“We Are All Natives Now”: An Overview of International and Development Communication Research

SANDRA BRAMAN
University of Alabama

HEMANT SHAH
JO ELLEN FAIR
University of Wisconsin—Madison

This chapter reviews the historical and conceptual parameters of the international communication research area, followed by a focus on communication and development. Both parts of the chapter define the scope of the areas discussed, summarize the main theoretical approaches, and present major trends in research. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

DECADES ago, the question for those studying international communication was how communications turns “others” into “ourselves” (propaganda). Now the question is who we are, ourselves, and where the “other” has gone. As a subject, international communication has moved from “low” to “high” policy; corporations and communities struggle to adapt to conditions created by a qualitatively new information infrastructure, and every social science...
attends to "who says what to whom with what effects." The continued importance of Lasswell’s formula (Korzenny & Schiff, 1992) is evidence that its development as a research agenda for international communication (Gary, 1996) succeeded. Indeed, this agenda long served the field of communication as a whole. Yet across the history of international communication study, “individual and social” identity has dissolved into a site of conflict, transaction, and accommodation. In this subfield there has thus been a shift from a first-order to a second-order investigation.

When Clifford Geertz (1983) said, “We are all natives now” (p. 151), he meant that the conversations across communal borders of the past now effectively take place across communicative borders within individual identities, and he meant that we all, irrespective of the types of societies from which we come, include within ourselves the mixture of the premodern, modern, and postmodern that has come to characterize the anthropological “native” on the frontiers of a qualitatively changed communication, and therefore social, environment. The second major section of this chapter explores the special contexts of the 5 billion majority of the world’s 6 billion population whose communication challenges are studied in the specialization called communication and development.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Definition

After a 19th-century “prehistory” during which journalists thought about news and war, and users accumulated anecdotal evidence about then-new technologies (Headrick, 1990), communication formed its identity after World War I through efforts to understand and manage propaganda (Lasswell, 1927/1971). After World War II, foreign policy goals supported a second surge of interest; the next major section of this chapter explores the development communication literature this phase spawned. Digitization and globalization launched today’s third phase, during which international questions have again become coextant with the field of communication as a whole.

Distinguishing international communication as a subfield has always been difficult. Often international simply means “not American” (Stevenson, 1994). Such self-absorption is no longer either acceptable or possible. Historically there has been a cost, as when U.S. and British scholars have ignored work on public opinion well-known in Germany by the 1920s (Keane, 1991). Also, research around the world has exploded, in journals such as the Asian Journal of Communication, Nordicom Review, Journal of International Communication, Canadian Journal of Communication, European Journal of Communication, and Gazette and surveys of communication scholarship in different countries appearing in other journals. National and regional associations are
getting stronger, international participation in and coproduction of conferences is on the rise, and large-scale comparative research projects are under way.

It can be hard to know where international communication begins (Albarran & Chan-Olmsted, 1998). Important borders are often not those of the nation-state, but intrastate, suprastate, or organizational. Mediated communication in both developed and developing societies (International Telecommunication Union, 1996) is dominated by corporations based elsewhere. The constitutional locus is itself moving to the international level; largely in response to the need to deal with global information flows (Petersmann, 1991), private decision-making entities and contract law are setting precedents for the development of international law (Dezalay & Garth, 1996).

A pragmatic approach defines international communication as communication that flows between nation-states. This distinguishes it from comparative, intercultural, and development communication. Every element, however, has become problematized. Issues include the following:

- **What is the message?** Attention is moving toward the economic and cultural fields in which flows occur and away from the flows themselves.
- **Who is the sender?** Although mainstream media organizations and governments remain important, a wide variety of other types of content providers are also of interest.
- **Who is the audience?** Is the receiver a member of civil society, citizen, consumer, audience, community member, participant in a diffusion process, avatar, intelligent agent, or machine?

### Theory

Because the subfield of international communication deals with every phase of communication processes, theories of all kinds (micro, meso, and macro) and at every level of analysis (from the individual to the global) apply. A study of the impacts of messages on decision makers, for example, may draw from cognitive information-processing theory (Suedfeld & Tetlock, 1977), analysis of audience reactions to popular culture may start from cultural studies and reception theory (Lull, 1987), and a look at international constraints on national telecommunications policy making may rely on political economy (Comor, 1994).

Because theories are themselves shaped by and in response to specific contexts, many believe that communication theory developed in one society cannot be applied, at least without adaptation or further articulation, in another. Different types of theories may arise out of disparate intellectual traditions (Kincaid, 1987), as Mowlana and Wilson (1990) show in their discussion of communication theory based in Islamic religious thought. They may also arise out of differing experiences, as exemplified by Ito's (1990) conceptualization of a type of communication that does not exist in Western culture, *kuuki*, the Japanese process of consensus building, and Michaels's (1994) analysis of Australian Aboriginal
communications. Even such concepts as Bourdieu's cultural capital need adaptation for use in transforming societies (Palumbo-Liu & Gumbrecht, 1993). The situation is complex, for, as Ito (1990) notes, some Western theories may not apply at all in a country such as Japan, whereas others may apply there but not elsewhere. One concern is that theory developed in relatively stable societies may not be useful in those undergoing change (Downing, 1996; Pye, 1967). For Rosenau (1997), however, the "cascading interdependence" of the early 1980s has become general geopolitical turbulence, and theorists such as Guattari (1995) start their analyses of global communications from this point.

Today's flows are so complex that they are no longer confinable within simple or singular versions of either media imperialism or the free market. There has been a threefold response:

1. The range of flows of interest has expanded. Having begun with studies of mass-media content, research now looks at flows of knowledge structures, organizational form, narrative form, and the hardware and software of the infrastructure itself.

