

the work of isolated individuals rather than the collective cause of communication studies.

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Communication, Theory, and History
**“The Future Is Not
What It Used To
Be”¹: Gender,
History, and
Communication
Studies**

by Sue Curry Jansen

Napoleon described history as the fable agreed upon. During the closing decades of the 20th century, explorations of the grounds for such agreements have been the sites of highly charged epistemological and cultural conflicts. Theories about communication have provided the cognitive maps for many of these explorations. These theories have not, however, originated within the academic field we know as communications.

Except for studies in rhetoric, communication research has been largely ahistorical. The usual excuse for this lapse, the newness of this branch of inquiry, does, in fact, have merit. The field, like the cultural practices it studies, is increasingly an international enterprise. Nevertheless, communication initially articulated its identity as an independent area of academic inquiry in the United States, and the structures of knowledge it supports continue to carry the signature of this historical genesis.

Established in the wake of the communications revolutions that took place during World War II, communication research claimed modern, technology-based forms of communication as its primary foci. In short, it created a space for itself by identifying a subject matter that was of immense impor-

tance to the postwar U.S. economy and society but of marginal interest to traditional academic disciplines.

This strategic move situated communication research within the categories and the historically dependent structures of thought of what Henry Luce, the publisher, had heralded in 1942 as “the American century.” It defined a set of contemporary Western artifacts and cultural practices as the subject of communication research and invested its methodological commitments in the then current understandings of the nature of empirical inquiry. This positioning did not merely predispose the field to historical and cultural myopia, it came close to mandating it.

Yet, communication—even contemporary forms of communication—cannot be understood without understanding history. Mary Mander (1983) strongly underscores this point when she asserts:

At the heart of communication, however defined, is the fact that it is mediated. Because all communication is mediated, the nature of communication is necessarily connected to historically dependent dispositions. (p. 12)

Recovering History:

Communication as Situated Knowledge

Ironically, communication research achieved academic legitimacy by securing its claims in empiricism at precisely the historical juncture when scholars in more established disciplines were beginning to discover that empirical claims are themselves “speech acts” (Searle, 1969) and that these speech acts are socially and culturally “situated” (Haraway, 1988)

forms of communication. The so-called “communicative turn” (Habermas, 1971) within epistemology has yet to be fully acknowledged, appreciated, absorbed, or accommodated by the domain assumptions of communication research.

Where the field of communications has been responsive to these developments, it has usually been in ways that continue to support impoverished conceptions of history. Thus, for example, Michel Foucault’s (1970, 1977, 1978) concept of “discourse,” which recognizes that knowledge and knowers are always constructed within, and indelibly marked by, a field of power relations, has gained currency in communications. There have, however, been few reflexive explorations of the ways this idea radically challenges conventional/textbook understandings of disciplinary histories and research practices—including the history and practice of communication research.

Pressing the Foucault example further, how many of us have seriously considered the methodological problems that the concept of historical discontinuity or “rupture” poses? Foucault (1970) not only contends that the categories with which we know, think, and make sense—both as scholars and ordinary citizens—are historically and culturally dependent dispositions; he also points out that these dispositions can be radically disjunctive. He uses a by now very familiar quotation from a Chinese encyclopedia to illustrate this phenomenon.² He cites this example to demonstrate not only the “exotic charm of another system of thought” but also “the limitation of our own” and “the stark impossibility [for us] of thinking that” (p. xv).

Awareness of “that” has become a tenet of cultural and postcolonial studies in our field. This is an advance. Yet, too often, this awareness has generated pat validations of “difference” that offer easy excuses for relativism. These have, in turn, created a ready arsenal of stock charges of “essentialism” and “reductionism” that are levied against anyone who presses researchers to do the very hard, systematic, and disciplined historical and sociological work necessary to make some, albeit always incomplete, sense of “that.” Without this work, each of us will remain incarcerated in “her own zoo,” to use Trinh T. Minh-ha’s metaphor (cited by Haraway, 1991; see also Trinh, 1989, pp. 80–86). When this happens, all possibilities of developing rational models of intergroup communication and coalition politics are foreclosed.

The apartheid approach to scholarship (Trinh, 1989) that results from the unreflexive valorization of historical discontinuity and cultural difference ensures that communications will remain “a field of isolated islands of thought” (Rogers, 1989). It also excuses its practitioners from participation in the very difficult, conflict-laden dialogues that are a necessary prologue to articulating ways of knowing that are no longer secured in categories and logics of domination and submission.

