. So I went there; the fund provided money for different kinds of projects. The director of the fund was also the chancellor of the Helsinki School of Economics. After a while, he asked me to serve as a temporary professor for business management. I agreed, and a year later, I was nominated for a full professorship.

You also became a member of the Finnish Parliament.

We started a new party with a few friends, the Liberal Party. After some difficulties in the beginning, the parliamentary elections came, and I was asked to be a candidate. I thought that, as a new party, we would not get any seats. But we did, quite many, in fact. Before that, I had been the personal assistant for the Prime Minister for about four months. It was a temporary government between two political governments. At the time, the political situation in Finland was very bad. In many European countries, there was a strong leftist movement, especially among the youth. The communication department at Tampere University was identified with strong leftist ideology. I wasn't, though.

Could you understand academics that never would stand at an election to the parliament?

Of course, but again, I had to refer back to the political situation, especially to the influence of the communists within the intellectual world of the West. They wanted to control everything: the education system, companies, newspapers, radio, television, and so on. I have been a liberal all my life and had to do something against the leftist movement. I wanted to have freedom.

Back to Table of Contents

Did you ever think about staying in politics?

I didn't really like it. About a year before my term ended, I let my party know that I would not be available for a new term. In 1978, I had an invitation to Buffalo, with a possibility to continue there. I had not confirmed that invitation when I received an offer for a new professorship of communication at Helsinki. The professorship was to be created only for me. The final agreement was to go to Buffalo for a year, and then come back to Helsinki. That's what happened. The year in the U.S. was very good. I made a lot of contacts there.

Were there any university graduates in your family environment?

No.

When did you know that you wanted to become a scientist, or a communication scientist?

It was when I started to teach at the Helsinki School of Economics. I liked teaching, writing, and research. Since then, I have been dedicated to this kind of work. What I didn't like was the political war in the 1970s and 1980s. There were a lot of personal attacks against me.

Can you give me an example, please?

After taking my position at the communication department in 1978, some of my students went to a discussion with students from Tampere out of curiosity. What they heard was a list of my political sins. The top of the list showed that I had been involved in defense matters. I had been the chair of the defense committee at the parliament and the chairman of the National Finnish Reservists' Association. The delegation of our students then heard advice on how to oppose me. The editor of an international journal of communication told me that they had an angry letter from Tampere about me and my article. For a time, we had to disconnect our phone at night because of nasty phone calls in the middle of the night.

How long did those struggles influence your work here at Helsinki?

When I came back from Buffalo, the atmosphere had changed. The Eastern influence wasn't over yet. However, the youngest students were against the leftist ideas. It was amazing how quickly it had happened.

Internationally, you are best known for your work in organizational communication.

One of my major works was published in the *ICA Yearbook* (Wiio et al., 1980). When I worked at the Helsinki School of Economics, I developed a system to measure the communication satisfaction in a company. It was called the LTT Communication Audit. Simultaneously, there was a similar study at ICA. We were just earlier, and we didn't know about each other. Organizational communication was my major interest for a long time, but I have been interested in other branches of communication, as well. Just take my project on media and violence (Wiio, 1995, 2003) or *Wiio's Laws* (Wiio, 1978). I have tried to get an English publisher for the book, but no success.

Was it because of the subject?

Not really. You have to know the publishing channels. You need an agent who sells the book for a publisher. I didn't have an agent. So there was "no go." *Wiio's Laws* are quite old in my history. First of

Back to Table of Contents

all, I had the laws of future studies in the 1970s when I worked for Sitra. They sent me to a seminar with Herman Kahn in the U.S. (Wiio, 1970). He appreciated that I didn't always agree with him. Kahn and his opinions on nuclear catastrophe were widely known at that time. My laws of future started from talks with him.

What about the laws of communication?

They started from our parliamentary politics. In our Liberal group at the parliament, we had members who had no training in communication. They often thought that a possible TV coverage would make sure that they were re-elected. There were constant arguments about whose turn it was to appear on television. I knew that it does not happen that way. In fact, in my election campaign in 1974, the second Liberal candidate in Helsinki was the most famous television hostess at that time. She had about half of my votes. Most of the communication laws were, indeed, created while listening to the mostly boring speeches on my seat at the floor of Finnish Parliament. However, my many years as a radio amateur had taught me quite a lot of scepticism about the success rate of any communication process.

