The Speech Tradition

Were a natural set of categories for subjects and study. But just like everything else, disciplines and departments in the contemporary U.S. university have a history. What we think of as "communication" may be covered by two or three different departments, and all of them may have started out very different from their current form. We currently imagine communication as a universal process that happens in different media (television, radio, print, the Internet) and is attached to different professions (journalist, writer, producer, actor). The development of all these things proceeded by complex paths, however, and the bewildering diversity of communication departments reflects this. In some places, all kinds of communication are in the same department or college. In others, the communication professions (journalism, public relations, advertising) are in a separate department or even in the business school. In some cases, theater is contained within the communication department, while in others it is by itself or linked with other performing arts, such as music and dance. For the purposes of this article, we'll take the core of university education in communication to be public speaking, debate, and the traditions that follow from them. In some places, the department in this tradition is called **Speech** Communication, though that term is increasingly disappearing in favor of Communication or Communication Studies.

To explain the general growth and direction of the communication discipline, we'll first look at state universities 100 years ago and the received understanding of communication education. Then we'll examine how public speaking and debate became the core of a new kind of department, the **Speech** department, and unpacked the commitments of **speech** education to civic rhetoric and social improvement. The evolution of the field, lending it a humanistic and social science side, will be next, as we consider the unfolding research programs that grew out of the teaching interests of the **Speech** faculty. Finally, we'll observe how current teaching and research in the field are organized.

Changing Universities

Before looking at the emergence of the field itself, let's consider the background of higher education; the field of **speech** emerged out of changing teaching practices in U.S. higher education in the early 20th century. Between 1880 and 1920, many of the academic fields in the United States formed associations and university departments. Until that period, colleges had "faculties," groups of people who taught a certain course. They usually didn't have advanced degrees but were just university-educated men teaching various liberal arts subjects to students from prosperous families. Both the faculty and the students, however, were changing. University education, with the rise of the research university and the land grant schools, was becoming accessible to a larger and more diverse group of Americans. Higher education was outgrowing its traditional function of reproducing an elite class. In the 18th and early 19th centuries, college was mostly an exercise in self-improvement; its job preparation was limited to qualifying students for the "gentle professions" of the clergyman, the lawyer, and the politician, acceptable jobs for "gentlemen." All these professions were "public" (in the sense of public speaking) and reflected a civic approach that derived from a model of classical education focused on principles expounded by the Roman orator Cicero.

Where did communication fit into this model of education? **Speech** instruction had until this point been integrated into the general, liberal education of the private colleges, with students **writing** and speaking as part

of the study of the classics and philosophy. But as the 19th century came to a close, **speech** instruction, focused mainly on delivery, became a separate course in the curriculum. Speaking as a performance art, the "platform entertainer," had become lucrative and popular, and college instruction reflected that reality. People also expected that anyone with a college education could speak eloquently, with beauty and complexity and, at length, whenever the occasion demanded.

The resulting pedagogy, called *elocutionism*, focused heavily on the delivery and performance aspects of speaking and was perhaps more closely related to theater than to public address. Elocutionism harmonized with the middle-class culture of oral and musical performance but remained in tension with the civic traditions of public address. In 1890, the National **Speech** Arts Association (NSAA) was founded, with the intention of bringing together both private and university elocution teachers under the term **speech** , allowing them to include diverse activities involving the voice.

Speech as a Discipline and a Department

In U.S. universities, **speech** instruction was evolving from traditional patterns. A precursor to the field of **speech** was "Oral English," which continued the elocutionist pattern by including courses (or sometimes parts of courses) that focused on students reading out loud or interpreting essays, stories, or poetry (either classic pieces or those **written** by the student); speaking was understood as a complement to **writing** instruction. This relationship to the dominant, literature-oriented part of English departments resulted in a kind of second-class status for those who taught speaking; they were paid less than others and typically were not eligible for promotion. Oral English itself was short-lived, as most of the people who taught these courses eventually moved to **Speech** departments when they were formed. The relationship between **speech** teachers and English departments was generally unstable, although some faculty made attempts at professional unity.