2. Conceptualization of the forces shaping flows has become more complex, including flows within flows (Tracey, 1985), contraflows and disparities between and within different areas of media activity (Boyd-Barrett, 1998), unevenness in the global economic context (Amin, 1993), asymmetries (Straubhaar, 1991), and "swirls" such as the influence of a Japanese serial about a peasant woman in places like Iran and Poland (Mowlana & Rad, 1990). Flows are influenced by such classic processes as gatekeeping (Chang & Lee, 1993), agenda setting (Hu & Wanta, 1993), and framing (Entman, 1991).

3. Communication flows are now understood to occur within structured fields that are replacing flows themselves at the center of attention.

Increasingly, however, there are no flows, as in cases of what is variously called syncretism, hybridity, and mestizaje (Martin-Barbero, 1993), in which negotiations occur among multiple cultural, ethnic, and social forces within individual identities. There are also no flows when messages are, effectively, distributed globally instantaneously, making chronopolitics (power over time) of more interest than geopolitics (power over space) (Virilio, 1995). Similarly, today's merger of medium and message—including the economy—eclipses flows. Product innovations today involve concurrent design of both content and the infrastructure needed for distribution and use (Owen & Wildman, 1992).

"Information" entered discussions of international communication when information systems models became popular in the 1950s. Quantitative flow analysis undertaken by political scientists (Cioffi-Revilla, Merritt, & Zinnes, 1987; Pool, Inose, Taksaki, & Hurwitz, 1984) took the "A bit is a bit is a bit" approach to an interest in numbers of messages rather than their content. From the beginning, the "new world information order" debate included explicit concerns about data flows as well as news (Richstad & Anderson, 1981). Today the merger of archival and distribution functions in the global information infrastructure—and of library and
information science schools with those of communication—further deepens interest in all kinds of international information flows.

From the perspective of culture, a bit is not a bit; content is all. The concept of culture appeared early, as a filter for diffusion processes and as a set of contextual dimensions. Said's seminal *Orientalism* (1978) offered a Foucaultian vision of the production and reproduction of culture, and Wallerstein's (1990) pronouncement that culture is the “battleground of the world-system” marked a turning point. Contemporary analysts, inspired by Bourdieu on cultural capital and habitus, Stuart Hall on identity and power, and Derrida on difference, see culture as critical to global capital.

The state is not only a “sender” but an informational entity itself, reaching modernity concurrent with the building of the global information infrastructure. Public administration as a discipline was launched by a Woodrow Wilson piece of 1887 in which he emphasized the role of information in governance, an insight he acted upon in his position as U.S. president with his vision of ending war with “open covenants openly arrived at” (Blanchard, 1986). Richards's (1993) study of the archival activities of the British Empire suggests that informational control over colonies penetrated more deeply and more successfully than did military control. Telecommunications policy is a key site for states trying to exercise informational forms of power today because the informational profile of a state proscribes its effective boundaries (Braman, 1996). James N. Rosenau (1992) describes the current problematic of state identity as a “puzzle” in which there is a “perplexing globalization of patterns wherein the loci of authority [are] relocated and restructured” (p. 253). In citizenship, individual identity issues merge with those of the state.

Studies of normative media-state relations—how things ought to be rather than how they are—explain some aspects of state behaviors as intervening variables for effects. Thus the four theories of the press (Peterson, Schramm, & Siebert, 1956) and Hachten's (1992) five theories have been important and continue to be so despite their obsolescence.

International relations theory has also turned to “symbolic technologies” (Laffey & Weldes, 1997), beginning with the role of the media in the construction of international realities (Tehranian, 1997). Constructivism, including notions of epistemic communities and consensual knowledge, is increasingly used to study political processes (Checkel, 1998). Theories of organizations as information technologies are applied to international players (Haas, 1990). Recent work has directly addressed the impact of the use of new information technologies on international relations (Deibert, 1997).

Of the many conceptualizations of globalization (Featherstone, 1990), Wallerstein's world-system theory has had the most influence. In Wallerstein's view, the inherently globalizing tendencies of capital create a system out of which nation-states become articulated in response to economic forces. All theories of globalization break from the international perspective by abandoning the latter's state-centric; nonstate entities are thus also important, including multinational
and transnational corporations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and international organizations.

The global is produced and reproduced in the local, where a variety of dimensions can be distinguished for analysis: The local can be understood as geographic (local), the site of human agency (locus), a cultural and historical environment (locale), or surface physical features (location), and primary, secondary, and tertiary processes of localization can be distinguished (Braman, 1996). Appadurai (1993) separates *history*, which leads outward toward global universes of interaction, from *genealogy*, which leads inward toward the particularities of the local, suggesting multiple chronopolitical processes in any specific cultural act or identity. Others prefer the term *immediate*, which has the attraction that it can be used for both chronopolitical and geopolitical analysis. *Propinquity* was first used to describe the local in electronic space in the 1970s (Korzenny, 1978). Traditional local knowledge is meanwhile now extremely valuable to corporations anxious to mine genetic information in plants, animals, and organisms with biotechnologies, also informational metatechnologies. Other types of corporations are interested in the local because it is there that blockages of capital and information flows occur and the "cultural discount" is determined (Hoskins & Mirus, 1988).