On the Internet, I read that you have a major impact on the academic field in Finland. How would you describe that influence?

I don't know what that impact has been [laughing]. Perhaps I was influential in some area of communication, but otherwise, it's difficult to say because I'm biased.

I am very interested in your biased perception.

I should mention the magazine, *World of Technology*. It has a circulation of 150,000 copies a month, and is the leading technology magazine in Scandinavia. I started the magazine in 1952, but had to sell it before the first issue was published. I ran out money. I wrote articles to the magazine, and later, they asked me to write regular science columns. I started in 1987, and I still write them, until the end of this year. For example, I wrote about the space flights from Gagarin. I visited Cape Canaveral, and I have interviewed several astronauts. In addition, I have written some 30 books (pointing at his bibliography).

How did you feel when you became an ICA fellow?

Pleased, of course [laughing]. It was something my colleagues have done for me.

Have you ever considered applying a position outside Helsinki?

No. When I came back from Buffalo, I made the decision to stay. However, I have had a lot of guest lectures all over the world, including Japan, Australia, Israel, and many European countries. In Australia, I was a visiting professor for three months.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

I've done quite a lot of work in technology, as well. For me, communication is simply transfer of information from one system to another. Systems can be artificial or living. Then, you can develop all kinds of extras to that. Communication as such is only one system here, another system there, and the transfer of information between them. One system may be as small as a living cell or a transistor in a microchip.

Back to Table of Contents

How was the reputation of the discipline in Finland and Helsinki?
When I started in this field, it was mainly journalism studies. They taught me how to write articles. There was very little content analysis and almost no theories. Very few people were interested in research.

What about the feedback from other disciplines when you started here as a professor?
It was mostly positive, but I still remember the faculty of social sciences meeting when my professorship was offered to the university. One of the professors said that communication didn't belong to academia.

Can you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide?
I would rather not [laughing]. It changes. It depends on the persons who are there. Suddenly, you have a new place, which becomes famous because of the person. When he or she goes away, it disappears.

Where do you see the field in 2020?
I may be wrong, but to me, the field has stagnated. I was active in a period when we had a strong and fast growth. Where are we now? I've tried to follow communication research after I left the active life, but there are very few things I find new.

Are there any scholars whom you would call role models?
Not really. I am trying to be polite. However, there were long-ago persons like Paul Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz. They deserve credit for pointing new directions by claiming that communication is not a simple process of sender-receiver. Most of us have followed that path.

Looking back on many, many years in the field, is there anything you are especially proud of?
Maybe I've set some limits to what communication is. The following is only one set of those limits, but consider my first law: Communication usually fails—except by chance. It's much better to try to make a communication situation successful than just to communicate regardless.

Then again, is there anything you would do differently today?
Not really. You work and think with the abilities you have at the moment.

What will remain when Osmo Wiio is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
Wiio's laws [laughing]. People should remember some of the laws, I hope.

Back to Table of Contents

References

Flesch, R. (1951). *How to test readability*. New York: Harper.

Wiio, O. A. (1968). *Readability, comprehension and readership: An experimental study on the readability of Finnish magazine articles, with special reference to readership*. Tampere, Finland: Tampereen Yliopisto.

Wiio, O. A. (1970). *Technology, mass communications, and values. Paper presented to the Committee on Science and Astronautics, U.S. House of Representatives, January 28, 1970.* Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Wiio, O. A. (1978). *Wiio's laws—and some others*. Espoo, Finland: Welin-Goos.

Wiio, O. A. (1995). Is television a killer? An international comparison. *Intermedia*, *23*(2), 26–31.

Wiio, O. A. (2003). *TV: Guilty or not guilty? Television and violence: An international comparison*. University of Helsinki: Department of Communication.

Wiio, O. A., Goldhaber, G. M., & Yates, M. (1980). Organizational communication research: Time for reflection? C*ommunication Yearbook*, *4*, 83–97.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1873–1879 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

BARBARA WILSON

"A legacy of really strong leaders from communication."