In 1910, the Eastern Public Speaking Conference became the primary organization for college teachers of **speech**. The idea of a conference for public speaking teachers in particular came from James Winans of Dartmouth College, later a renowned teacher at Cornell University; Winans was concerned about the differences between NSAA teachers, who were sometimes more similar to today's "motivational speakers," and the emerging group of academic **speech** teachers and debate coaches. The journal of the conference was the *Public Speaking Review*, a mix of teaching tips, professional news, and reports from the conference. The conference and the journal met the needs of public speaking teachers to be able to talk to each other about teaching issues and professional issues. It was here, really, that the idea of **speech** as a distinct discipline was born.

But the *Review* was only part of the picture; overall, speaking instruction was flowering all across the country. At the national level, speaking teachers met as a section of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), an organization that supplemented the research-oriented Modern Language Association (MLA) by focusing on teaching and including secondary school teachers. Due to the tension within English departments, the meetings of the NCTE and MLA became increasingly uncomfortable; James O'Neill of the University of Wisconsin, in particular, spoke out strongly about the need for **speech** teachers to organize themselves and to maintain the quality of both their teaching and their professional lives.

At the 1914 meeting of the public speaking section of the NCTE in Chicago, Illinois, O'Neill suggested a postconvention meeting of the **speech** teachers, and there, about 10 faculty members, mostly from the Midwest, decided to create a new association, the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking (NAATPS), along with a journal, the *Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking*. O'Neill would be president for the first 5 years, with Howard Woodward of Western Reserve University in Cleveland as the treasurer. The members took each part of their association's name seriously. They wanted to be a *national*, not a regional, organization, similar to many other scholarly organizations formed in the previous 20 years. They were interested in the *academic* teaching of **speech**, which would be tied to research and scholarship; much elocution instruction happened in local, private academies, much the way private music schools still operate. The new organization

saw itself as composed primarily of *teachers* who were brought together not so much by a common body of knowledge as by a common vision of instruction and skills.

Speech and the Civic Tradition

Most important, the founders of the field chose *public speaking* rather than "elocution" or "oratory" to designate their primary area of instruction. Oratory had been traditionally tied to the contexts of either elite speakers in the political arena (the Mayor, Governor, or President) or an aesthetically pleasing mode of speaking (what we would nowadays call "motivational speakers" were extremely popular in the late 19th century). Public speaking represented a turn toward the practical. It included a variety of speakers, not just those in political power or entertainers. Public speaking also included a great many more contexts. Most of the communication professions we know today had recently appeared, in particular advertising and public relations, and people understood the emerging importance of what we would call "business and professional communication." In addition, in a democratizing move, they envisioned almost all citizens as potential speakers. The widespread growth of civic organizations, from the Masons to the Lions Clubs, the Rotary, and innumerable other local organizations, would provide a platform for just about anybody to be a speaker. Public speaking was not only a broader category than oratory; it contained the possibility of an entire new field.

But in a larger sense, the new **speech** teachers did not give up on the civic mission of **speech** instruction; they simply realigned and reinterpreted it. They saw that the "public" in public speaking could have wide applicability without losing its civic meaning. Speaking to the Rotary on matters of public concern was just as civic, democratic, and political as a candidate's campaign stump **speech**. The area where the civic dimension of **speech** was most hotly contested was intercollegiate debate, between teams of college debaters representing their schools. In "switch-side debate," as it is called, a question is posed (for the whole season), and teams of two students (a school typically fielded several teams) debate other students through four or five rounds in a tournament. In each round, they switch to the opposite side of the question they are debating.

The first 10 years of the *Quarterly Journal of* **Speech** reveal a preoccupation with debates about debate. While public speaking instruction apparently wasn't too controversial (except for the questions of standardization of grades and the role of **speech** correction), the proper organization and judging of debates provoked fierce quarrels, in which the political character of pedagogical choices became very clear. Several issues commanded the attention of those who cared about the fate of debate pedagogy. First, questions about the aims of debate emerged continually from the practical problems of conducting debate contests: What does debate do for students? So coaches argued over questions such as the following: (a) How much help should a coach give? (b) How much of a debate should be **written** and delivered as **speech**? (The impromptu rebuttal was an innovation around 1920.) (c) Should the judges be debate coaches and **speech** faculty, or eminent citizens of the community? (d) Do you let students debate both sides of the question?

