Democracy and American Mass Communication Theory:
Dewey, Lippmann, Lazarsfeld

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ABSTRACT
In the early twentieth century "the public" was a key problem for American social theorists perplexed by the social consequences of industrialization and urbanization. Dewey's account of the public (and its problems) laid a foundation for a theory of mass communication. Later American social science came to take politics as a topic, not the starting point, of study (Lippmann). When mass communication research faced the vexing issue of mass media/mass society in the 1940s and '50s, it lacked the rhetorical and theoretical resources to do as much as it could have. This failure has marked research on media and society since and been the basis for many calls that would reconceive the political uses of research. (Key Words: Democracy, Mass Communication Theory, Liberalism, Dewey, Lippmann, Lazarsfeld).

INTRODUCTION
This essay treats the development of the discourse of American social science about the mass media. It tells the story of a cluster of narratives that came to lose consciousness of their narrative status. With that loss went a narrowing of horizon: a forgetfulness as to the "politics" (both broadly and narrowly conceived) of mass communication theory. The essay aims to sketch the general trajectory of American mass communication theory from the Progressive era to the consolidation of the field in the 1950s. The argument is that much of history of American mass communication theory and research is an attempt to carry out a political project without being articulate about that project. If you could lay the classic texts of American mass communication research down on a psychoanalytic couch, you would find that they thought themselves talking narrowly about the mass media and their "effects," while they were in fact talking about the perils and possibilities of democracy. This political concern appears like an unexorcized demon whenever American social science turns its attention to the media--largely because the commitment to an image of democracy is unacknowledged. A political concern for democracy is thus not only a topic of discourse in American mass communication theory; it is part of the structure of that discourse. Many old American narratives appear in American communication research in garbled form: the hopes of building a city on a hill that would shine to the nations, of creating a political order in which the free flow of opinions would guarantee the flourishing of human variety and opportunity, and the horror of mental enslavement when opinion becomes too powerful.
This essay treats three moments in the development of American mass communication theory. First, it examines the social thought of John Dewey (1859-1952); second, the critique of that mode of thought by Walter Lippmann (1889-1974); third, the social

research done by Paul Lazarsfeld (1901-1976) and his associates. Though I focus on these three scholars, their names are intended to represent entire eras and styles of thought. Dewey stands for the social thought of the American progressive era (1890s through the 1920s); Lippmann for the rise of a self-consciously scientific, value-free ethos in American social science (1920s and '30s); and Lazarsfeld for the early days of American mass communication research (1940s and '50s).

HISTORICAL SELF-IMAGES: WHAT IS AT STAKE?

Why start with Dewey? Placing mass communication theory's origin in the issues that Dewey struggled with helps to solve conceptual incoherence and restore political self-consciousness to American media studies. Dewey is appealing because he saw no reason to want a science that suppressed its moorings in values and history. For him, inquiry was a means to create values and to intervene in history; it was one especially fruitful human practice among other human practices.   Science was better the clearer it was about its commitments; the self-imposed amnesia or bracketing of values he thought unproductive.   Dewey started with the question of political order and only later arrived at a conception of communication. Like many, more recent, students of communication and culture, he begins with politics, not as an afterthought. His willingness to take democracy seriously as a category of philosophical consideration and social action may make him today seem noble if antiquated, but he also offers a way of coming to terms with the inherited political narratives of liberalism without degenerating into slogans and trivialities. As James Carey has suggested in several essays (1975, 1982, 1985), Dewey's work can be read as providing the resources for an indigenous American tradition of cultural studies. Dewey, in short, is the path not taken by American mass communication research.

According to its conventional self-understanding, in contrast, American mass communication research emerged during the years between the wars as social scientists of various stripes began to do empirical research on topics such as propaganda (e.g. Lasswell, 1927), movies (e.g. Blumer, 1933), mass media generally (Willey and Rice, 1933), and radio (e.g. Lazarsfeld and Stanton, 1942, 1944, 1949). A good example of this vision of the field's history--as originating more or less contemporaneously with the broadcasting industry and being strictly a matter internal to the history of empirical social science--can be found in the widely cited claim of Wilbur Schramm, himself a chief institutionalizer of the field, that communication research has four "founding fathers": Paul Lazarsfeld, Harold Lasswell, Kurt Lewin, and Carl Hovland (Schramm, 1980).   To look at the rise of mass communication research as we now recognize it, however, is to arrive too late on the scene to understand its intellectual history and character.   Self-images now in power may exclude forms of research and ideas which once in fact were crucial but since have become embarrassing. As Sproule shows (1987), for instance, propaganda analysis was crucial in getting research on mass media off the ground in the 1920s and '30s, but was later systematically forgotten. All histories of academic enterprises tend to have something patricidal about them: embarrassing intellectual paternities are suppressed and preferred ones put in their place. So too with mass communication research: its institutional birth happened only long after its intellectual problems were established. Mass communication theory and research, again, is a voice in

an ongoing conversation about the meaning of American democracy that has rarely recognized its participation in that conversation.