Barbara Wilson, March 9, 2011.
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1957 in Appleton, Wisconsin
Education:	1979 B.A. in journalism, University of Wisconsin, Madison
	1982 M.A. in communication arts
	1985 Ph.D. in communication arts
Career:	1985 Assistant Professor, University of Louisville
	1988 Assistant Professor, University of California, Santa Barbara
	1992 Associate Professor, University of California, Santa Barbara
	1996 Professor, University of California, Santa Barbara
	2000 Professor, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
	2002 Department Head
	2008 ICA Fellow
	2009 Vice Provost of Academic Affairs
Personal:	Married, two children

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Barbara Wilson

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?
I'm the oldest of three girls. I was raised to believe that girls could do anything. From the earliest time, I remember my parents saying, "You are going to college." Especially my mother was pretty pivotal in that regard. I remember her telling me that I should find a job where I didn't have to depend on a man. That was always in the back of my mind as I thought about my future, but I didn't actually think about communication or about graduate school.

Do you still remember why you chose to study at Wisconsin?
This was the flagship school in our state. I started out in journalism and hoped, perhaps, I would be the next Barbara Walters. I stuck with that broadcasting idea pretty much throughout my undergraduate degree, although by the end, I was starting to have second thoughts.

What kind of thoughts?
I started to move toward public relations. I did an internship and some writing, but I couldn't see myself doing that for the rest of my life.

What attracted you to research in the end?
I took two classes that were pivotal. One was with Jack McLeod, a research methods class organized around conducting a survey every year. I ended up in a data analysis group and really got excited. It just clicked with me. The second class was with Winston Brembeck, who asked me about graduate school. I only applied to Wisconsin, and in particular, to the Department of Communication Arts. It's one floor above the Journalism School in Vilas Hall, where I had spent most of my undergraduate years. Jack wrote me a letter of recommendation. I didn't know at that time what a giant he was in the field. When I got in the program, I took a class early on with Joanne Cantor, who turned out to be my adviser. I really liked the way she taught.

Was it the experience with her that led you to media and children (Strasburger & Wilson, 2002)?
In the beginning, I couldn't imagine being a research assistant—I just didn't think I was ready for that. So, I started working as a teaching assistant for one of her classes. Then, she got the large NIH grant on children's fright reactions to the media, and I eventually became one of her research assistants. It just took off from there. I loved what Joanne was doing and had personal interests in what frightens children. I remember as a kid watching *Wizard of Oz* every year on TV. Back then, we didn't have any video tape machines. You watched movies like this: They were aired on broadcast TV, once a year. *Wizard of Oz* was a family experience, but I remember simultaneously being thrilled and scared out of my mind while watching this movie. I wanted to learn more about that.

What did your mother do for a living?
She went to college for one year and then dropped out. I think she wanted to make sure that her daughters did the kind of things she wished she would have done. Both of my sisters went to college. We all have college and graduate-level degrees.

Back to Table of Contents

What about your father?
He was a banker. He just died at the age of 90 in May 2010. He lived a long and healthy life.

Did religion play any role in your childhood?
We went to church, but I can't say that we were an extremely religious family.

How would you compare the student Barbara Wilson with your students today?
I think I worked harder than a lot of our undergraduates work today. I studied more, I read more, and I did not involve myself in extracurricular activities. It would never have occurred to me to miss a class, and I was earnest about my grades all the time. Some of our students today are like that, but I don't see the intensity of studying that I was involved in.

How would you rate the position of scholars who study children within our discipline?
I'm not sure that I can answer that question, but I'll give you a couple of observations. Anybody who wants to work with children takes on an additional burden. Because of the Institutional Review Board challenges, you are not going to have as many publications as others. It simply takes longer. It's much more challenging to get access to children, to interview children, and to show them things on a screen. I always tell my students that there is a relationship between trying to get these labor-intensive projects accomplished and the number of publications that you end up with. But quality of scholarship is always more important than the sheer quantity of your work.

Ellen Wartella thought of it as a devalued area.
This is a perception in psychology, yes. The situation is different in communication. One of the most debated public issues is the impact of media on youth. That gives us an emphasis that a lot of other subareas don't have.