The remainder of this essay focuses on some of the ways the new feminist epistemologies can be seen as marking radical breaks with conventional, empirical conceptions of science and communication. I will use this exposition to try to show why most attempts (including friendly attempts) to integrate feminist perspectives within main-

stream research programs and publications fail, and suggest some possible avenues for re-marking this impasse as a site of discovery rather than conceding it as a point of terminus for dialogues within the field of communications.

*Losing History in the Translation:
The Communication Question in
Feminism, the Feminist Question in
Communication Studies*

Like the Chinese encyclopedia, new feminist epistemologies and theories of communication weave together categories, concepts, and cultural practices that are impossible to think within the Baconian and Cartesian methodologies that have provided the warrant for empirical studies in social science. To be sure these empirical methodologies have always functioned more as ideology than as practical recipes for conducting scientific research (Latour, 1987; Woolgar, 1988).

What makes the feminist claims unthinkable is the forthright assertion that the discourses of science are not only manmade, but that the epistemologies and the theories of knowledge that produced these discourses are systematically skewed by both Euro- and androcentric interpretive and textual practices. Or, to put it in the term of Mander’s (1983) proposition: the rules governing the communications that comprise scientific talk and texts have been secured by the historically dependent dispositions of a select group of well-educated Western men.

According to the feminist view, then, the substantive claims of science are neither “neutral” nor “neutered” (MacKinnon, 1982). To the contrary, feminist epistemologies treat the forms of “objectivity” science has valorized

as contingent cultural artifacts: artifacts that were crafted by formalizing and codifying the subjective views of the men who participated in the founding conversations of modern science. Feminists have identified some of the gendered practices that shaped these artifacts. First, women were excluded from science at its inception. This was, in part, a strategic move that was designed to distance the powders and potions of scientists from those of the womanly arts of herbal medicine and witchcraft, and thereby protect scientists from the bloody Inquisition that swept Europe during the formative years of the scientific revolution (Easley, 1983; Merchant, 1980; Trevor-Roper, 1969). Second, modern science marked this distance by securing its vision in highly sexualized and sexist metaphors: instrumental metaphors that characterized nature as a woman and recommended her domination—even, in Bacon’s graphic hyperbole, her “rape” (Keller, 1985; Merchant, 1980). Third, the categories of Western science emphasize discrete boundaries, hierarchies, binary logics, and abstractions that, paradoxically, support both disembodied and homoerotic patterns of thinking and writing about natural phenomena (Bordo, 1986; Keller, 1985; Noble, 1992; Rose, 1983).

Feminist accounts of the history and cultural practices of science partially overlap and converge with accounts of the scientific enterprise that have been independently arrived at by sociologists and historians of science (Easley, 1983; Hillman, 1972; Latour, 1987). The feminist project is not, however, merely an analytical or critical endeavor. To the contrary, it is committed to social change: to radical

revision and re-creation of the terms and fields of power relations that provide the auspices for the discourses of science and history.

Feminist revisionism does not claim that the discoveries or the laws of the Sciences of Man are invalid or obsolete. It does, however, claim that these sciences are not only partial but also incomplete. For this reason, feminist epistemologies patently reject all strategies for redressing this partiality that do anything less than undertake a comprehensive revision of existing categories and structures of knowledge (Harding, 1991, 1992).³

Yet, established structures of knowledge in science and history contain no terms and few spaces for thinking “that.” And, that is why these structures cannot support integration of feminist ideas within existing paradigms and definitions of the problematics of communication studies.

In contrast to the “view from nowhere” that the epistemics of Baconian and Cartesian objectivity support, feminist epistemologies recognize that all forms of knowledge, including the disciplined knowledges of the academy, are, in Donna Haraway’s (1988) terms, “situated knowledges”: knowledges that are historically, culturally, and linguistically mediated, finite, and secured within, although not necessarily homologous with, a field of power relations. This recognition does not necessitate an embrace of relativism. To the contrary, it is the first move in what Haraway (1988) describes as a “no-nonsense commitment” to the hard work necessary to provide “rational,” “objective,” and “faithful accounts of a ‘real’ world” (p. 579) that can be partially shared and that are “friendly to earthwide proj-

ects of finite freedom, adequate material abundance, modest meaning of suffering, and limited happiness" (p. 579).