Extending the history of the field back nearly half a century in order to include debates about democracy in the Progressive Era gives a more coherent account of the problems with which the field has struggled and helps to articulate what precisely is at stake in the study of the mass media and what the potentials of that discourse are. American thinkers such as Dewey, Charles Horton Cooley, and Josiah Royce deeply felt the coming of the twentieth century with all its disruptions (Quandt, 1970). For them, the world was out of joint. Industrialization and urbanization had forced them to live in a world different from the remembered world of intimate communities they were born into. In a moment of exaggeration Dewey quipped that only geographically did Columbus discover the new world: the genuine new world only came into existence in the machine age. Progressive social thought can be construed as an attempt to answer the question: what are the prospects for democracy in a society no longer based on face to face communities? Is the vision of each "man" determining "his" own fate obsolete in a society of such colossal scale, where things are in the saddle and ride mankind? Is political participation a chimera in a society of displaced city-dwellers and uprooted immigrants?

There are two basic responses. One is a nostalgia for the small community and an attempt to create a nation-wide "community of communities" (to use Richard Bernstein's phrase [1986]): the approach of such thinkers as Royce, Cooley, Park, and Dewey (Quandt, 1970). The other is a glee at the chance to scientifically engineer a monstrously large society: the approach of thinkers such as Walter Lippmann, Herbert Croly, Thorstein Veblen, and again Dewey (Kaplan, 1956). Dewey is arguably the quintessential "Progressive" who embodies the contradictions of his age: he is at once a bright-eyed humanist liberal hopeful for the ultimate triumph of democracy and a scientistic social engineer who advocates the social control of human nature.[1]

THE PLACE OF COMMUNICATION IN DEWEY'S THOUGHT

Dewey sketches a complex vision of social life that links together an understanding of the self, communication, community life, and democracy. He has a theory of mass communication (though he did not call it that) prior to the appearance of the mass media as we now know them. Further, his theory is inseparable from larger concerns for social, political, and moral order: what Dewey called "democracy." I will briefly examine each aspect of the Dewey's vision of social life and communication, showing how Dewey's thinking transcends older divisions such as self/society, reason/desire, symbol/reality, all of which inform classic liberal thinking about mind and society (Unger, 1975).

The Self

Dewey's notions of the self owe much to William James's destruction of the idea of an essential self, spiritual or transcendental in nature, in The Principles of Psychology (1890, Ch. 10). James saw the self as a multifarious collection of experiences, possessions, roles, projects, and passions, unified biologically. James, like Dewey after him, celebrates rather than laments the disappearance of the essential self. For James and Dewey the plurality of the self is a liberation, not a scandal. It liberates from the

stultifying metaphysical crutches invented to assure the self a solid existence, and allows people to go about the business of forming selves from the materials of their experience. Since the self does not stand remote from but is constituted by its experiences, no ritual separation into sacred reason and profane desire is possible. As James said, sense and intellect, reason and desire "are wrapped and rolled together as a gunshot in the mountains is wrapt and rolled in fold on fold of echo and reverberative clamor." In pragmatist thinking, the contest of reason and desire was a pseudoproblem, a consequence of a faulty picture of human nature, and a natural consequence of the myth of the autonomous, rational self. (The harmony of reason and desire, self and society, is worked out most fully in Cooley, 1902/1983).

Dewey's moral and political theory is based on this Jamesian conception of the self, mixed with a faith that the vocation of humanity is self-realization. For Dewey (1898:205), self-realization or growth was "the most general category of moral life," the keystone in the arch of virtues. One of Dewey's most distinctive projects was the attempt to combine the German idealist notion of each person developing his or her powers in an unfolding process of Bildung (formation, education) with the pragmatist denial of any fixed human essence. For Dewey, if the self exists prior to its "realization," self-realization is a mere unfolding of an innate telos already existing in potentia. If the self exists apart from its realization, then self-realization is a process of acquisition--mere abstract consumption. Dewey rejects both conceptions (which might be called the Aristotelian and possessive individualist theories, respectively) of the self. Instead, "the self has no existence excepting in terms of what it has to do, and what it has to do is a function of the whole situation . . . the self is the realization and the realization is the self" (1898:206; emphasis in original). He leaves no room for souls or spirits: the self is nothing other than the forms it takes, and those forms are "a function of the whole situation," that is, dependent on the whole social and moral order at a given point in time. Self-realization occurs through the works of one's hands and the words of one's mouth, but opportunities to work and to speak depend on the rest of the social order.

Community

From there, Dewey proposes a conception of community. This is a vision of multitudinous, diverse social life which offers a limitless variety of paths to self-realization. Only in the company of others is genuine self-realization possible at all. A society of one would have none of the treasures invented by the collective historical genius of the race--intellectual, material, practical, medicinal, culinary, technical, whatever--through which to grow. "Liberty," Dewey (1927:150) said, "is that secure release and fulfillment of personal potentialities which takes place only in rich and manifold association with others" (cf. Cooley, 1902, Ch. 12). Modern society (despite tendencies to abstraction and distance) increases the accessibility of different contributions to human life and opens many avenues for self-creation. The particular conditions people find themselves in are not strangle-holds on freedom but the necessities for a rich, full, concretely universal self. "There is no self until you ask what the self is called to do in relation to other people" (Dewey, 1898:207). Dewey "held that self-realization and the good of the community were the same end viewed from two different

perspectives . . . The good of each was the good of all, and the good of all was the good of each" (Westbrook, 1980:39).