Why did you choose this rocky road?
I've always loved children, and I've always been very interested in the way their minds work and how much time they spend with media. It's just more fascinating studying them than studying adults.

Could you understand colleagues who would never leave California?
I thought I would retire there. I still sometimes wonder about myself, frankly. Santa Barbara is a wonderful place, and I had a tremendous experience there. The colleagues I had were amazing. We did the National Television Violence Study there (Wilson et al., 1997, 1998). I will never have a situation like that again, where we had such a nexus of people working together on a very exiting project that really made a significant difference in the way people think about media violence.

In the end, you came back to the Midwest.
Yes, because of family. That's really an important part of my life. I wanted my kids to be closer to my dad and to my sisters. This opportunity came up out of nowhere.

Back to Table of Contents

You got a lot of awards, both for your research and your teaching. If you had to choose between those roles, which one is your favorite?

That's a tough one, because I do love both, and I don't see them as distinct, especially in a research institution like this. Some of my most exciting moments pertain to involving undergraduates in research. That's really educational, too. If I had to take away one, I would be hard-pressed to give up research. I couldn't just teach. On the other hand, I don't think I could just do research. I really love teaching.

Were you ever forced to think about gender questions during your academic career?

Gender is part of who I am. Every time I walk into a room, I function in a way that battles stereotypes. In my undergraduate classes, I say, "Close your eyes and think of a professor." Most of them think of a man. It's a mental image. When I started out in this field, a young female professor was unusual. I don't think about that as much anymore. But I do think that one of the challenges that women faculty have in academic institutions is that we get asked to do more things just because we are smaller in number.

There is safety in numbers.

Every committee needs at least one woman; a female full-professor who is willing to serve. Oh, my goodness. That happened in Santa Barbara, and it happens at Illinois. There are a lot of my male colleagues who never get asked to do things, simply because there are lots of them.

How did you feel when you became an ICA Fellow?

It was probably one of the highlights in my professional career. I never thought that would happen. To be confirmed by your colleagues as doing important work, and recognized by an association that you really care about was really meaningful to me.

Do you like the role of a university manager and decision maker?

Some days [laughing]. No doubt, this is the most challenging leadership position I've been in. And I'm not even the provost. I'm a vice provost. These are difficult times for higher education, both financially challenging and challenging in terms of technology and changing ways of instruction. It's very important that we have people who have been successful in faculty roles doing these jobs. The further you get removed from what it feels like to be a faculty member, the less effective you are in making decisions that are in the interest of an institution. I'm proud that I'm able to do it, but I'm also conscious all the time of what I'm giving up. It's very hard to do research in this job, or even to mentor graduate students. I'm in meetings from 8:00 a.m. until 5:30 or 6:00 p.m. every day.

Are you able to serve the discipline in this office?

I think I do. I certainly help our department here on this campus because I am visible, and I am always bragging about our faculty and students. In addition, I write a lot of letters for promotion and reviews. Because I'm in this position, I get asked to do more of that than I would ordinarily. It's good for communication faculty to be in these roles. This is a service, no doubt.

Back to Table of Contents

Who is Barbara Wilson: a researcher, a teacher, or a university manager? What is the most important part of your academic life?

Before you put academic life in there, I would have said "mother." Being a mom is the most important thing I do. My two teenage daughters don't see me as much as they would like to these days. Well, they are teens, after all, so they don't want me around all the time! But they know I am a professional doing important work at the university, and they know that they have inspired my work. Family is more important than anything to me.

And at university?

At heart, I'm a teacher. I mean that term broadly. My research has been aimed at helping families think about the media. When I do research or go into an undergraduate class, I'm always thinking about the next generation of parents. I'm an educator, but a big part of how I educate is through research.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?

When I think about communication, I think about the study of messages. How messages get created, how they get interpreted, and what impact they have. The messages could come from all kind of venues: interpersonal, family, organizations, and mediated. What we do that no other discipline does is focus on messages.

How is the reputation of the discipline here at Illinois?