Contra Foucault's theory of mediation, however, feminist epistemologies do not assume that all roads to resistance and emancipation are blocked by hegemonic discursive practices. Increasingly they recognize that Foucault's concept of "discourse," like Bacon's and Descartes' concepts of "objectivity," failed to adequately account for its own vantage point: the situation of its own production.

Foucault's "data," the texts and expert claims that he used to expose the panoptic disciplining of modern forms of authority and sexuality, were situated within the epistemic of what Nancy Hartsock (1981) calls "abstracted masculinity." Consequently, a sociologically informed feminist epistemological position supports Jürgen Habermas's (1981) indictment of Foucault as a "young conservative," although not only or fully on the charges specified by Habermas, whose own theory of emancipatory communication is also punctuated by gendered "blindspots" (Fraser, 1989; Jansen, 1989).

Dorothy Smith (1987) implicitly recognizes Foucault's (and philosophy's) androcentric positioning when she reinterprets his concept of "discourse" from a sociological perspective:

because we are talking sociology, not philosophy, we want to address discourse as a conversation mediated by texts, that is, not a matter of statements alone but of actual on-going practices and sites of practices, the material forms of texts (journals, reviews, books, conferences, classrooms, lab-

oratories, etc.), the methods of producing texts, the reputational and status structures, the organization of powers intersecting with other relations of ruling in state agencies, universities, professional organizations, and the like. Attention to discourse as socially organized does not discard or invalidate the statements, conventions, and knowledges that its texts bear. Rather texts are understood as embedded in and organizing relations among subjects active in the discourse. *We are talking then about actual people entering into actual relations with one another* [emphasis added]. (p. 210)

Smith reminds us that "the actual people entering into actual relations with one another" in the laboratories, seminars, government offices, and publishing houses that produced Foucauldian "discourses" were (and are) primarily, although not exclusively, male and that these men operate within a gendered field of power relations that is based upon a complex dialectic of "dominance" and "submission."

Since Foucault attended to the sexual rather than the gendered constituents of the anatomy of power relations, he was unable to gain access to a persistent site of tension, conflict, and sometimes resistance to hegemonic discourse: women's cultures or "ways of knowing" (Belenkey, Clinchy, Goldberger & Mattuck, 1986; Combahee River Collective, 1977/1982; Gilligan, 1982; Smith-Rosenberg, 1985). The specific contents and artifacts of these sub- or "residual" (Williams, 1980) cultures have generally been of marginal interest to male institutions and disciplinary practices. Consequently, they have retained significant diversity across ethnic, religious, color, and class lines

even within Western industrial societies. Unlike the disciplined, homogenized, and commodified values, practices, and artifacts of the dominant/male culture, “woman” is still, as Luce Irigaray (1980), put it, the “sex which is not one.”

When women are represented within the discourses of abstracted masculinity (and they often are), it is as “the sex”—the marked category—in the field of power relations.⁴ These representations usually define women in essentialized and heterosexist terms based upon the roles they play in men’s lives as sexual partners, wombs, and nurturers.

These representations leave much of women’s experience “hidden from history” (Connell, 1987; Rowbotham, 1974). What is hidden from the disciplined discourses of abstracted masculinity, including Foucault’s corpus, is

the experience of spinsters, lesbians, unionists, prostitutes, madwomen, rebels and maiden aunts, manual workers, midwives and witches. And what is involved in radical sexual politics, in one of its dimensions, is precisely a reassertion and recovery of marginalized forms of femininity in the experience of groups like these. (Connell, 1987, p. 188)

Since Foucault (1977) ascribes special epistemological status to the outlaw—“the condemned man”—who, he claims, represents “the symmetrical, inverted figure of the king” in the “darkest region of the field of political power-relations” (p. 29), his disinterest in marginalized forms of femininity is especially telling. It is androcentric if not overtly misogynist.

Also hidden, or erased, from the historical archives are adequate ac-

counts of the contributions women have made to the development of the disciplines either by attending to the material needs of scientists and scholars (Rose, 1983) or by acting as silent partners in the research process (Sayre, 1975). Recent speculation about the role Einstein’s first wife may have played in developing the special theory of relativity is just one, albeit dramatic, example of this kind of gap in the official archives of science. A more prosaic but pervasive example of women scholars hidden from history, including the history of communications, is the two person academic career in which wives, cast as silent partners, function as researchers, typists, editors, and sometimes ghost writers. Such careers were very common in the United States after World War II, when academic women, like their working-class sister, Rosie the Riveter, were dismissed from their positions en masse to make room for men returning from the military and war-related government work.