Democracy

This form of social life, the abundant community, is precisely what Dewey meant by democracy. Dewey held that democracy was more than a form of government. He was an insistent defender of the belief that democracy is a whole way of life, a form of social organization in which all can realize their personalities in full. In a famous statement (Dewey, 1927:148): "Regarded as an idea, democracy is not an alternative to other principles of associated life. It is the idea of community life itself." Though his philosophical opinions went through a striking metamorphosis as Dewey matured, this theme ran throughout his career, from his youthful idealism to his mature instrumentalism (Westbrook, 1980:37). In an early essay, "The Ethics of Democracy" (1888/1969), he argued, "To say that democracy is only a form of government is like saying that home is a more or less geometrical arrangement of bricks and mortar; that the church is a building with pews, pulpit, and spire. It is true; they certainly are so much. But it is false; they are so infinitely more" (p. 240). Democracy is not captured in its mere material forms. Rather, it "is a form of moral and spiritual association. . . . It is the form of society in which every man [or woman] has a chance and knows that he [she] has it--and we may add, a chance to which no possible limits can be put, a chance which is truly infinite, the chance to become a person. . . . It means that in every individual there lives an infinite and universal possibility; that of being a king and priest. . . . democracy is an ethical idea, the idea of a personality, with truly infinite capacities, incorporate with every man [woman]. Democracy and the one, the ultimate, ethical ideal of humanity are to my mind synonyms" (p. 240, 244, 248). Dewey attacked a "numerical" conception of democracy, which he said makes "mincemeat" out of the social organism. For him American democracy was not only a particular passing experiment, but a (yet incomplete) attempt to create the universal and necessary social context for the fulfillment of human nature. Democracy for Dewey is hence simply the universal end-point to which any attempt to build a social order based on the full realization of human potential will arrive. In a rich, harmonious community, the potentials of the individual and of the species converge. Classically, only God was thought to embody in a single personality all the potentials of the species; now, democracy offers the chance to each person, as Dewey said, to be a king and priest. Like Mill (1859) and Whitman (1897) before him, Dewey saw the specific grace of democracy and the sign of its success in the personalities it produced, or rather, the personalities that created themselves under its care.

Communication

For Dewey communication was not the problem of putting private minds en rapport one with another. It is not the intimate communion of individual minds as classically formulated by liberal thinkers such as Locke. Rather, communication is the problem of getting people to be full, participating members in the public life of a community. Without this common partaking, then society is a mere symbiosis, not a democratic, human association. As Dewey said (1915:87) democracy is "primarily a mode of

associated living, of conjoint communicated experience." Democracy is a structure of possible experiences. What then is his conception of experience?

Dewey's notion of communication is based on the striking claim that experience is public, not private. Sidney Hook notes (1968:219) that many have misunderstood Dewey by taking experience to mean "first-person, incommunicable, unsharable subjectivity." Dewey himself argued (1916:3-8) that experience is a sum of structures in the world as they are focused in consciousness. Experience is a set of practices of action and appreciation found in a community. It is the repertoire of stories that can be told and situations in which they can be told. The mature Dewey was not an idealist who grounded the objectivity of meaning in a cosmic Mind or Self; his social philosophy was precisely the attempt to see experience as objective and supraindividual without falling back on transcendental modes of argument. A democratic community is one that possessed a collection of human artifacts and practices available for the self-realization of members of a community. For Dewey (as for Peirce before him, and Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and their followers after him) the flow (or what Peirce called the "metaboly") of meaning took place outside the individual mind. Dewey materialized language and culture and externalized meaning and experience. He treated experience as part of the furniture of social life, not a mental event or construct. For Dewey, the individual's autonomy was not threatened by the exteriority of meaning, but empowered to become fully human through absorbing the aesthetic and practical productions of the human family.

Dewey's notion of communication is closely related to his notion of "intelligence," which resides in "the improvement of the methods and conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion" (Dewey, 1927:208). It consists of practices of speech, thought, and action and is similar to James's (1907:166) notion of common sense--the habits of thought handed down through myriad generations and preserved in language. Intelligence for Dewey is quintessentially public: it is the objective stock of possibilities of reasoning and discourse available in a community. Each creative or self-creative act is indebted to previous labors and laborers: a poet to those who developed language and poetic forms; a musician to those who developed instruments; an athlete to the many who have refined the practices of games and institutions of sport; and analogously, a self to those who invented ways of being human. "The things in civilization we most prize are not of ourselves. They exist by grace of the doings and sufferings of the continuous human community of which we are a link" (Dewey, 1934:87). Civilization, therefore, is the residue of the intelligence created by a myriad of actors and deposited in social institutions, law, religion, art, language, technique, etc. The difference between the savage and the civilized, for instance, is the store of intelligence available to the latter. Communication is the practice of getting people collectively to partake of this treasure trove of public experience. Culture, while objective, is also diverse; hence it is not tyrannically constraining but objectively various. Communication for Dewey is thus not the process by which minds come into contact, one with another; it is a matter of discursive practices and communities--of cultural forms and forums.