It's very good here. I'm glad that you ask that. When I said that my role helps the department, it's not just me. On this campus, we have had a legacy of really strong leaders from communication. Jesse Delia and David Swanson, for example, who both moved into the provost's office after serving as department head. These very successful individuals helped the campus to understand communication. At Illinois, we are more than respected. Communication is routinely cited in people's language about what it means to be a top-ranked and collegial department. We are producing great students, too. We have 800 undergraduate majors and over 60 graduate students. Unlike many other campuses in this country, communication is a jewel here.

Is it just an impression?

No, it's reality. We have more than 50 departments in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences on our campus. Sometimes, it's hard to be known in the sea of all these different disciplines. Communication has an established track record. The department did very well in the NRC study recently, and it has a long legacy of being ranked, no matter what kind of study you look at. Our data are just good. We graduate our students on time, we have successful alumni, and our graduate students go out to well-known places (Barnett et al., 2010). It also helps to have very visible people from a department doing campus-level work.

Could you please draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?

I'm not the person who can do it worldwide very well. In the U.S., there is a lot of strength in the land-grant institutions, particularly in the Big Ten. As a department head, I spent a lot of time thinking about

Back to Table of Contents

recruiting and about our competitors. There is strength in California, Texas, and North Carolina, for example, but the geographical hotspot is probably in the Midwest.

Where do you see the field in 2030?
There is going to be a continual demand for communication at the undergraduate level. A lot of what employers are looking for in these days is communication. They want individuals who can write and speak well; they want individuals who work well in groups and people who understand people from different backgrounds. Students are recognizing that. In most of our institutions, the size of your undergraduate program partly dictates your financial situation. That's why I think our departments will continue to be fairly robust compared to a lot of other disciplines where students just can't quite figure out the translation of that study to a career.

So there is no need to change at all?
The potential is great for us to continue to grow. I think we are doing a better job of making connections to other disciplines. We need to do that more and more. On our campus, communication faculty are connecting to engineering, information science, to some of the other social sciences, and to some extent, even to health and biology, which are really important. The more we do that, the more people will recognize that communication issues are part of all our grand challenges. The departments that are doing this connection work will be the strong leaders in 2030.

The money is in health and biology.
It's there because people recognize that those are some of the real challenges in our society right now.

Are there any scientists whom you would call role models?
Joanne Cantor is definitely one. She has done an amazing job of juggling all the different priorities. Joanne has always conducted impeccable scientific work, but she has also been able to make her findings accessible to the public. That's a real challenge that we all constantly need to face. For me, a second role model is Ellen Wartella, who is a great spokesperson for communication. Ed Donnerstein has been a role model for me as well, especially in leadership issues, as well as in science. He was able to serve in really important administrative roles at different universities, first in Santa Barbara, and then in Arizona.

Looking back on 30 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?
I'm proud of my graduate students. I haven't had as many as I would have liked because I have been in leadership roles for so long. They are all doing great things.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?
In terms of my academic life? Let's limit it to that. Frankly, I would have taken a little more time off when I first brought my kids home. My husband and I adopted two children from China, and I think I continued to work too much during that time. Now, we have better policies at most universities to help families balance work and children—those didn't exist when I was younger.

Back to Table of Contents

What will remain when Barbara Wilson is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
My work underscores how important child development is to the study of media. Children at different levels in their cognitive, social, and emotional development will respond differently to the media. I hope that, in the future, there is still attention to developmental issues.

References

Barnett, G. A., Danowski, J. A., Feeley, T. H., & Stalker, J. (2010). Measuring quality in communication doctoral education using network analysis of faculty-hiring patterns. *Journal of Communication*, *60*, 388–411.

Strasburger, V. C., & Wilson, B. J. (2002). *Children, adolescents, and the media*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Wilson, B. J., Kunkel, D., Linz, D., Potter, W. J., Donnerstein, E., Smith, S. L., et al. (1997). Violence in television programming overall: University of California, Santa Barbara study. In *National television violence study: Vol. 1* (pp. 3–268). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Wilson, B. J., Kunkel, D., Linz, D., Potter, W. J., Donnerstein, E., Smith, S. L., et al. (1998). Violence in television programming overall: University of California, Santa Barbara study. In *National television violence study: Vol. 2* (pp. 3–204). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Back to Table of Contents

International Journal of Communication 6 (2012), Feature 1880–1886 1932–8036/2012FEA0002

BARBIE ZELIZER

"I still analyze journalism."