Moreover, the historical eraser rubs both ways. When, for example, the history and cultural practices of science are apprehended through the lens of “abstracted masculinity,” the absence of women from the laboratory or research team is routinely taken to mean gendered behavior is also absent. That is, abstracted masculinity cultivates the peculiar conclusion that male institutions are not gendered institutions. It allows scholars like Steve Shapin (1991), co-author of *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (1985), and others to maintain, for instance, that gender is not relevant to explaining Boyle’s science because it was a “gentlemen’s” activity, and that

therefore gender is not a significant variable for studying the formative texts of modern science.⁵

In contrast, feminist epistemologies conceive of the absence of women from the laboratories, research teams, public forums, and archives of science as decisive markers of gendered terrain. Thus, for example, science, technology, war, and sport are usually conceived of as homosocial and sometimes homoerotic institutions within feminist research protocols (Cohn, 1987; Hacker, 1989; Keller, 1985; Reardon, 1985; Sabo & Jansen, 1992; Sabo & Panepinto, 1990). Recent feminist research in communications indicates that news, information science, and certain other research venues are also illuminated by viewing them as sites of gendered knowledges (Jansen, 1989; Rakow & Kranich, 1991).

In sum, feminist epistemologies assume that gender is a crucial constituent for the analysis of all fields of power relations and all disciplined subjects and structures of knowledge.⁶ This assumption mandates radically new ways of conceiving, legitimating, and building structures of power and knowledge.

*The "Brave New World" of
Communication Studies*

Communication research is peculiarly positioned in relationship to gender studies. Empirical research in the field has confirmed gender based differences in taste cultures, audience responses, conversational behavior, decision making processes, leadership styles, voting and consumer behaviors, and much more. Gender is therefore well established as an important variable for most forms of research in the field.

Empirical social science research methodologies produced these findings. In the 1970s and early 1980s feminists interpreted such findings as evidence of patriarchal domination and incorporated them in briefs for reform in both science and society. In the past decade, however, as Sandra Harding (1986) points out, feminist empiricism has discovered that gender is not merely an important variable in explaining social behavior, it is the difference that makes a difference. This discovery not only radically altered the future of feminist research, it also transformed the ways feminist sociologists and historians conceive of the past.

Moreover, this discovery is producing a body of research that is increasingly exercising influence beyond feminism.⁷ This research is demonstrating that gender is a primary constituent of the anatomy of all forms of power and knowledge. So that, for example, if we want to study the structures, processes, and achievements of Plato's academy, the Crusades, the medieval monastery, the Royal Academy, or the National Football League, we must consider and examine the exclusion of women as a constitutive, gendered behavior rather than an incidental practice of these bodies.

This move opens up what Stuart Hall describes as a "brave new world" for researchers: one that radically alters the topography of knowledge. According to Hall (1988), a "revolution in thinking" follows

in the wake of the recognition that *all* social practices and forms of domination—including the politics of the Left—are always inscribed in and to some extent secured by sexual identity and positioning. If we don't

attend to how gendered identities are formed and transformed and how they are deployed politically, we simply do not have a language of sufficient explanatory power at our command with which to understand the institutionalisation of power in our society and the secret sources of our resistances to change. (p. 29)

Even the brave enter this world knowing that they must rewrite their personal intellectual histories as well as the histories of their disciplines and that these revisions will significantly transform their investments in the future.

Yet, such reflexive exercises can also secure the grounds for forms of rationality and politics that are no longer situated in the unexamined assumptions of Western structures of gendered knowledge. Thus, for example, they make it possible to uncover and partially repair the gender-based “blindspots” in Foucault’s archaeology of knowledge and Habermas’s concept of emancipatory communication, and thereby to recraft and amplify the power and resonances of these ideas. Such exercises will, of course, also have less salutary effects. A reflexive history of communication research would probably show that situating the field within the prevailing assumptions of the power-knowledge of “the American century” contributed to cultural imperialism, Cold War ideologies, and replications of gender orders based upon what Rob Connell (1987) calls “hegemonic masculinity.” In my judgment, however, the risks and embarrassments we face are far outweighed by the opportunities.