The question provoking the angriest confrontations was the fourth one. A bright line emerged between the sides: If the debate is judged, then either we get technically better and more skillful arguers or slick and cynical sophists. If the question is judged, then either we'll get better citizens later on or we cheat students by having them stoop to local politics instead of learning excellent debating skills. Each side in this controversy saw significant values on the line. For those who wanted to judge the debate, led by James O'Neill, the president of the NAATPS, the professional-ization of the **speech** profession was at stake; if you could bring in (say) Judge Smith or Rev. Jones to judge a debate, then there was nothing particularly professional or technical in teaching debate. For those who wanted to judge the question, led by Hugh Wells, a former judge then coaching at the University of Southern California, the civic context of **speech** instruction was at stake; if you didn't mimic the form *and* content of civic occasions by holding students responsible to real audiences (i.e., members of the community), then debate became a game with no necessary connection to civic life. For many critics, the competitive nature of debate fundamentally undercut any civic ethos it might have; democracy, to be ethical and effective, must be much more than a game.

Dissatisfaction with debate has thus been around as long as debate has been an intercollegiate sport. In the 1930s, unhappiness with debate led to the introduction of a new course on *discussion*, which focused on deliberation and decision making in small groups. The discussion course brought together the various pedagogic threads we've seen. Discussion was collaborative and cooperative rather than competitive—group members work together to solve problems. Discussion represented an idealized form of civic communication. While many people identify democracy with voting, it could—and should—be more than that, since votes ought to be based on rational reflection about what to do. Discussion mimicked the deliberative aspects of democracy by bringing together diverse people and allowing them to engage each other rationally in decision making. Discussionists, including Alfred Sheffield, Craig Baird, and James McBurney, among many others, contrasted discussion sharply with debate and used John Dewey as their philosophical justification. Debate begins with a proposition (the "resolution"), and so when a debate begins, all the important decisions except one have been made. Discussion begins with a problem, which a group discusses until the participants feel that they have a common understanding of it. They then proceed to consider alternative solutions, asking of each one not only whether it solves the problem but also how its trade-offs compare with alternate solutions. Discussion isn't mere talk; it is intended to be a framework for argument and reasoned **speech** that allows the focus to be problem solving rather than "winning the debate." The important aspect of discussion is its "microdemocratic" character; at each stage, any member of the group could have input, challenging or modifying the characterization of the problem or the details of the solutions, whereas in a debate, once the resolution is proposed, the only choice is to vote it up or down. The discussion course evolved, during the 1960s, into the "Small-Group Communication" or "Group Dynamics" course, though discussion was a competitive event in college forensics until the 1970s and remains one in some states' high school forensic contests.

The Structure of Speech Departments

The first years of the NAATPS saw the widespread evolution from departments of Oratory and Elocution to departments of **Speech**; partly this was a change under way already, but the Association also encouraged members to form separate departments when they could. The new field quickly became more than public speaking. The most common pattern for **Speech** departments, sometimes called the "Midwestern" or "Illinois" model (after Charles Woolbert's design for the department there), included every activity that involved human **speech**. Instead of courses that focused on a particular speaking situation (in the way the Oratory department focused on political and legal discourse), **speech** teachers expanded their domain into all the *uses* of **speech**. Courses thus included public speaking, debate, persuasion, physiology of the voice, diction and vocal expression, theater, and interpretation (of literature), the new name for what had been called "reading." The early **speech** field did not view these as separate areas simply thrown into a department (as had been partly the case with **speech** in English departments) but as a unified course of study, beginning with the voice mechanism and proceeding to the various functions of human **speech**. Sometimes the "psychology" of **speech** was included as a unifying perspective, with each aspect of verbal communication depending on an underlying psychological mechanism. Sometimes classical rhetoric was invoked to provide a common thread, picturing a discipline that began with Aristotle and Cicero and was now moving into the 20th century. The Midwestern-style department would typically have four areas: (1) public speaking and debate, (2) theater and performance, (3) **speech** disorders, and (4) (with the advent of radio) some type of mass media.