Barbie Zelizer, January 18, 2011.
University of Pennsylvania. Photo by M. Meyen.

Born:	1945 in the Midwest
Education:	1976 B.A. in English and political science, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
	1981 M.A. in communication, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
	1990 Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania
Career:	1990 Assistant Professor, Temple University
	1996 Associate Professor, Temple University
	1997 Associate Professor, University of Pennsylvania
	2002 Professor, University of Pennsylvania
	2009 ICA President and Fellow
Personal:	Three children

Copyright © 2012 (Michael Meyen, michael.meyen@ifkw.lmu.de). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at http://ijoc.org.

Back to Table of Contents

Michael Meyen Interviews Barbie Zelizer

Can you tell me something about your parents and your first professional dreams?
I had one professional dream. That was to be a journalist, from a very early age on.

At age six or seven?
At age six or seven, I wanted to be a writer. That moved certainly into journalism. From the moment I knew how to write, I knew that's what I wanted to do.

What about your family?
I was the youngest of four kids. We grew up in the Midwest. Our father was a Polish Jew who came here in the early 1900s. In the family, university education was relevant, but I primarily came from a long line of rabbis. Obviously, this is jumping ahead, but when I decided to go into the academy, I always looked at it as if I had taken a shift from religious into scholarly inquiry. My father had five brothers and sisters, and both his father and one brother were rabbis. By my generation, there were many who had gone into university professorships. Clearly, there was a kind of collective shift in the family where we moved from rabbis to professors.

Do you still remember why you chose to study English and political science in Jerusalem?
I went to Israel largely on a bribe from my parents. I had been planning to go to Berkeley. It was a time of political unrest, and my parents offered me a trip to Israel to switch directions. I thought I would go for one year and ended up staying. They didn't have journalism, but only a graduate program in communication. So I took subjects close to my professional interests. At the same time, I worked as a proofreader at the *Jerusalem Post*.

How would you compare the student Barbie Zelizer with your students today?
Being an American in Israel and working there as a journalist, and then coming back to the United States for the PhD thesis, this makes a difference. Obviously, I had a kind of independence already developed that many students don't necessary have today. I would hesitate to say that I had more autonomy, but if I wanted to find something out, I needed to find it. Nobody was going to give me the answers. Coming back after I had been a reporter, I didn't really need somebody to teach me how to find information. What I did need was somebody to teach me how to think.

Can you tell me something about your main academic teachers?
In Israel, Elihu Katz and Daniel Dayan. One of the first projects I worked on was their media events project (Katz & Dayan, 1992). Elihu and Daniel really offered me a pair of intellectual guides that I needed to be able to develop my own approach to thinking.

Can you name this pair?
Elihu offered the sociological vision, and Daniel, the semiotic. That combination was a further parallel of my earlier training in literature and political science.

Back to Table of Contents

Why did you leave Israel? Did you follow a call of Elihu Katz?

No, I preceded Elihu Katz. I had done my masters with Elihu and co-authored a book with him (Roeh et al., 1980). When I was looking around for a PhD, I felt that I really needed to look beyond Israel to broaden my perspectives. I had already learned quite a lot from Elihu, who was clearly the father of communication in Israel, but I felt there was a lot that I didn't know.

What did you find here, at the Annenberg School?

My adviser was Larry Gross, who helped me retain my very passionate interest in public events and in journalism. A second central person was Roger Abrahams. He was a very eminent folklorist at Penn. I took a certificate in performance studies as part of my PhD training.

Why did you abandon journalism and your beginning journalistic career in Israel?

I started having kids, and it got a little difficult to have dinner at 3 o'clock in the morning. This is one answer. Probably, [the] more important one is that I became a little tired with continually tackling topics for short periods of time. When you are in the wires, stories are turning over. There is no real kind of prolonged engagement with a given topic of inquiry. That's why I started to look for a different kind of knowledge about things going on in public.

Can you tell me something about your positions in this journalistic career?