Theories of cultural or media imperialism are much used. Based on the implications of world-system theory for those in developing societies (dependency theory; Mattelart, 1978), media imperialism theory claims that international communication flows reproduce colonial relationships (Lee, 1980; Salwen, 1991; Schiller, 1971). Debate turns on whether and how media imperialism exists, to whom it applies, whether its existence matters, and how it can be resisted. There are critiques—beginning with the methodological—that there is little work actually being done on the ground, researchers keep returning to a set of aberrant statistics, and specific cases are overgeneralized (Boyd-Barrett, 1998; Chaffee, 1992; Cioffi-Revilla & Merritt, 1981). Hamelink (1983) prefers the notion of cultural synchronization because it acknowledges two-way transfer interactions. Wasser's (1995) study of "Hollywood" films—no longer American except in name—elegantly makes the point that theory can lag behind empirical reality. The discourse of imperialism is described as itself mythic, overly simple, and obsolete in a post-Marxian and poststructural era (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1995). Lull (1995) suggests that constructivism is more useful today. Meanwhile, the classic view remains: Herman and McChesney (1997) assert that media corporations run the world, Gonzalez-Manet (1988) sees a return of colonialism in new information technologies, and Schiller (1991) and his supporters continue to tell us that his version of media imperialism still applies.

There are multiple ways of thinking of the receiver, each associated with different theories and research practices: member of civil society, citizen, audience, consumer, reader, participant in diffusion processes, contested site of identity, and, now, avatar (identity representation in virtual reality) and intelligent agent (software extensions of individual identity and agency). The audience is now content provider. For the increasingly large proportions of international information
flows that are not final products such as books but, rather, secondary inputs into 
other manufacturing, distribution, and consumption processes (60-80% of all 
international information flows today are intracorporate), the concepts of sender 
and receiver do not apply. Rather, analysts must look at all activity that takes place 
in and through the net, what the French call the filiere electronique.

Research

Here only a few dominant, useful, or particularly interesting streams of interna-
tional communication research can be introduced. There is no one-to-one corre-
spondence between theories and research: Theoretical approaches are at times 
combined, and each is associated with more than one research method. Too much 
work has been descriptive and atheoretical; in turn, critique of theory often focuses 
on its failure to reach research operationalization.

State-Oriented Research

International political communication is communication that tries to influence 
geopolitical relations—affairs between states qua states—or through which such 
relations are conducted. The types of political communication used are affected by 
venue, culture, and the degree to which affairs are conflictual. Communication 
among nation-states that is ongoing (diplomacy) is different from communication 
that takes place during conflict that is low intensity (public diplomacy, propa-
ganda, intelligence), medium intensity, (terrorism, revolution), or high intensity 
(arms and arms control) (Frederick, 1993).

Formalized rules for diplomatic communication were established as part of the 
reification of the modern nation-state, early in the 19th century (Tran, 1987); 
under these rules, only "official" speakers can speak. Thus some contemporary 
work looks at uses of the media by diplomats and efforts on the part of the media to 
fulfill diplomatic roles (Davison, 1997). The low-intensity conflict of the Cold 
War introduced the concept of public diplomacy as communication with entire 
peoples in efforts to affect their governments; the United States is also the target of 
such efforts (Manheim, 1994).

Public diplomacy is one point on a scale of political persuasion at the end of 
which is propaganda, intentional efforts to shape public opinion as distinct from 
the structural effects of the influence of media imperialism (Jowett & O'Donnell, 
1992). The two perspectives come together in their interest in the images of states. 
This staple of the field is of long-standing interest (Buchanan & Cantril, 1953; 
Messaris, 1993) and is sometimes today known as cognitive-strategic research 
(Herrmann & Fischerkeller, 1995). Several streams of literature look at factors 
affecting the internal identity of the state, including interactions between ethnicity 
and geopolitical relations (Cunningham & Jacka, 1996) and new forms of commu-
nity in the net environment (Elkins, 1997).
Certainly national security concerns have been an influence throughout (Simpson, 1994). Today the illusions, interpretation, and verification exercises associated with the use of mandated information flows for peacekeeping purposes—called confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) in arms-control parlance—are a central site for the struggle for transparency in international information flows. The Gulf War is understood as narrative as much as it has been studied as a military operation (Dufour-Gompers, 1992). Weapons and the practice of war have also been transformed by the use of new information technologies (DeLanda, 1991; Dudley, 1991).

"Unofficial" content providers include terrorists (Paletz & Schmid, 1992), revolutionary movements (Sussman, 1993), indigenous groups (Michaels, 1994), the women's movement (Viezzer, 1986), and others (Boyd, 1991). In the Internet environment, everyone who has a Web page, sends messages to a list, shows up in virtual reality, or participates in chat is a player in the media world; thus the range of content of importance, too, has expanded beyond those products and services traditionally conceived of as commodities.

**Flow Studies**

Flow studies examine the directions, quantities, and content of communications between states. The complexities of analyses of contemporary flows have been described above. Key early work explored biases in news flows (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Hester, 1971) and factors shaping those biases (Hester, 1973; Peterson, 1979). Entertainment flows were soon studied as well (Pool, 1977; Varis, 1992). By the mid-1980s, so many flow studies had been conducted that meta-analyses began to appear (Elasmari & Hunter, 1997; Hur, 1984; McQuail, 1986; Wu, 1998). The digital mixture of data types now generally referred to as the net was first known as transborder data now; methodologies are still being developed for analysis of flow in the environment of the Internet. Global and regional flow dynamics interact (Kim & Barnett, 1996), requiring multistep analyses (Sepstrup, 1989). Other recent trends include a historical turn and an absorption in flows about and directed at Americans.