Communication was the answer to the problems of American democracy Dewey gave in his foremost work on political theory, The Public and its Problems (1927). In it, he argued that the public realm had gone into "eclipse": "Till the Great Society is converted

into a Great Community, the Public will remain in eclipse. Communication alone can create a Great Community. Our Babel is not one of tongues but of the signs and symbols without which shared experience is impossible" (p. 142). The "public" for Dewey in a way is a language factory. Its task was to invent forms of discourse needed for the exigencies of social life. By so doing, the collective level of "intelligence" would be raised without improving "original endowments one whit": a "mechanic can discourse of ohms and amperes as Sir Isaac Newton could not in his day" (p. 210). His most concrete proposal of the book was of a massive reinvention of discursive possibilities--specifically, the mobilization of scientists and artists to invent new signs, symbols, and forms and discourse that would prove useful for altering the way things are and for expressing the deep meanings of everyday experiences. "The function of art has always been to break through the crust of conventionalized and routine consciousness. Common things, a flower, a gleam of moonlight, the song of a bird, not things rare and remote, are means with which the deeper levels of life are touched so that they spring up as desire and thought. This process is art" (pp. 183-4).

However, such improvement of the general discursive and aesthetic life could not proceed, according to Dewey, without a revival of the local, face-to-face community: "There is no limit to the liberal expansion and confirmation of limited personal intellectual endowment which may proceed from the flow of social intelligence when that circulates by word of mouth from to another in the communications of the local community" (Dewey, 1927: 216). Dewey thus conceived communication to be the solution to dislocated public life--and hence the solution to the crisis of democracy. Communication for him combined objective, supraindividual cultural forms (the "intelligence" that results from scientific inquiry and artistic creation) and social forums ("local communal life") in which these forms become the common property of all.

In sum, Dewey proposed a new liberalism. It was based on the individual to the extent that the unfolding of personal powers was its cornerstone. But it added a distinctive belief in the objectivity or publicness of experience, with a whole array of corrosive arguments against classic liberal notions of the individual self as a reasoning island that must fight off social attachments from without and the blind and hungry gnawings of desire from within. Human liberation was not freeing the individual from all constraint, but growth in a social world with other people. He advocated what Macpherson (1973) calls "developmental liberty"--freedom to develop rather than freedom from impediment. Further, if reality is made and remade by human labor, then politics will be less about how to interpret reality than how to create it (Carey, 1982). Democracy then is the collective determination of reality. Dewey agreed with James that the disappearance of the notion of "the Truth, conceived as the one answer, determinate and complete, to the one fixed enigma which the world is believed to propound" (James, 1907:157) was a call to creative truth-making rather than a cause for mourning. The impossibility of ever settling a question by reference to "the facts" only served to reorient human disputes more fruitfully: away from the dead-end belief that there is a final answer "out there" toward the establishment of productive ways of collectively determining and producing reality-- Dewey's "methods and conditions of debate, discussion, and persuasion."

In what follows, I want to argue that Dewey's conception of communication and social order is superior to the liberal notions that preceded it and followed it as well. While all liberalisms are clearly based on some kind of privilege to speech as key to political and social order, Dewey's liberalism takes human minds, communities, and selves to be created out of the practice of speech, rather than preexisting it. Hence speech and communication cease to be an eternal problem of bridging the poles of self and other, individual and community, private and public (Unger, 1975).

A NARROWING OF HORIZON: LIPPMANN

American mass communication theory and research, at least in its theoretical vision, is a series of footnotes to Lippmann's Public Opinion (1922). It continues Lippmann's reliance on the antinomies--of self and other, theory and practice, reality and fiction, reason and desire, science and morality--that Dewey worked so hard to blur and shares Lippmann's sentiment that debates about democracy should be carried on only via the discipline of objective science.

Carey (1982) suggests that Public Opinion is the founding book of American media studies. The book expresses a number of key themes in the history of mass communication research: the near impossible calling of the journalist (or scientist) who must strive for objectivity, the distorting powers of symbols, the sometimes volatile, sometimes inert nature of the masses, etc. The book makes all the distinctions American social science is comfortable with: reason/desire, fact/fiction, objective/subjective. Generally unrecognized in the field, however, is that the book and its position in the canon do not represent timeless wisdom but a historical victory over another mode of conceiving mass communication and its connections to the public space: Dewey's. Lippmann fell back on the rhetorical gestures tutored by classic liberal thought rather than building on the pragmatic insights available to him. He created a language for dealing with the mass media founded on stark dualisms of reason and desire, mind and world, symbols and reality, self and society. Instead of Dewey's notion of intelligence, he worried about facts; instead of democracy as an ethical ideal, he treated it as solely a form of government; instead of self-realization, the citizen's duty was to gain information about public issues; instead of desire as the motor of human creativity, it was a demonic force from the underworld and the scourge of politics; instead of language as a living museum of humanized heirlooms it was an inadequate tool to be disciplined by science; instead of symbols as the bond of community, they were the emotion-ridden evil of mass manipulation; instead of science enlightening society from within via a wide-ranging publication of the results of inquiry, it was to engineer society from above via a technocratic elite of experts; instead of the constitution of a malleable yet resistant reality by collective deliberation, politics centered on gaining accurate pictures of a world outside that was fixed once and for all. In short, Lippmann takes us out of the Deweyan world where speech and politics are inseparably connected to one where all the old liberal wine is poured into new bottles.