This curriculum included some novel areas. Rhetoric became a standard part of the curriculum due to the many PhDs produced by the program at Cornell University; sometimes the focus was classical, sometimes on the emerging idea of "rhetorical criticism," but most often, it was a study of British and American public address of the past 200 years. **Speech** pathology, pioneered by Smiley Blanton (who had an MD from Johns Hopkins) at the University of Wisconsin, became a staple of the field. **Speech** pathology (later called **speech** *pathology and audi-ology* and now most commonly called *communication sciences*) covered everything from nonstandard accents to cleft palate and stuttering to deafness and was a standard part of a general **speech** education right through the 1970s. Within 10 years of the founding of the field, radio had become important enough so that

universities offered courses in "radio speaking," or training one's voice for radio. At some schools, journalism was a part of the **Speech** department; at others, it grew out of news-**writing** courses and remained in the English department; and in others, it had its own department.

Consistent with the unified vision of the field, improvement of "**speech**" by addressing lisping or stuttering was of a piece with improving **speech** by "normalizing" a student's accent or improving his or her interpersonal skills. This last function was often glossed as "social hygiene" or "**speech** hygiene." By the late 1920s, teachers assumed that civil society was organic and that there was a normal, "healthy" function for individuals in social groups. Rather than a simple-minded conformity, they had in mind a kind of civic humanism inspired by John Dewey; the democratic functioning of groups both large and small required individuals who possessed the skills for both contributing their individual points of view and helping the group to function overall. In particular, Elwood Murray, in his classic work *The* **Speech** *Personality* (1937), not only launched the first serious use of social scientific methods in the field but also outlined the type of person that **speech** training was supposed to produce: someone "well-adjusted," who could get along well enough with others to solve problems. This perspective was a considerable advance over the earlier skills approach, which had emphasized individual competence and success.

The NAATPS changed its name in 1920 to NATS, the National Association of Teachers of **Speech**, which conserved the pedagogic focus that defined the field previously while accommodating the move to teaching the full range of courses involving **speech**. In 1947, the name became the **Speech** Association of America, recognizing the growing research component of the field, demonstrated in the *Quarterly Journal of* **Speech** and **Speech** *Monographs* (now *Communication Monographs*), established in 1934. *The* **Speech** *Teacher* (now *Communication Education*) began in 1952 as a forum for teaching methods and later published mainly social scientific work on communication pedagogy. So, as it diversified, the field at this point has two branches, the humanistic (using the word *rhetoric*) and the social scientific (more closely identified with **speech** or *communication*). Let's examine each of these in turn.

Rhetorical Studies

While working in **Speech** departments, humanistic scholars in communication increasingly identified themselves as "rhetoricians"—those who study rhetoric. With their discovery of Kenneth Burke's work on rhetoric in the early 1950s, they merged a classical tradition of rhetoric with symbolic interactionism, developing a general approach to the human use of symbols. Through the 1960s, they expanded their notion of public discourse beyond **speeches** by politicians to include pictorial and nonverbal rhetoric, protest rhetoric, and the rhetoric of social movements; in the 1980s and 1990s, literary theory and cultural studies decisively influenced the course of rhetorical theory and criticism.

Even though the term *rhetoric*, since the 18th century, had been a synonym for style instead of content and in the early 20th century was associated in the United States with composition courses (the "freshman rhetoric"), a more dignified and intellectually satisfying account of rhetoric has been natural to (**Speech**) Communication departments. From Henry Hudson's "The Field of Rhetoric" to Donald Bryant's "Rhetoric: Its Function and Scope" and the proceedings of the Wingspread Conference in 1970, scholars in this tradition sought to illuminate the social, cultural, and intellectual value in the study of persuasion.