A blindspot that requires immediate redress, in light of the lessons of the new feminist epistemologies as

well as the work of Derrida (1974, 1976), Foucault (1978), and many others, is the fundamental, even constitutive, error in most current research protocols for empirical research that treats gender as a “variable.” This error is produced by the unreflexive practice of importing and replicating the compulsory heterosexuality of the larger culture that forces data into the logics and structures of discrete, binary categories, which reflect hegemonic definitions of masculinity and femininity. One methodological strategy already in use in communication research that has the potential to accommodate this correction is the “sense-making” approach pioneered by Brenda Dervin (see, for example, Dervin, 1989; Shields & Dervin, 1991).

Conclusion

The communication revolution in epistemology has robbed contemporary scholarship of its philosophical innocence and naivete. Developments in politics and the global marketplace have changed the terms, technologies, agendas, and material conditions for the production of knowledge. New structures for securing, testing, and validating knowledge claims recognize location and positioning as pivotal because, as Hall (1988) notes, “This insistence on ‘positioning’ provides people with co-ordinates, which are specially important in the face of the enormous globalisation and transnational character of many of the processes which now shape their lives” (p. 29). In short, this insistence makes all scholarship more accountable than it was during “the American century.”

The communication turn in epistemology also creates extraordinary op-

portunities for the field of communications. Some of the architects of this revolution are now looking to us to help them map the terrain of the brave new world they have created. Thus, for example, Donna Haraway (1991) sees communication studies as posed on the cutting edge of further developments in the new scholarship. To meet the challenges of this scholarship, we will need to create methodologies with sufficient analytic power to systematically investigate the multiple and multifaceted ways that gendered patterns of communication and gendered distributions of power are variously constructed and replicated in different social institutions and structures of knowledge.

My account has underscored some of the ways that empirical approaches within science and history have secured their vision—their way of seeing by not seeing gender. It has also identified some of the “blindspots” in some prominent theories of mediation and emancipatory communication. Finally, it has located some of the sources of Euro- and androcentricity in the power-knowledge of the American century, and in the socially situated knowledge that secured the legitimacy of the field of communications.

Poised on the threshold of a brave new world, some of us now regard the shadow histories that these approaches to discovery supported as very promising sites for new discoveries. To effectively develop these sites, however, we need fully equipped conceptual tool boxes. Consequently, we cannot afford to throw the proverbial infant out with the soiled suds. Empirical social science, and the forms of rationality it supports, remain powerful tools for knowing and being in a

world wired together by transnational and global communication and market structures. We need to acknowledge the continued relevance and utility of this form of inquiry as well as its gaps and blindspots.

Positioning communications within the context of the American century gave researchers privileged access to the cultural artifacts and forms of power-knowledge that are currently being reproduced and transformed by global and transnational processes. That these processes are now making the cultural and gendered constituents of that power-knowledge increasingly transparent should not be read as a failure of the empirical project but rather as a delayed affirmation of its critical and self-correcting powers. Documenting the denials that secured the delay is a crucial emancipatory move. Nevertheless, it should not eclipse the fact that the project for empirical study of communication, conceived a half-century ago, has been very productive. Indeed, it has been so successful that it is now undermining its own grounding.

The challenges and opportunities we now face involve rethinking and re-situating our conceptions of that past in light of what we now know. Awareness of the gaps in the power-knowledge that secured our field enriches the quest for, and multiplies the paths to, more adequate grounds for “rational” inquiry. It also provides more open and responsible templates for situating and adjudicating claims to “objective” knowledge. In sum, this awareness moves us closer to knowing how to craft “faithful accounts of a ‘real’ world” that can be partially shared, and that are “friendly to earth-wide projects of finite freedom, ade-

quate material abundance, modest meaning in suffering, and limited happiness" (Haraway, 1988, p. 579).

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Notes

¹ This ironic characterization of the future is generally attributed to the poet Paul Valery.

² Foucault borrows the passage, which he treats as a paradigmatic case, from Jorge Luis Borges: "This passage quotes a 'certain Chinese encyclopedia' in which it is written that 'animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies" (cited in Foucault, 1970, p. xv).