Narrative forms flow. Each type of content is received differently within as well as across societies (Roeh & Cohen, 1992). Even within a genre there can be significant structural variants as well as surface particularities (Cooper-Chen, 1994). Narrative styles change in response to media exposure and political conditions (Chan & Lee, 1991). Genre is equated with niche, whether in the marketplace (Liebes & Livingstone, 1998), in the political environment (Blommaert, 1990), or in relationships between the two (Snyder, Willenborg, & Watt, 1991). Genre is evolving rapidly on the World Wide Web (Aune, 1997), and Elmer (1997) notes that in that environment, links from one Web page to another, a form of citation, serve as both genre and medium. Narrative form is important because it structures cognition. Other ways of transmitting knowledge structures are also global flows of interest in today's environment, such as publishing (Kobrak & Lucy, 1992) and research and development (Pearce & Singh, 1992).
Because organizations can be seen as information technologies, the diffusion of organizational form and development of transnational and multinational corporations are also flows of interest (Strang & Soule, 1998). There has been a lot of work conducted concerning the diverse ways in which media firms have become internationalized as well as the impacts of new information technologies on firms of all kinds (Hoskins, McFadyen, & Finn, 1996). Although some studies of multinational and transnational organizations ignore cultural difference altogether, the more useful look at cultural difference both within firms and within the cultures in which they operate (De Bernardy, Boisgontier, & Goyet, 1993). Studies of networked interpersonal, intrapersonal, and small group communications within organizations—the literatures of computer-mediated communication, computer-supported cooperative work, group decision support systems, and the like—are also pertinent to the understanding of international communication today (Walther, 1997).

Audiences, too, flow. Thus there is a nascent literature on migration as communication (Castles, 1998) and a burgeoning one on tourism (Pearce & Butler, 1992). And, finally, trade in information goods and services now drives economic arrangements and conflicts. The General Agreement on Trade in Services, the World Trade Organization, and international intellectual property rights law cover both the hardware and the software of the infrastructure and the international information flows of both final products and production inputs that are its content (Braman, 1990; Drake & Nicolaides, 1992).

Globally Oriented Research

Myriad studies have looked at the impact of globalization on specific cultures or settings. One stream of work debates the possibility and/or reality of global civil society: Waterman (1990) says yes, Sparks (1998) says no, and Hallin and Mancini (1991) say yes, but only for short moments. Another looks at the all-important international and global regulatory structures for what is now clearly a single global information infrastructure (Branscomb, 1986). In this environment, meta-analyses of comparative studies have gained in value for policy makers who must now reach consensual and effective agreement with players from many states in order even to operate domestically (Mansell, 1994; Mody, Straubhaar, & Bauer, 1995). Cyberspace is seen by political economists and those in cultural studies as a frontier for new types of community identity as well as a venue for contestation over identity among communities that are geopolitically or ethnically based (Mitra, 1997).

Many content flow studies are intended to find support for or to disprove the media imperialism thesis, although it is impossible to reach conclusions about effects by looking at either content or quantities. Other research on media imperialism has included attention to such diverse matters as analysis of the impact of American television on Latin Americans (Beltran, 1978), radio wars between Cuba and the United States (Frederick, 1986), and the semiology of popular cul-
ture (Dorffman & Mattelart, 1975), what Eco (1990) refers to as "semiological guerrilla warfare."

Methodology

Many methodological issues raised by international communication research are endemic, such as the difficulties raised by efforts to achieve equivalence across cultures (Halloran, 1995). There are inconsistencies; as Chaffee (1992) notes, for example, whereas effects in other societies are explained by media imperialism theories, those in the United States are generally addressed with cognitive information-processing theories. Little has been done to develop research methods from theories based in non-Western cultures, although Blake (1997) offers Afrocentric rhetorical analysis. The engagement of feminist theory with international communication (Hegde, 1998) may bring innovations in research methods.

Some descriptive work is necessary—inductive analysis of unknown ground is an important stage in the life of a research question, and the phenomena and processes being studied are endlessly varied and constantly changing. Such work is not, however, sufficient: Lerner's *The Passing of Traditional Society* (1958) was based on data collected 8 years before the conceptual framework emerged (Golding, 1974). As others have noted, mere accumulations of such work are essentially pointless.

Concern about the quality of quantitative data focuses on their inability to deal with issues of equity, non-state-oriented globalization processes (Beck, 1992), or the "thick" dimensions of the local. There are access issues: Data don't exist, aren't comparable, or are inaccessible by law, culture, or institutional intention or failure. There is a need for more longitudinal analyses and midrange work. Funding has an impact; Sreberny-Mohammadi (1995) notes that large-scale projects have declined since UNESCO funding dropped, and a BBC researcher admits that even that organization's surveys are too random and ad hoc (Mytton, 1993).

Theoretical developments demand methodological adaptation and invention. Effects research has assumed a stable and passive audience receiving changing messages, but international communication researchers are often looking at active and changing audiences who may be receiving stable message flows (Chaffee, 1992). The global/local assemblage encourages the use of qualitative research methods, with the "local" sited variously in the body (Ang, 1990), the home (Gumpert & Drucker, 1998), and the city (Jussawalla, Toh, & Low, 1992).

Among the many things to be learned from Michaels (1994) is that the first and most difficult task may be to figure out not which questions to ask, but which questions are even possible. Moral issues arise from the Hawthorne effect, the impact on a society of questions asked, although one NGO (Canada-based IDRC) has foregrounded use of this effect in research design as a selling point with policy
makers. Too many research products sit in libraries in the developed world, inaccessible to planners in the societies studied (O’Brien, 1983).

Summary

The ideal for international communication has changed several times since the middle of the 19th century; the late 19th century saw efforts on the part of media organizations to distinguish themselves institutionally as autonomous, or “free.” Since the close of World War I, the United States has promoted the international goal of the “free flow of information.” Developing society experience shifted attention from the late 1960s on to the “free and balanced flow of information” as an orienting goal. In the 1990s, the target became “transparency.”

With transparency come problems of identity. Because there is no mirror, we cannot see ourselves. It is possible to gaze through the transparency, but what we see may be fractured, or refracted, or the dimensions may be confused. More information is not necessarily better information, and its granularity can be manipulated according to political, economic, and technological constraints and desires.

Rather than doing research on how entities with agency construct images with their messages for intended effect, whether political or social or commercial, the problem for international communication research has shifted to that of identifying the locus of agency itself. This locus, “identity,” may be multiple, shifting, permeable, and self-contradictory (Hall, 1996). In Lalvani’s (1995) terms, both international communication and its study are now processes of “consuming the exotic other—and the ‘other’ remains ourselves.”

COMMUNICATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

On January 20, 1949, U.S. President Harry S Truman announced the formation of policy intended to make the benefits and advances of Western science, technology, and progress available to the “underdeveloped areas” of the world. So began the era of development.¹

In practical terms, making Western benefits and advances available to “underdeveloped areas” to relieve these regions of the burden of being “underdeveloped,”—the ideology of modernization—involved a wholesale transfer and infusion of U.S. and European cultural assumptions, political premises, and economic values. But modernization has been and is more than political and economic endeavor. Modernization is a perception, a way of imagining the world and so managing social order. At a discursive level, Truman’s declaration that certain areas of the world—and by extension their cultures and peoples—were “underdeveloped” reinforced an old, often-used hierarchy of pitting “us” against “them” to justify Western intervention on behalf of development in much the same way that
Christian, then Western, imperialism and colonization had been rationalized (Amin, 1989; Memmi, 1965; Mudimbe, 1988; Said, 1978).

During this post-World War II era, policymakers began to view mass communication as a powerful modernizing force. Guided by concerns over communist intrusion into Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America, U.S. government offices and international organizations were keen to fund research investigating links between communication and socioeconomic change (Samarajiwa, 1987). Thus the field of mass communication and national development emerged. In the following pages, we provide an overview of mass communication and development research, highlighting its conceptual and historical parameters, major theoretical approaches, and current research trends.

Defining National Development

*Development* refers to the operational implementation of modernization ideology in the nation-state. For decades now, social scientists have constructed elaborate theories to dissect and measure various aspects of development. Politicians likewise have pursued development strategies and projects. While social scientists and politicians have tinkered with the specifics of development, its measurement and application, the need for development—whether top-down, participatory, socialist, basic-needs oriented—has remained largely unquestioned. Thus, in the social imaginary, development has become powerful in its ability to organize cultural practices and representations as well as political and economic spheres (Escobar, 1995, pp. 3-20; Tomlinson, 1991, pp. 154-169).

Despite the West's emphasis on the development of the developing world, many critics suggest that the search for mass prosperity has failed. Indeed, regional inequalities, both macro and micro, have widened. For example, in 1960, the world's top 20% possessed wealth 30 times that of the bottom 20%, whereas in 1989, the upper 20% had nearly 60% more (U.N. Development Program, 1992, p. 34). The 1980s, popularly labeled by journalists the "lost decade," was for the Third World a period of crushing foreign debt, budget deficits, capital flight, falling commodity prices, declines in foreign assistance, and structural adjustment (Bradshaw & Wahl, 1991; Brown & Tiffen, 1992; Glasberg & Ward, 1993; Watson & McCluskie, 1994). Still, the idea and policies of development persist, although it is continually transformed to account for changing global economic and political trends (Mehmet, 1995; Waters, 1995).

Indeed, the policy and practice of development, which originate in the ideology of modernization, are often traced back to U.S. plans to revitalize Europe after much of the continent was destroyed during World War II. But a case can be made for tracing the lineage of modernization ideology much further back in history than 1945. In fact, Luke (1990) suggests that the notion of "modernization" represents only "the latest sophistication" in a long chain of "imperialistic language to suit new political relations with the developing countries" (p. 222). The first of these sophistications was the idea of Christianization of newly "discovered" popu-
lations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. As early as the 16th century—and earlier, if we include the Crusades to what we now call the Middle East—European nations embarked on religious missions to the "new worlds," their mission to bring the light of the Christian God to these regions and to save souls. The dawn of the Enlightenment created a need for a secular version of Christianization that could be used to argue for "objective" and "rational" reasons for continued Western dominance of Third World countries.

This new sophistication was called Westernization. Through what was understood in the West to be the rationale of objective indicators, the West was "defined as the cultural center of the world, from which all other regions borrowed or learned in order to evolve or progress" (Luke, 1990, p. 222). Despite the seemingly innocuous language of Westernization, the process often involved violent imposition of values and practices that aroused anger, anguish, and resistance to Westernization. Criticism of the spatial biases and assumptions of cultural superiority embedded in the notion of Westernization (during the era of European colonialism and up through the end of World War II) brought about the need for a despatialized term to describe the relationship between the West and the Third World.

Thus the next sophistication was modernization. The term denoted neither a spatial bias toward the West nor a zeal for saving souls. The notion promised only a vision of a modern society and offered a process that could bring "primitive," "backward" peoples and societies into the modern present. It is interesting to note that the spatial bias of Westernization had been replaced by the temporal bias (toward the modern present) of modernization. It is also important to note that despite the discursive movement toward a secular and spatially neutral terminology, modernization (and its operational existence as developmentalism) still bears the imprint of the Western church. Pieterse (1991) has observed that "developmentalism [and modernization] conforms to a Christian format and logic in viewing history as a salvific process" (p. 15). In modernization, "providence is recast as Progress. Predestination reformulated as determinism. The basic scenario of the scripture, Paradise-Fall-Redemption, comes replicated in evolutionary schemes [such as] primeval simplicity and innocence (the good savage), followed by the fall from grace (corruption), which in turn is followed by redeeming change (modernity)" (p. 16).

There is yet another sophistication in terminology that describes the relations between nations. As modernization has come under fire for, among other issues, its temporal bias (the claim that the future of the Third World is located in the present of urban centers in the West), a universalized version of modernization has made its way into discussion of relations between the West and the Third World. This newest sophistication is globalization. Waters (1995) forcefully reveals the connection between globalization and its antecedents:

Globalization is an obvious object for ideological suspicion because, like modernization, a predecessor and related concept, it appears to justify the spread of Western cul-
ture and of capitalist society by suggesting that there are forces operating beyond human control that are transforming the world. Globalization is the direct consequence of the expansion of European culture. (p. 3)

Because modernization has had clear historical and ideological connections with processes of Western imperialism and colonialism, it has been criticized from various intellectual perspectives.