In the 1930s, in part due to the efforts of Craig Baird at the University of Iowa, a rough consensus emerged about the outlines of rhetorical study. Humanists in **Speech** departments began with the idea that they would be studying "rhetorical history," the historical elements (events, people, and words) that intersect at important political **speeches** in the American and British political tradition. But there could be very different emphases in studying **speeches**, as noted by Herbert Wichelns (1925/1993) in his landmark essay "The Literary Criticism of Oratory." Wichelns points out that there are many different ways to understand the importance of a **speech**, and that some of them are not consistent with a rhetorical approach. He considers and rejects several options,

most important a literary approach, where the **speech** is treated as a text just like a poem or a novel, and a biographical approach, where the emphasis is on trying to tie the personality or character of the speaker to specific features of the text. Wichelns argued that the approach that should be most characteristic of rhetoricians in **Speech** departments is a functional one: **Speeches** should not be evaluated on their aesthetic merit but on how well they achieved the speaker's purposes in the situation. (Edwin Black would later contest this formulation in his 1965 book *Rhetorical Criticism*.) Craig Baird realized in the early 1930s both that Wichelns' view didn't exclude historical approaches (you might need to have a deep historical understanding to evaluate success) and that two things were needed for rhetorical criticism to become systematic. First, the field would need collections of **speeches** and need to collect important current **speeches**; Baird and his students William Brigance, Maxfield Parrish, and Lester Thonssen got this project under way, and **speech** collections continue to be published to this day. Second, they needed a method of rhetorical criticism that would enable scholars to systematically analyze **speeches**. Thonssen and Baird intended their massive **Speech** *Criticism: The Development of Standards for Rhetorical Appraisal* (1948) to meet this need. The key features of this text were its comprehensiveness and its vision of rhetorical criticism as a methodology. **Speech** *Criticism* tried to establish rhetorical criticism as a continuous tradition from the Greek and Roman rhetorical theorists to the present. It presents the problems of theory and methodology as part of a long tradition, which to an extent was an invention of the authors; the field that began as "**speech**" was focused on teaching public speaking, not the analysis of **speeches** and texts. Thonssen and Baird integrated some useful bits of literary methodology but by and large attempted to find an entirely rhetorical approach. But their focus was on **speeches**, and they hewed close to the functionalist approach outlined by Wichelns.

The Wingspread conference, held in Racine, Wisconsin, in 1970, was sponsored by the **Speech** Communication Association (as part of its National Developmental Project on Rhetoric) and organized by the faculty at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. An interdisciplinary group of scholars responded to the question "What is the essential outline of a conception of rhetoric useful in the second half of the 20th century?" In a superb set of essays and responses, participants outlined an expanded notion of rhetoric, which went far beyond the public address tradition. In light of the political unrest of the time, contributors noted that a starting point must be the inadequacy of traditional conceptions of political discourse as a foundation for rhetorical theory and criticism. In the publication of the Wingspread proceedings, in a volume called *The Prospect of Rhetoric* (Bitzer & Black, 1971), we can see some common threads connecting the "new" rhetorical scholarship. Rhetorical analyses are not empirical studies or theories about the effects of persuasion; those are left to social scientists, marketers, and mass communication researchers. Rhetorical theory and criticism must account for common **speech** as well as the **speeches** of politicians, low-brow discourse as well as high-brow, science as well as popular culture. Rhetoric is never merely technical, never just a set of means to an end; rhetoric is always both style and substance, ornament and argument. The moral dimension of rhetoric cannot be separated from its technical aspects, and rhetoric is not only a conveyer of knowledge but is also constitutive of knowledge.