Public Opinion is first of all a paradoxical book in its relation to classic liberal conceptions of democracy. On the one hand, Lippmann wants to attack old ideas of rational, "omnicompetent" citizens living in a self-contained community as irrelevant to the scale of modern society and hopelessly naive in the face of modern psychology's

exposure of the irrational element in human nature. On the other hand, he does not want to put himself in the difficult rhetorical position of attacking democracy, since he would be attacking the sacred for many of his readers. The dominant persona of the book is of a shaken democrat who wants to believe but cannot, and the rhetorical strategy he adopts is a loving recreation of the eighteenth-century image of democracy. He both pooh-poohs and expresses nostalgia for a Gemeinschaft of participating, reasoning citizens. As he unfolds the once-upon-a-time of classic democratic theory, it becomes clear to the reader that the notion of people as "legislators by nature" who "take in facts as they take in breath" is inadequate to modern conditions. His image of the public of days gone by is brilliantly wrought; one reason, perhaps, for the book's enduring status as a classic is that readers can easily forget that this image is a target Lippmann sets up to attack rather than a definitive description of American ideals.

Though Lippmann sets up the old image as a straw man, he never gets beyond its vision nor its vocabulary. Like Dewey, he faces a crisis of public discourse. Both have a similar diagnosis: the complication of things via industrialization, the great expansion of scale and speed, and the sense that the ordinary person was sapped of the potency to change or even understand events (Haskell, 1977). But their prescriptions diverge. Dewey, as above, sought a great instauration of public discourse through what amounts to a vast educational program. Lippmann, in contrast, thought that democracy could be saved only by the reign of reason in public opinion, and the only way he thought that possible was via a technocracy of experts (Public Opinion, chs. 25 & 26). He thus salvaged the classic image of democracy in a way that violated the spirit it was supposed to have contained, at least in Dewey's view: the hope that each individual could make something of him- or herself through participation in public life.   As Dewey in fact noted, in a shocked but otherwise enthusiastic review of the book, Public Opinion was not the salvation (as Lippmann claimed) but the indictment of democracy (Dewey, 1922).

Lippmann was a Wunderkind of sorts in the movement now known as democratic realism: a current of American political science that examined politics in the light (or darkness) of "the new psychology" (i.e., Freud, crowd, herd, and instinct psychology) and its revelations of the dark side of the psyche. Lippmann was one of many intellectuals in the 1920s who "had come to reject what they considered the romantic idea that all men should actively engage in governing the country, assuming the irrationality of most men and the practical impossibility of actual popular control" (Purcell, 1973:108). But his conception of human irrationality led to a stark division of human capacities into the rational and emotional, with "reality" being on the side of the rational and "symbols" being on the side of the irrational. Anything deviating from the accurate representation of "reality" is vulnerable to being overrun by the violence of the instincts. In his epistemological economy, there is genuine coin ("reality") and counterfeit ("fictions" or "symbols"). Politics, rhetoric, and hermeneutics are fruits of irrational interest and in need of science's discipline. A narrow view of scientific method, in other words, has the monopoly on truth for Lippmann (an ironic position for one whose fame rests on his brilliant story-telling!).

In Lippmann's earlier Drift and Mastery (1914) he suggested that science was the midwife of human passions. By the time of Public Opinion (1922), Lippmann saw science's job not as to educate the passions, but to tame them. The passions were not the basis of a rich

human life but an ancient, animal substratum to be domesticated. Science is the discipline that keeps the mind from confusing real and apparent causes. Lippmann gives a vivid description of the confusions that can befall a mind ruled by emotion. "In a superstitious mind, emotion is a stream of molten lava which catches and imbeds whatever it touches. When you excavate in it you find, as in a buried city, all sorts of objects ludicrously entangled in each other. Anything can be related to anything else, provided it feels like it. Nor has a mind in such a state any way of knowing how preposterous it is. Ancient fears, reinforced by more recent fears, coagulate into a snarl of fears where anything that is dreaded is the cause of anything else that is dreaded" (p. 155). This phantasmagoric description --complete with overtones of clotting gore ("coagulate") and savage beasts of the jungle ("snarl") --dramatizes the belief, then current, of the horrifying power of nonrational mental life.   Any principle of intellection that is not logical and scientific necessarily falls prey to emotion--in all except the most "acutely sophisticated mind," he writes, we allegorize, condense, and combine (as if those were bad). Once accurate pictures of the world outside disappear as an arbiter and check, nothing is to prevent the reign of Dionysian chaos and barbarian violence. Objectivity grounds, for Lippmann, all hope of rational discourse and hence of social order.