Major Theoretical Approaches to Development

In the context of the Cold War, the U.S. State Department, the U.S. military, institutions of higher education, and private foundations (Ford, Rockefeller, and the like) formed a cooperative relationship through which academics were encouraged to study the new nations of the Third World as a way of promoting economic development and political stability so as to avoid the "loss" of the new states to the Soviets (So, 1990). A generation of political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, and communication scholars cut their academic teeth on research into various aspects of the new Third World nations (Gendzier, 1985; Samarajiwa, 1987; So, 1990). By the 1950s, "an interdisciplinary modernization school was in the making" (So, 1990, p. 18).

So (1990, pp. 18-23) has summarized the main theoretical assumptions of the modernization school. They are rooted in ideas about evolution and functionalism. From these roots, the following critiques, among others, were proposed: Development is assumed to be unidirectional; development requires the elimination of "traditional" values; development is understood as an internal process to the extent that foreign domination by states and transnational corporations is ignored; and there is an ideology underlying the development idea that justifies U.S. intervention in the Third World. These critiques have led to the rise of other ways of looking at the process and idea of development. These are the neomodernization, dependency, world-system, and postmodern approaches. We briefly summarize the first three of these approaches here because they are fairly well-known. We discuss the postmodern view of development a bit more thoroughly because it is relatively new to development studies.

The neomodernization school retains some key ideas and concepts about the development process from the modernization school, such as a focus on nations and the view that modernization is generally beneficial but recognizes and revises certain faulty assumptions (So, 1990, pp. 60-87). Dependency is a neo-Marxist critique of modernization that came out of Latin America in the 1960s and is a response to the shortcomings of the liberal economic program proposed by the U.N. Economic Commission on Latin America. Dependency theory finds little hope for optimism in Third World countries' retaining ties to the imperialist core countries and proposes socialist revolution to bring about change in the unequal relations between the West and the Third World (Portes, 1976; So, 1990, pp. 91-109). A related model (because it also is rooted in neo-Marxist orientation)
is the world-system approach to analysis of development, associated most closely with Immanuel Wallerstein. Wallerstein claims that dependency cannot adequately explain continued economic growth in East Asian countries, the economic stagnation of several socialist countries, and the declining hegemony of U.S. capitalism. Wallerstein's world-system approach divides the world into core, semiperiphery, and periphery states; all nation-states can move among these three modes over time. Thus, from the world-system perspective, the focus on development studies is a longitudinal view of the global political economy rather than a view of the economy of a single nation-state (as it is in the dependency and modernization approaches; see So, 1990, pp. 110-134).

The postmodern critique of modernization is rooted in what might be called a crisis of modernity. The recognition of the ecological limits to growth (see Chatterjee & Finger, 1994), new social movements that challenge the notion of linear social change (see Melucci, 1989), and the realization that the very process of modernity is, in theory and practice, more exclusionary than inclusive (see Kothari, 1988; Pieterse, 1991; Said, 1978) are among the factors that set the stage for a postmodern critique of modernization. There are two broad strands in this critique. One is optimistic and embraces the possibilities for local and particularistic types of and strategies for development (e.g., Burkey, 1993). The second is skeptical about development and examines how the "discourse of development" works to perpetuate the paradigm despite the fact that development efforts are rarely successful (e.g., Crush, 1995; Escobar, 1995). The tasks that postmodern development skeptics have identified for themselves are to identify and deconstruct the institutional, political, and cultural interests and processes involved in postwar theorizing that "recycles key development ideas which appear, disappear, and reappear under changed political-economic and ideological circumstances" (Peet & Watt, 1994, p. 232).

Communication Research for National Development

Throughout the modernization era, communication was seen as a key element in the West's project of developing the Third World. In the decade and a half after Lerner's influential 1958 study of communication and development in the Middle East, communication researchers assumed that the introduction of media and certain types of educational, political, and economic information into a social system could transform individuals and societies from traditional to modern. Conceived as having fairly direct and powerful effects on Third World audiences, the media were seen as magic multipliers, able to accelerate and magnify the benefits of development.

In 1976, Rogers suggested that the dominant paradigm, as the direct and powerful effects model of communication and development came to be known, had passed. Guided by the works of critical mass communication scholars in Latin America, Rogers recognized that the effects of communication are mediated by
social structures, interpersonal networks, the accessibility of communication hardware and software, and the quality of messages. In this revision, Rogers suggested that the effects of communication not only may be limited but also may not necessarily be direct or large.

Fair's (1989) examination of 224 studies of communication and development published in the first three decades of this specialization (1958-1986) reveals that much of the research was informed by models predicting either powerful effects or limited effects. About 40 years after Lerner, 20 years after Rogers, and nearly 10 years since Fair's metaresearch, Fair and Shah (1997) examined the research literature between 1987 and 1996 about media effects on Third World audiences to discover how the field had evolved in that decade.

Theoretical Frameworks

In the first four decades of the life of this problem-solving research area, the majority of studies had no theoretical base. In the fourth decade studied (1987-1996), the situation showed some improvement. The increase in theoretical research perhaps marks some movement toward more conceptual precision and clarity in thinking about how to describe, explain, or predict the effects of media in the Third World. What is interesting across time periods is the nature of the theories used in research. In the earlier period, Lerner's model specifying the relationships of urbanization, literacy, and media use on political and economic participation accounted for approximately one-third of the studies using some kind of theoretical framework. The use of Lerner's ideas largely occurred early in the history of communication and development literature, prior to the beginning of criticism of the dominant paradigm in 1976.