Rhetoric, in short, is not only about much more than "just" **speeches**, it covers the whole canvas of human symbolic interaction. Much of the impetus for the newer versions of rhetoric came from the work of Kenneth Burke, a self-taught symbolic interactionist who adopted rhetoric as his favored theory. Nearly any part of culture or human life, from movies to music to clothes to food, can be understood as symbolic, and thus analyzed in terms of both the audiences that consume it and the audiences it creates, or constitutes. In the 1970s, scholars increasingly moved away from the public address paradigm, where the audience and, to an extent, the purpose are given, and toward a constitutive view of rhetoric, in which audience and speakers create a cultural and social reality through their talk. This expanded ("global") conception of rhetoric empowered rhetoricians to study increasingly diverse types of cultural artifacts and eventually paved the way for a version of rhetoric that overlaps with cultural studies. Cultural studies, which originated at the University of Birmingham (United Kingdom) in the 1960s, is a multidisciplinary movement that studies, from a generally Marxist point of view, the effects of the production and consumption of cultural artifacts, in particular how they do or don't challenge the political status quo.

From Speech to Communication

To understand how the social science side of the field evolved, and thus the structure of the modern Communication Department, we have to see how Woolbert's original picture of the field fared over the years. The Midwestern school had looked forward to a social scientific account of communication and sought scientific foundations for "**speech**," from the physics of the human voice to the psychological means of persuasion. Woolbert's 1916 article on "The Organization of Departments of **Speech** Science in Universities" outlined the Midwestern approach quite comprehensively. The organizing trope was "**speech**," embodied (quite literally) in the use of the vocal mechanisms. Departments of **Speech** Science were to study and teach about the uses of the speaking voice (which obviously excludes singing) in all their functions and contexts. Woolbert listed 10 headings for the academic student of **speech**:

1. Phonology: Physiology of the voice, the physics of sound
2. The Technique of Expression: Vocal technique, bodily action, history of elocution
3. The Psychology of Expression: Adjustment of mind and voice—the psychology of meaning and thinking
4. Application of Laws of Expression: Reading, interpretation of literature
5. The Acting Drama
6. Extempore Speaking
7. Argumentation and Debate
8. Persuasion
9. The Pedagogy of Oral Expression 10. The Aesthetics of Speaking, Interpreting, and Acting

The disappearing relationship of **speech** to elocution is apparent here, since drama, oral interpretation, persuasion, and argument all find a place. To characterize **speech** disciplinarily, Woolbert (1916) provided a diagram that showed, through an overlapping set of circles, how the study of **speech** was related to virtually every other field. Yet the point of disciplinarity is to emphasize difference over similarity, and Woolbert's attempt to leverage **speech** into disciplinarity through its relation to other fields didn't succeed at first. Throughout, Woolbert emphasized the "scientific" character this new discipline will have; for example, he discussed the laboratory practices that will soon, he hoped, be a standard feature of **Speech** departments. Research was the key, and so he noted,

The reason **speech** *is backward as a subject has been its frequent lack of academic character …* **Speech** *science, if it is going to persist in our universities, must raise up for itself a corps of fully trained men and women. (p. 72)*

Woolbert thought that the issue of disciplinarity was central, since social significance and curricular coherence would follow from a clear "scientific" research program that placed **speech** among the disciplines that have already made it. He was, however, wrong in the long run. Social scientific research was either borrowed from other fields or emerged out of concerns about the social relevance of knowledge about communication, as we have already seen in the case of Elwood Murray.

In the post–World War II era, the **speech** discipline began, slowly but steadily, to lose the integrated structure that had characterized its early years, in tandem with the growth of social science. First, and most obviously, the Midwestern model of the departments began to break up. As **speech** pathology became increasingly professionalized, it had less and less in common with **Speech** departments. Their focus was on research into the physiology of **speech** and hearing and the treatment of **speech** and hearing disorders, and on the production of accredited audiol-ogists and **speech** pathologists for private practice and schools. Theater, in many cases, had more in common with other performing arts such as music and dance, sharing their need for performance spaces and having its faculty evaluated for their artistic output rather than publications. In departments with the components of mass media, radio, television, or film, the level of student interest and the increasing scholarly and professional profile of media scholars and practitioners led in many cases to the formation of a separate department where there wasn't already one.