³ In this respect, it embraces Audre Lorde's (1984) assertion that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." Because existing structures of knowledge are based upon a dialectical relationship involving domination and subordination, the new feminist epistemologies assume that any strategy that simply adds women's contributions to existing equations will not produce the necessary corrective. Both terms in that equation (masculinity and femininity) are damaged by the exploitive nature of the architecture of the field of power relations in which they are situated. For discussions of this point, see Ferguson (1984) and Connell (1987). For a fast and easily accessible examination of what happens when mainstream models of scholarship attempt to "add women and stir," see Berkin's (1991) "Dangerous Courtesies' Assault Women's History."

⁴ Women are, of course, very amply represented in male discourses. Indeed, the surfeit of such representation was, in part, the provocation that led Virginia Woolf to write *A Room of One's Own* (1929).

⁵ To be sure, Shapin and Schaffer (1985) demonstrate that class is the salient variable of the narrative they construct to explain the working relationship between Boyle and Hooke.

⁶ It should be noted that recognition of the ubiquity of gendered knowledges and structures of power does not preclude or marginalize consideration of class, race, ethnicity, and other important social categories. To the contrary, as Connell (1990) points out, his theorization of "hegemonic masculinity" facilitates analyses of social structures in general rather than forcing the researcher to place a priority on class or gender relations. This point requires emphasis because some sociologists (e.g., Mosco, 1991; Shapin, 1991) are, in my judgment, legitimately suspicious of theoretical programs that obscure or deflate the importance of class analysis, particularly at a point in history when large scale redistributions of wealth are taking place in countries like the United States and the United Kingdom—redistributions that are designed to reverse the social benefits of the welfare state.

⁷ Studies of the processes and products of the scientific enterprise by feminists such as Bleier (1984), Hacker (1989), Haraway (1989), Hubbard, Henefin, and Fried (1982), Keller (1985), Martin (1987), Rapp (1988), Traweek (1988) and others have demonstrated just how powerful the lens of gender is in examining the social construction of knowledge. So much so that many male sociologists, historians, and philosophers of science without feminist commitments now want a piece of the action. Witness recent developments in the science and technology studies (STS) journal, *Social Epistemology*, as well as inclusion of Keller and Haraway in the programming of the 1991 National Endowment in the Humanities Summer Institute on "Science as Cultural Practice" at Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT. The STS crowd appears to be unaware that male scholars such as R. W. Connell (1987, 1990), Brian Easlea (1983), and Paul Edwards (1985, 1990) have for some time used the concept of gender and feminist theories very effectively in their respective explorations of the sciences and technologies of militarism.

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Communication, Theory, and History **Theory and History**

by John Nerone

Historians are frequently criticized for paying too little attention to theory. This criticism is certainly justified, though it is often ill-informed. On the level of conscious argument, historians are wary and dismissive of theory in one sense—as “covering law”—but have often embraced theory in another sense—as “grand narrative”—and are somewhat receptive to theory in a third sense—as methodology. Yet, on the level of practice, historians put theory aside in the explication of sources, and adopt as an (unattainable) ideal the telling of the past in its own terms. This leads to a common mentality that is instinctively hostile to theory and its latinate vocabularies.

Communications historians are less likely to share the instincts and practices of the bulk of the historical profession. But, while claiming in some cases a greater theoretical sophistication, and while sharing an agenda with various styles of communications research, communications historians often ignore the work of cognate historians. This allows them to advance grand narratives in a way that most historians now disavow.

This article begins with a discussion of the development of the historical profession and its distaste for theory. It then outlines the crisis of professional history of the past few decades, dwelling on a few of the historiographical issues that arose during that crisis. It then contrasts this to the situation of communications historians.

History Versus Theory

Part of the craft culture of professional historians is a scorn for theory and theorists. Historians conceive of themselves as blue-collar workers who mine archives and craft narratives. They think of their work as concrete and deride the scholars of the abstract. They joke, punning on Veblen, about the leisure of the theory class.

Historians' scorn for theory has a history itself. History as a discipline and a profession was formed in the 19th century as a subset of a broader array of historical thought. Put another way, professional historians colonized a wide continent of historical thinking and entrenched themselves against attacks from other colonists—“speculative” or “philosophical” or “evolutionary” notions of history—and from aboriginal barbarians—the popular memory. Historians excluded popular memory by emphasizing objectivity and critical analysis of documents and denying the political import of their own narratives. At the same time, on the other frontier, they excluded other historical thinkers (Hegel, Marx, Spencer, Comte, Darwin) by developing an explicit set of rules of argument and evidence and an implicit rejection of overarching theory and deductive method (Nisbet, 1969).¹