In the 1987-1996 period, Lerner's modernization model completely disappeared. Instead, the most frequently used theoretical framework was participatory development, a postmodern optimist orientation, which is almost the polar opposite of Lerner, who viewed mass communication as playing a top-down role in social change. Also vanishing from research in this latter period was the two-step flow model. Research in both periods did make use of such theories or approaches as knowledge gap, indirect influence, and uses and gratifications.

Research appearing from 1987 through 1996 can be characterized as much more theoretically diverse than that published between 1958 and 1986. In the more recent period, along with participatory development notions, researchers used a number of frameworks—information environment, cultural integration, community structure, interactivity, imagined community, public sphere, dialogic, feminist—that attempt to address media effects more critically in a broader social, economic, and political context.

Another indicator of the state of the field is to be found within the Intercultural and Development Communication Division of the International Communication Association. We examined the convention programs of the 1997 and 1998 ICA
conferences to learn what kinds of research approaches—modernization or neomodernization, dependency or world-system, postmodern optimist or postmodern skeptic—were in use. We made our judgments based on paper titles and abstracts. To be sure, this is a rough guide at best, but we tried to systematize our classification process by first compiling a set of keywords that likely would be associated with each of the approaches and using this scheme to categorize the conference papers. In 1997 and 1998, a total of 20 papers on communication and development were presented. Among these papers, 7 took a modernization approach, 3 took a neomodernization approach, 9 took a postmodern optimist approach, and 1 took a postmodern skeptic approach. In other words, 10 studies were in a modernization school and 10 were in a postmodern school. None of the studies was judged to be taking a neo-Marxist approach.

**Conceptual and Operational Definitions**

Over the two metaresearch periods, how scholars conceived of media effects varied in terms of whether effects were seen as direct (going from the media straight to individuals or society) or complementary (acting indirectly or with other individual or societal variables). The most pronounced change in the conceptualization of media between the 1958-1986 and 1987-1996 periods was a shift from a view of the media as having direct effects to a view of the media’s effects as complementary.

The research conducted in the more recent period tried to account for the complexity of national development by downplaying the media’s direct role in both individual modernization and social change. It looked to the media’s relationship to macro-level or structural variables consistent with the dependency and world-system critiques of modernization. An increased complexity in approach is reflected by the wider range of disciplines, including some from the humanities, cited in the literature reviews. In the earlier period, literature reviews cited three primary fields: mass communication, sociology, and political science. In the later period, mass communication, sociology, and political science represented the most frequently cited fields, but fields such as education, philosophy, cultural anthropology, religion, feminist studies, and literature were also represented.

The conceptual and operational definitions of national development were also examined. In the earlier metaresearch, more than half the studies conceptualized national development as having to do with modern attitudes or behaviors (Fair, 1988, p. 152). From 1987 to 1996, national development seems still largely to have been defined within parameters of modernization theories, despite ongoing debates and revisions in fields outside of communication. However, in a change from the previous period, about a third of studies did incorporate a conceptualization of development that stems from rethinking modernization: Those studies defined development in terms of the abilities of societies to meet basic needs or to
have self-reliance, ideas that have been incorporated by the optimist postmodern critique.

National development is a complex issue to think about and difficult to measure. In both periods, the majority of studies contained no operationalization of development. Although the absence of conceptual and/or operational definitions of media effects and national development highlights the difficulty of defining such terms, it also may reflect a lack of clarity or rigor in organizing the framework of study. The neglect of definitions can serve only as a hindrance to substantive theory building and exploration of media effects in the Third World.

**Media as Variables in the Development Process**

Researchers found several variables to be important in influencing or mediating media effects. In the first metaresearch, the primary factors mitigating media impacts generally were individual or personal characteristics: interpersonal and family relations, literacy, education level, socioeconomic status, and gender. In the second metaresearch, studies cited a greater diversity of mediating factors. With the exception of interpersonal and family relations, which remained the mediating factor most often provided, variables were less often personal and more often structural, reflecting the attention to structural factors proposed by critiques of modernization—especially the dependency and world-system schools of thought. Government policies, the state of the polity or economy, cultural pressures, credibility of the message or message sender, poor infrastructure or lack of media availability, and world capitalism represent the new prominent mediating influences.

**Methods, Data, and Levels of Analysis**

Of the studies conducted in the earlier three decades, about 50% were quantitative survey projects. In the most recent decade studied (1987-1996), a vast majority of the researchers used some form of qualitative methods (such as description, historical methods, and field observation). Quantitative methods were used in less than 20% of the studies examined. Specific approaches included surveys, content analysis, and econometrics. In both periods, however, the focus of empirical studies was mainly on rural audiences of mass-media development messages. Also, most empirical studies in both periods were cross-sectional as opposed to longitudinal.

In the 1958-1986 period, Asian countries were the most frequent focus of studies, followed by Latin American, African, and Middle Eastern nations, in that order. In the 1987-1996 period, Asian countries continued to be the most frequent focus of studies, but these were followed by African, Latin American, Middle Eastern, and Eastern European countries. The fact that there was more focus on Africa than on Latin America in this period may be reflective of Western determination to "democratize" Africa in the 1980s. The appearance of Eastern Europe in
communication and development studies indicates the Third World-like status of many Eastern and Central European countries as they emerged (after 1989) from an era of neocolonial relations with the Soviet Union.

Although macro-level analysis increased in the 1987-1996 studies, micro-level analysis remained the most used. When it came to actual measurement of development and media use, researchers tended to rely on measures of individual characteristics and change.

From the earlier period to the later, the biggest change in the pattern of funding was that non-U.S. governments and intergovernmental organizations were getting involved. University funding had become scarcer, and funding from the U.S. government had declined.