The loss of the integrated vision also happened on deeper levels, both methodological and epistemic. To an extent, **speech** scholars in the 1930s and 1940s had seen themselves as answering similar questions about **speech**/communication in different forms: sometimes questions about the historical context of **speeches**, sometimes about the causes of stuttering or the correlates of effective speaking. Increasingly, especially with the development of sophisticated experimental and statistical techniques, some **Speech** scholars began to emulate researchers in psychology and sociology and adopt a more clearly social scientific approach to communication research. The rift between humanistic and social science research would continue to grow, and by the 1970s, debates on the relative merits of each approach were common.

Before then, however, researchers often borrowed methodologies and made them their own. Some borrowings turned out to be highly significant. Expanding on the Yale studies of persuasion, communication research, both in **Speech** and in Mass Communication departments, began to take a variable-centered approach to studying interpersonal and public influence. The Yale studies of the mid-1940s (conducted by psychologists from Yale, including Carl Hovland, Irving Janis, and Harold Kelley) began as assessments of the World War II motivational films in the *Why We Fight* series directed by Frank Capra. Rather than looking simply at the properties of the films (i.e., the arguments and visual images, or "appeals"), the U.S. military asked Hovland and his associates to systemically assess which aspects of the films actually changed the attitudes of soldiers about fighting; their methodology consisted in giving before-and-after measures of soldiers' attitudes, to measure any change, and systematically varying the content of the films and the audience members to see which variables produced the most change in specific kinds of soldiers (older/younger, more/less educated, and so on).

In the late 1940s, a group of researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, led by the social psychologist Kurt Lewin, began to study group interaction ("group dynamics") reflexively, by having group members simultaneously participate in and observe groups. They established a site in Bethel, Maine, the National Training Laboratory (NTL), for intensive summer studies of group process. They introduced many radical ideas, such as the reflexive study of groups (members both participate and watch themselves participate simultaneously) and the terminology of T-groups (therapy), C-groups (community groups), and X-groups (experimental groups). They brought new philosophies into communication research, from existentialism to Freud, and pushed the **speech** hygiene concept to its limit: Bad communicators are pathological and in need of therapy. They began to believe that a healthy psychological state and good communication were the same thing, since poor communication was caused by insecurity, defensiveness, failure of empathy, and so forth. As the NTL evolved, it began to move away from strictly group process and toward interpersonal communication more generally. This focus on personal relationships was actually somewhat novel. The **speech** scholars who attended the NTL summer sessions came away not only with a new framework for studying communication but also with a new ethic for communication. Some of them became part of what was sometimes called the human potential movement, an approach that sought to maximize the possibility of authentic and transparent communication. This approach represented an extension and transformation of social hygiene and was typified by textbooks such as Virginia Satir's (1972) *Peoplemaking*.

During the 1960s, the standard contexts of communication we recognize today became parts of **speech** pedagogy and research, including professional communication and organizational communication. As more and diverse topics were included in the curriculum, the term **speech** began to seem restrictive, and the more general term *communication* seemed more appropriate, since it easily accommodated nonverbal communication, **written** and mediated communication, as well as the perspective that focused on human relationships generally rather than the parts of them conducted through **speech**. In 1968, a conference in New Orleans, Louisiana, was sponsored by the U.S. Office of Education and the **Speech** Association of America and resulted in the book *Conceptual Frontiers in* **Speech**-*Communication: Report of the New Orleans Conference on Research and Instructional Development* (Kibler & Barker, 1969). At this conference, the recommendation was made to change the name of the field to **speech**-communication, and this name, minus the hyphen, was adopted the next year, resulting in the **Speech** Communication Association (SCA).

The conference's recommendations were made in recognition of the expanding understanding of the field, so that *communication*, a more general term that encompassed diverse channels, media, and modes of human interaction, was a more appropriate name for the field than **speech** , even though they adopted "spoken symbolic interaction" as the focus of study. They emphasized, echoing Woolbert without realizing it, that all areas of the field should "use scientific approaches to inquiry" (Kibler & Barker, 1969, p. 21). The report acknowledged some old themes: the field as essentially interdisciplinary, the importance of **speech** processes to democratic decision making, the necessity of **speech** instruction for people to become functioning members of society. But these themes developed a new urgency due to the recognition of the plight of the underprivileged in society; "The conference participants encourage **speech**-communication scholars to design and execute research dealing with the **speech**-communication dimensions of current social problems" (p. 25). This conference also marked the emergence of applied communication research, serving the needs of both society and (later) business.