Along with his demonized conception of the emotions went an impoverished conception of reason as well. Reason was nothing without facts. Without reality, the mind produced nothing but prejudice. "When men act on the principle of intelligence they go out to find the facts and to make their wisdom. When they ignore it, they go inside themselves and find only what is there. They elaborate their prejudice, instead of increasing their knowledge" (1922:397). His assumptions are first that wisdom is based on facts, second that it is something outside, not inside. Lippmann would have no sympathy for the idea that wisdom is not any particular content, but simply an attitude of openness to novel experience (Gadamer, 1982:319). For Lippmann, human judgment wells up from the murky subterranean caverns of desire. This belief in the irrational character of human judgment leads naturally to Lippmann's advocacy of experts--those whose passions have been disciplined by training--as saviors of American democracy (Kaplan, 1956). Similarly symbols are irrational slogans rather than vehicles of experience as they were for Dewey. Lippmann's conception of language is motivated by a horror of its imperfections and a desire for the exact transmission of meaning.

For language is by no means a perfect vehicle of meanings. Words, like currency, are turned over and over again, to evoke one set of images today, another to-morrow. There is no certainty whatever that the same word will call out exactly the same meaning in the reader's mind as it did in the reporter's. Theoretically, if each fact and each relation had a name that was unique, and if everyone had agreed on the names, it would be possible to communicate without misunderstanding. In the exact sciences there is an approach to this ideal, and that is part of the reason why of all forms of world-wide cooperation, scientific inquiry is the most effective (p. 66).

Because words have no meaning besides the image they evoke in someone's mind, all intersubjective meaning depends on agreement. For Dewey, in contrast, language does not depend on such delicate gossamer threads; each word, rather, is an objective yet diverse repository of possibilities that can be unfolded conversationally (i.e., in time). Echoes of the Vienna Circle are in the passage from Lippmann quoted above, along with

the idea that language ought to be a conduit of pristine ideas (cf. Reddy, 1979). He treats language as something whose function is to evoke images--that is, to point to something beyond language. Language consists of signs of things, not just signs. For him, to mean is always a transitive verb. A word or sign must mean something; it can't just mean in and of itself. To admit that significance might be publicly anchored (rather than individually) for Lippmann is to let down the floodgates to widespread confusion and the tyranny of other people's words.

Lippmann's conception of science is differs from Dewey's. For Dewey science is created by many people, is not subject to revision by personal whims, and is a complex of methods for defining, describing, and producing reality. For Lippmann, science builds a moat around reason to protect it from the dragons of desire. It is a discipline of individual minds, not communities. Its benefits have to do with the restraint of irrationality, not the production of alternate modes of social life. Lippmann's conception of science rests on his belief that the only basis of meaning is the individual mind. He is a great critic of public discourse. Symbols stand for ideas, and ideas exist only in individual minds. "In thinking about symbols, it is tempting to treat them as if they possessed independent energy. Yet no end of symbols which once provoked ecstasy have quite ceased to affect anybody. The museums and the books of folklore are full of dead emblems and incantations, since there is no power in the symbol, except that which it acquires by association in the human mind" (p. 220). Lippmann thus anchors the power of symbols psychologically. He thus misses Dewey's profounder conception that a symbol signifies not because of what an individual associates it with, but because of the way it testifies of a community's experience or of moments in history. Lippmann does not want the dead to seize the living.

It is curious that Lippmann both devalues political discourse and gives it great, even terrifying, persuasive powers. Because the measure of all politics is the quality of cognitions, politics is worthless yet feared because of the apparent passions it encourages. As Carey writes (1982:24), "Lippmann redefined the problem of the press from one of morals and politics to one of epistemology. The consequence of that move was to radically downplay the role of the state and class power, indeed to contribute, paradoxically in a book about politics, to the depolitization of the public sphere." Public Opinion was not in fact about politics; it was an attempt to eliminate politics. An epigram from Lippmann's sequel, The Phantom Public (1925:30), expresses the technocratic credo: "a code of the right and wrong must wait upon a perception of the true and false." All moral choices boil down to having the facts; information rules over ethics. And the constitution of the facts for Lippmann is prepolitical (rather than always already political). His vision of politics is the rational administration and ordering of society by objective scientific methods and impartial experts. He presents not a refinement of politics, but an alternative to politics, or, to alter the title of one of his books, an Epilogue to Politics. His proposals belong to the spirit of the age--an age that believes in the beneficence of social engineering, ranging from Taylor's scientific management to Lenin's vanguard party.

Lippmann's vision of democracy rested on the capacity of the ordinary citizen to participate knowledgeably in public--governmental--affairs. In his theoretical framework, democracy rose or fell with the intelligence of the masses. Dewey, in contrast, thought

that the widespread debunking of popular intellectual capacities by democratic realists was not a conclusive sign of the innate incompetence of the masses but of a failure to achieve meaningful forms of public participation. The fundamental dividing line between Dewey and Lippmann was their attitude toward democracy: Dewey thought that education, art, and science--the creation of intelligence--could make it possible; Lippmann thought that democracy at best could be improved by providing the public with objective facts about the outside world. Dewey wanted to improve people's lives and discourse; Lippmann wanted to improve their data-base. Dewey would agree with Lippmann that public information was crucial, but little more than a prerequisite for the grand experiment of democracy in the modern world.