I started as a proofreader at the *Jerusalem Post*. Then I became an entertainment page editor and book reviewer. From there, I went to the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, where I was a reporter, and from there, I moved to *Reuters*. I worked with *Reuters* at a time when their bureau was in Tel Aviv. I was responsible for everything in Jerusalem and what was then the occupied territory. It was a kind of a one-person show.

Did you ever regret that change of your field of action?

No, absolutely not. Sometimes, I miss the proximity to stories that I had then. I had this kind of access to people in power that I don't have now. And I was rolling with the story as the story was unfolding. When I miss that, I do something that allows me to have a kind of journalistic voice—writing columns or op-eds. Overall, though, I enjoy the academic world enormously.

When did you know that you wanted to become a scientist, or a communication scientist?

I just evolved naturally into this field. There wasn't a field of journalism studies, per se, at that time. It's not like I ever changed what I wanted to do. I still analyze journalism. Communication seems, to me, to be the most obvious setting to pursue the concerns that I had (Zelizer, 1993, 2004, 2011).

Does a communication scholar need inside knowledge about journalism?

I don't think we need it, but the scholarly understanding of journalism is tremendously enhanced by having inside knowledge of how the community actually works. There is no question that it helped me to explain my scholarly instincts. But that's the extent of inside knowledge. I worked as a wire service reporter, and most of my scholarly work has been about images (Zelizer, 2010). I can't operate a camera for the life of me.

Back to Table of Contents

How is your relationship to journalism today? One of the founding fathers of this research area in Germany told me he is on his knees before good journalism (Meyen & Löblich, 2007, p. 220).
That's absolutely the case in terms of respect. I also think that it is important to recognize that journalism, to a large extent, becomes the whipping boy for a lot of larger concerns about how our culture and our society work, or how nation states function. It is important to keep journalism in perspective at the same time as we take journalism seriously.

Were you ever forced to think about gender questions during your academic career?
I get asked that question a lot. The answer is truly "no." Obviously, gender is an aspect of who I am, but it has not really been one that has forced me to make decisions in one way or another. Maybe that's because I have been fortunate. I have three kids. For many years, I raised them by myself, and yet I've managed to do everything while being a good mom. Although I know that is not the case all over the world, for me, particularly, I don't think it has been the kind of obstruction that it has been for other women.

How could we get more women in top positions?
I think it's important to recognize that people have different conditions. The most one can do is to articulate what the circumstances are.

As a professor, does it matter working at an Ivy League university?
Absolutely not. It matters to do good work wherever one is.

Have you ever considered applying for a position outside the Annenberg School?
I'm very happy here.

In the early 1990s, you called for a more interdisciplinary approach to journalism (Zelizer, 1993). Did your colleagues notice this call?
I think you have to ask my colleagues. There is more interdisciplinary research on journalism today, but it hasn't gone as far as it needs to. Journalism still remains somewhat colonized for different reasons in different pockets of the academy.

Colonized by whom?
Between journalists, journalism educators, and journalism scholars across different disciplines. We still don't have the kind of shared conversation that I think we should have. Nor do we have the kinds of conversations across geographic regions that we need to be conducting.

How would you rank the position of journalism scholars within communication?
I don't see it as a ranking against each other. There are lots of ways to approach communication, and lots of settings from which one can draw arguments about communication. I don't see one that is more important or more powerful than the others.

Back to Table of Contents

Why did it take so long to establish a journalism division within ICA?
That was also historical. For a very long time, the focus on journalism was part of mass communication. I actually credit the new division mostly to European scholars becoming active in ICA and saying this is important within its own domain, and not just as a smaller subset of mass communication.

How did you feel when you were asked to become ICA President?
Actually, I was asked to run for it. I was thrilled. I felt that I had a lot to offer and might have the chance to work on some of the things that I was hoping would be developed.

Could you name these things?
My platform was focused on two ideas. Number one was to become more familiar to ourselves. The association should recognize its internal divisions and interest groups and motivate a position where people might talk to each other more than they had until then. And the second was being more visible to the outside world and raising the public profile of communication as a field, both to the rest of the academy and to the public.

Did you succeed?
I think I've definitely changed the map. This is a moving target. The wonderful thing about ICA is that no one president ever does everything. There is a kind of handover of tasks, priorities, and objectives that get shared across the different leaders as they take their roles.