Conclusions

In the first three decades of the field of development communication research, the most commonly mentioned conclusions of research studies were that mass media had positive impacts on individual modernity. Less frequently mentioned were conclusions calling for expanded thinking about development communication and the need to examine other forms of communication. In the 1987-1996 study reviewed above, the most commonly stated conclusion was that mass media have positive impacts on social structure; this was followed by a call for expanded thinking about development communication. These most frequently stated conclusions reveal, once again, that macro-level concerns were of primary importance to researchers in the 1987-1996 era. Concerns about negative and positive impacts on individuals were mentioned relatively infrequently. The conclusions suggest a number of other areas of concern for researchers that are worth highlighting. Researchers indicated that they were interested in thinking more expansively about mass communication and development, that other forms of media should be examined, and that participation in participatory communication projects should be more inclusive.

Directions for Future Research

In the 1958-1986 study, the directions for future research most commonly suggested by the authors included closer examination of the relevance of message content, the need for more comparative research, and the need for more policy research. In the 1987-1996 period, the most frequent suggestion concerned the need for more policy research, including institutional analysis of development-agency coordination. This was followed by the need for research on and development of indigenous models of communication and development through participatory research, and two other suggestions that researchers examine the relevance of development communication messages and establish new normative models for development communication. The results suggest that since the earlier study, policy research has come to be perceived as an even more pressing need, as
has the need to create models of communication and development that reflect indigenous priorities and needs. The latter is clearly in line with the optimist postmodern view.

A Look at the Past and a Look Toward the Future

Clearly, there are significant continuities and discontinuities in the way the field of development communication research has evolved since the first metaresearch discussed above was completed. The 1987-1996 metaresearch reveals that research on communication and development has become more complex in several respects, but also that some features of the field remain relatively unchanged.

For some researchers, development is no longer only a Third World concern. Eastern European nations and marginalized groups in the West are receiving attention from communication and development researchers. Technological advances in communication have forced researchers to incorporate new media such as video and fax into their understanding of the role of communication in development. At the same time, researchers have recognized that the mass media act as contributory factors in socioeconomic development. Thus explanations of mass-media impacts on development have included a greater number of intervening variables. In particular, structural factors, such as infrastructure and political economy, are becoming more central to analyses of communication and development. Individual-level concerns have not disappeared, but individual blame for lack of development is no longer common because researchers acknowledge the structural constraints under which people live. In an effort to understand this complex relationship between the micro and macro levels more clearly, scholars have begun to rely upon a number of critical perspectives—such as feminist, dialogic, participatory, and public sphere perspectives—that are relatively new for this field.

Despite the trend toward complexity and change, studies of communication and development are still characterized by some of the shortcomings found in the first metaresearch. For example, in both research periods, few studies provided operational definitions of either development or how mass media might influence it, which was ostensibly the purpose of the research in the first place. When development or mass-media impact was operationalized in the 1987-1996 period, the definitions were almost identical to those in the earlier period. Moreover, in both periods there was little face-to-face interaction between researchers and the people they studied. Women, children, and other marginalized groups remained largely outside of researchers’ concern.

Our review indicates increasing epistemological and methodological tolerance as a greater number of studies with diverse frameworks appeared in the 1987-1996 period. However, it seems clear that conceptualizing communication and development based on critical theories has raced ahead of empirical research (whether quantitative or qualitative). Indeed, this metaresearch of the field found many conceptual think pieces and reflexive essays, with few applications of these ideas in
the field. What we are unable to ascertain is the extent to which funding agencies view the projects they support and the data they generate as proprietary and, therefore, unavailable for publication.

Finally, the thinking about communication and development has to some extent reflected the critiques of modernization. One aspect of the modernization critiques largely absent in the communication and development literature to date, however, is the skeptical postmodernist orientation. For future research, this kind of approach would involve a discursive turn in which communication and development studies would be examined not just for what and how they might describe the media's impact in the Third World and other "developing" areas, but also for the ways in which they reinforce existing power relations and structures of inequalities. For example, such an approach would explore why particular groups—women, children, the dispossessed—continue to be ignored despite the fact that the rhetoric of development suggests these groups are of central concern. In other words, the skeptical postmodern approach provides analytic tools that can aid researchers in discovering the relationships among discourse, structure, and agency. The importance of analyzing the discourse of development from a skeptical postmodern perspective is that it helps us to reveal who actually benefits from communication and development activities, including research. After nearly five decades of development efforts led by the Western development industry, the Third World has seen little tangible gain. At this historical moment in relations between the West and the Third World, knowing who benefits and who loses from "development" is key to reorganizing the development industry, in which communication and development researchers are central actors.

NOTES

2. For overviews on this point, see Mehmet (1995), Momsen (1993), and Webster (1990).
3. Although the decade might have been lost to Western business interests in the Third World and perhaps to Third World elites, disastrous effects of declining economies and living standards were certainly not "lost" to Third World peoples.
4. Writing in very broad terms, Pauline M. Rosenau (1992) describes two general orientations to postmodernism. On the one hand there are the skeptical postmodernists, who offer a negative and sometimes gloomy assessment. They claim that the postmodern age is characterized by "fragmentation, disintegration, malaise, meaninglessness, a vagueness, if not an absence of moral parameters and societal chaos" (p. 15), and there is little hope for political action or social change. According to Rosenau, this orientation is inspired by European philosophers such as Heidegger and Nietzsche. On the other hand are the affirmative postmodernists, who agree with the skeptics' critique of the postmodern age but have a more hopeful outlook on the possibilities for political struggle and resistance. These postmodernists celebrate "personal nondogmatic projects . . . and lifestyles" (p. 16).
5. These figures are based on percentages of responses obtained from multiple responses in which coders recorded up to three variables having mediating impact on the media. The total number of studies coded for mediating factors was 224 in the first metaresearch and 129 in the second.
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