MASS COMMUNICATION RESEARCH CONSOLIDATES ITSELF: LAZARSFELD
The great underlying problem of classic effects research was similar to those addressed by Dewey and Lippmann: How to conceive of the public sphere in an age of mass media? In its rise to the status of respectable social research, however, mass communication research lost the connection between communication, social science and democracy that had prevailed in earlier days when social science and social theory were more intimate. Consider the study of voting decisions in the 1940 presidential election by Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet, The People's Choice: How the Voter Makes up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign (1944/1968), often cited as a classic of mass communication research. This work is striking in that it takes on an obvious problem of public and political life but fails to theorize it adequately or explicitly.
The People's Choice is an extended footnote to Lippmann's demolition of faith in the rational citizen's existence.   A chief finding of the study is that the reasoning, independent voter who carefully ponders all the issues and votes accordingly is a fiction. "The real doubters--the open-minded voters who make a sincere attempt to weigh the issues and the candidates dispassionately for the good of the country as a whole--exist mainly in deferential campaign propaganda, in textbooks on civics, in the movies, and in the minds of some political idealists. In real life, they are few indeed" (Lazarsfeld, et. al., 1968:100). Interesting is what they make of this interpretation. For Lippmann, the notion that reason was not sufficiently distributed among the people to allow popular rule was scandalous and demanded accounting for. For Lazarsfeld and his colleagues, as we will see, the loss of the rational citizen was not a reason to abandon or reform the democratic church (as Lippmann had thought) but rather a reason to increase one's faith.
What Lippmann saw as sluggishness and resistance to reason in the masses was redefined in Columbia studies as a defense against volatile outbursts of passion that crowd psychology (e.g. LeBon, 1895) had feared. Moreover, the deficiencies of the masses were taken to signify a healthy stability rather than the apathy of democratic despotism that Alexis de Tocqueville (1969:690-95) had warned against. The masses were thus not the scourge but the ballast of democracy. This work of redefinition is especially evident in a later volume, Voting, by Bernard Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and William McPhee (1954). In this work, the traditional fears of democratic theory about the intellectual behavior of citizens--irrationality, frivolous choices, resistance to new ideas or evidence--became redefined as functional instead of dysfunctional. Private vices such as indifference, rigidity, and inertia were reinterpreted as public benefits such as consensus and resistance

to fanaticism and factionalism. These scholars argued that the proper unit of analysis for democracy is society as a system, not individual actors. What seems a scandalous indifference to politics by individuals thus can stabilize the system as a whole. They thus posit a sort of latter-day "invisible hand" regulating political order: "Where the rational citizen seems to abdicate, nevertheless angels seem to tread" (p. 311).   Or, "individual 'inadequacy' provides a positive service for the society" (p. 316).   A wholesale revision of classic democratic ideals was thus carried out without any sense of a revolution having taken place (see Lukes, 1977): democracy was no longer seen as individuals participating in public discussion. Berelson and Lazarsfeld made a virtue of a necessity: they conceded everything that mass-society theorists had feared (the rise of apathy and indifference, the alienation of individuals), yet found a way to place a blessing on it.

The initial villain (the uninformed, apathetic citizen) thus turns out to be the eventual hero (the stable [non]voter who maintains the social fabric). The tradition of mass communication research provides wonderful examples of the human capacity to take the failure of prophecy as its fulfillment. A political commitment to liberal democracy underlies this dextrous interpretation of findings, but this commitment is not theoretically articulate.   One wonders what would have counted as a refutation of democracy. These studies were simply not vigilant to the narrative about the travails of democracy they inherited. On the one hand, they showed a devotion to the viability of an idea (liberal democracy) quite remarkable for those trained to have ideas falsified by evidence; on the other, they helped to undermine this devotion without being aware of it.

Consider another Columbia production: Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld's <u>Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications</u> (1955). Perhaps the most distinctive finding of this work was "the two-step flow of communication" (a notion anticipated in <u>The People's Choice</u>). According to the hypothesis of the two-step flow, the mass media do not directly inform people about politics, fashion, consumer goods, etc. Messages from the media are received by "opinion leaders" or "influentials" (step one) who spread them by word of mouth to people less tuned in (step two). People, in an insight resonant with common sense and backed by data besides, turn out to be the most important mass medium (since they are the key link in the "flow" of mass-communicated messages); moreover communication is "influence" which travels horizontally rather than "power," which travels vertically.