Who is Barbie Zelizer: a researcher, a teacher, a chairwoman of international organizations, the founding mother of the journal* Journalism*? What is the most important part of your academic life?
It's hard to say if one is more important than the other. All of those tasks somehow support each other. I think, without my passion for research, probably none of them would have come about. But each of them in a very fundamental way leads to the fact that, as a scholar, we all have multiple sides. I'm fortunate enough to be in a position where my multiple sides have been able to support each other.

What is your definition of communication? What is the subject all about?
It's easier to talk about how it situates itself vis-à-vis the academy. Communication is one of the few fields that twin the social sciences and the humanities in equal portion. It thrives upon quantitative and qualitative methodologies; critical and empirical engagements with data; and practical, applied, and conceptual understandings of the world. At a point in time when the academy itself is undergoing so many challenges from different directions, I think communication has a kind of visionary role to play.

The cost might be the lack of a steady and clear disciplinary identity.
I see that as strength, and not as a weakness.

Is the discipline in a position to tell others what to do?
I think we shine by example. We are a new and evolving discipline. Within those constraints, we do things remarkably well, and we should continue doing them the way we have done up until now.

Back to Table of Contents

Sonia Livingstone told me about the discipline in the UK—about missing respect from old-established subjects, about the preconception that communication is about the training of students first and only secondly about research. How is the situation in the U.S.?
I think that many of the tensions that Sonia identified exist here as well. Don't forget, I'm speaking from a particularly elite position. This private university has resources that allow me not to touch the kind of tensions that most people in our field have to deal with on a daily basis. But again, it's important to recognize our use and our vitality, and to look on those markers as points of strength.

Can you draw a landscape of communication worldwide? Where are skyscrapers, where construction sites, and where, maybe, fire trenches?
The skyscrapers obviously are in the countries that have been able to do the most research. For good and bad, that's the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Scandinavia, and Asia. Over the years, these places have been able to foment a shared intellectual landscape for thinking about communication. That has to change. There is no question that we need to be thinking far more practically about what communication means in all of the places in the world that haven't had the opportunities to develop the field. In South America, Africa, parts of Asia, or Central and Eastern Europe, there are absolute blind spots to what we have thought about communication.

How do you explain these differences? Is it just about have and have-not?
It's not just about resources. It's about who has power, who can access publishing, and who can share knowledge. There is a kind of drop over effect from what we need to take in order to change. That's a big challenge for the field moving onward.

Where do you see the field in 2030?
I hope healthier, more diversified, and more sensitive to new approaches than we are today.

Are there any scientists whom you would call role models?
James Carey. Just for his rather unorthodox, but always changing, relationship with data.

Where did you meet him?
At a conference many years ago.

Is Carey the one and only?
No, there are many. Raymond Williams, again, as somebody who wasn't afraid to look at the messiness in between categorical definitions of how the world works.

Looking back on 30 years in communication, is there anything you are especially proud of?
I'm proud of the ways in which the field has evolved and the academy has given increased attention to communication over time.

Is there anything that you would do differently today?
No, I don't think so.

Back to Table of Contents

What will remain when Barbie Zelizer is gone? What should remain if you could influence it?
I don't know if I could answer that. Hopefully, it's not a question of anything remaining, because my students will carry on in the ways that they see, and their students after them. That's part of the charm of the university and the sharing of academic knowledge.

References

Katz, E., & Dayan, D. (1992). *Media events: The live broadcasting of history*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Meyen, M., & Löblich, M. (2007). Ich habe dieses Fach erfunde*. Wie die Kommunikationswissenschaft an die deutschsprachigen Universitäten kam*. Köln, Germany: Halem.

Roeh, I., Katz, E., Cohen, A. A., & Zelizer, B. (1980). *Almost midnight: Reforming the late night news*. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications.

Zelizer, B. (1993). Has communication explained journalism? *Journal of Communication*, *43*, 80–88.

Zelizer, B. (2004). *Taking journalism seriously: News and the academy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Zelizer, B. (2010). *About to die: How news images move the public*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Zelizer, B. (2011). Journalism in the service of communication. *Journal of Communication*, *61*, 1–21.

Back to Table of Contents