Speech Communication as a field of undergraduate instruction underwent explosive growth in the 1970s (Craig & Carlone, 1998). Students wanted to study in the many "new" areas of communication: interpersonal, organizational, group, and others. In fact, the diversity began, gradually, to outgrow the bounds of the term **speech** and the term *communication*, as cultural studies and media studies became integrated into the field's teaching and research. So, despite being shared by other departments, including Media and **Speech** Pathology, *communication* seemed increasingly a better fit. Another name change, based on the results of a vote by the membership, created the current National Communication Association in 1997.

Structures, Functions, and Contexts

A helpful way to understand the current structure of the field is to take seriously its tradition of linking pedagogy to research and look at the general structure of department organizations. Of course, each department is different, but there are some overarching similarities in how coursework is divided up. Courses (and research programs) tend to reflect different ways of categorizing communication. If a kind of communication is distinguished by the literal (sometimes physical) arrangement of communicators, we'll call that *structural*. If a kind of communication is typified by what it is for, we'll call that a *function*. When different functions and structures differ only in the setting for communication, we can call that a *context* (or *communication context*).

A primary division among types of communication is structural. If we focus on the individual, that's often called *intrapersonal* communication, a study of psychological processes; if we leave out the linguistic dimension, we would be studying *nonverbal* communication. If two people communicate, we call that *interpersonal communication*; typically, the interpersonal relationships studied are romantic and heterosexual, though a growing body of research studies friendships (same or different gender) and romantic relationships of the same gender. Add from one to a dozen more people to an interpersonal setting, and it would be called *small-group* communication. If one person is speaking to many, we often call that *public communication* or *public speaking*. And if one person (or a group) communicates with an unknown audience (through books, radio, TV, etc.), it has typically been called *mass communication*, though that term is increasingly being replaced by *mediated communication*, for the following reasons.

Mass communication was typically understood as a kind of structural analog to public speaking: one person speaking to many over the radio or TV, one person **writing** to many through the newspaper or a book. It's easy to see how that view can be extended to situations where the "speaker" is a group or organization; movies and television shows would fall in that category. But the structural assumption of broadcast media, from one to many, is now only one technological option among many others. Thanks to the growth of the Internet and digital media generally, many new combinations are possible. Using e-mail or a message board, many people can communicate with a single person and possibly see each other's contributions. Two people who've never met in person can form a close interpersonal relationship, and small groups can have their meetings remotely or

even asynchronously. Social networking sites such as Facebook or MySpace allow contact among people who know each other only indirectly. These new ways of accomplishing, through technology, different forms of communication are rapidly being integrated into the communication curriculum, in the form of a single course (called something like "Technology and Communication") or a variety of courses.

Communication departments also study and offer courses in certain *functions* of communication. For historical reasons, the functions studied are only a subset of the possible ones. For example, the function of relationship development is treated typically within the course on interpersonal communication. However, it's common to have courses in persuasion, mediation, and conflict resolution, all of which are important functions of communication and to a certain extent cut across the social science/humanities boundary. In the context of the communication professions, other kinds of functions are possible: sales, public relations, and training are uses of communication sometimes taught and studied in a Communication department.

The biggest growth in the study and teaching of communication has occurred in the expansion of the *contexts* of communication. A context is, roughly, the setting in which a structure or function of communication occurs, where the setting influences the nature or kind of communication. A brief list of contexts might include the following:

- Organizational communication
- Business communication
- Health communication
- Global communication
- Intercultural communication
- Marital and family communication

Each of these contexts brings together knowledge from structures and functions and tries to address specific question or problems of communication in that context. In fact, much of the study and teaching about contexts focuses on specific problems within the context, investigating what goes wrong with communication and how it can be improved.

—William M. Keith

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