This hypothesis is an enduring contribution to the understanding of mass media processes and effects. But it can also be read as a tactical manoeuvre in the heated war about mass culture and mass society going on in 1950s American intellectual life. The horizon of the debate, as C. Wright Mills (1956), the organizer of the field work for <u>Personal Influence</u>, noted, was that the mass media had destroyed the ratio between speakers and hearers needed for the traditional democratic conception of "the public." In this conception, as crystallized in the icon of the town meeting, people not only heard the deliberations; they were heard as well. In such a forum, the number of people was small enough that everyone, in theory, could have a chance to speak. Broadcasting, however, opened tremendous opportunities for mass hearing, but not for mass participation. The "audiences" (the etymology is apt) created by broadcasting were "masses" too large for the participation of all. Broadcasting struck a damaging blow to the ideal of the "public";

it seemed to herald a "mass society" where citizens are mere spectators or auditors of the elite few who speak.

The genius of Personal Influence was to rescue the public sphere from the media. The book plucked it away from channels of mass communication and put it back squarely in the hands of the people--specifically, in the discourse of citizens. Their "discovery of personal relations" showed that people still talk, that speech had not been stolen from people by the new media, and that small, public-like communities still existed (with a humorous self-mockery found in some of Lazarsfeld's writings, they claimed to have "discovered people"). Social science's "rediscovery of the primary group" could be read to imply that the discussion and face-to-face contact that constitute a "public" were still possible. The media could therefore be seen not as usurpers of the public space (as Mills and a whole range of mass-society critics saw them) but as contributors to it: the media provided material for discussion via the first step of the two-step flow. Katz and Lazarsfeld showed that the American polis was still run by people and not by centralized information-machines, the media.

Personal Influence is more than a solution of a conundrum in social science; it is a solution to a major crisis of its age: the possibility of (participatory) democracy in an age of mass media. The two-step flow model is profoundly satisfying to the democratic imagination (as Katz himself noted [1957]). It shows how "information" from the mass media gets disseminated, not in a direct, 'hypodermic' way, but filtered through the discourse of eminent citizens.

This salvaging was achieved, as above, through asserting the presence of speech in local communities. But is such speech sufficient to fend off mass-society fears? For several reasons, no. First, the speech they discovered was more a channel for the flow of media messages than the collective determination of reality argued by Dewey. They showed that people indeed do play a part in the flow of mass communication, but this role makes people receivers of information rather than orderers of social worlds. Second, such speech was private rather than public (Arendt, 1958). It had little or no efficacy in shaping a collective world; the topics of communication which they examined--ones that concerned choices among an already fixed set of alternatives in matters of fashion, consumption, or voting (Gitlin, 1978)--naturally influenced their generalizations about the nature and powers of discourse. Third, such speech did not originate in the stresses and strains of local community life; rather, it entered communities at a distance via the media.

Personal Influence showed that conversation indeed took place in local communities. Unlike Dewey, however, other than as a weapon to fend off mass society theory's gloom about the future of democracy and the fate of "mass man," the book lacked any theory of why community talk might be important.

Like much scholarship written in the shadow of mass society theory, Personal Influence uses watered down Tocquevillean imagery: it is concerned about the potentials of democratic despotism and the enervation of initiative. But the vicissitudes of American democracy are nowhere an explicit part of Personal Influence's theory or analysis, beyond its brief discussion of the image of mass society. Clearly the foreword by pollster Elmo Roper sets the stage for the underlying problem of the book: how is political participation possible in a vast society? Roper's foreword outlines how "ideas penetrate the public . . . without any apparent influence of the mass media" (xv), and sets up a quite remarkable

model of political influence based on concentric circles of influence.   To the innermost circle belong the "Great Thinkers," of which there can only be five or six in the whole world; after that follow "Great Disciples" (twelve in any one country), "Great Disseminators" (250-1000 in the U. S. A.), "Lesser Disseminators" (15,000 to 50,000), "Participating Citizens" (10-25 million), and finally, the "Politically Inert" (at least 75 million: his population estimates fit the mid-1950s). Roper is here concerned with the diffusion rather than creation of ideas; the image is of society as a homogeneous medium whose only resistance to the flow of ideas is individual, and where ideas flow one-way from the center. Besides Roper's image of Ptolemaic politics in the preface and the book's telling epigraph from J. S. Mill's <u>On Liberty</u>, <u>Personal Influence</u> makes no attempts to extend or deal with the underpinnings and political commitments of liberal democracy. The same problem of participation animated the thinking of John Dewey, who used the notion of communication to overthrow barriers to participation. <u>Personal Influence</u>, like much mass communication research after it, assumes an image of democracy but does not argue it. The authors might reply: such was not our task. Indeed, Lippmann and others had already effectively shut the door of freewheeling speculation on political or social theory to the self-respecting social scientist. Mass communication research has long been encysted within a debate about American democracy--specifically, the power of media to influence the delicate processes of public opinion formation upon which democracy conceives itself to be founded. The debate about the perils and possibilities of public life is much older than the media themselves, as Dewey's example makes clear. <u>The People's Choice, Voting</u>, and <u>Personal Influence</u>, as well as Joseph Klapper's synthesis, <u>The Effects of Mass Communication</u> (1960), can all profitably be read within the context of the debate on mass society (which turns on the question of the viability of democracy in an age of media and bureaucracy). These works did not explicitly situate their arguments within a debate about the nature of the American public sphere, but in some ways, their "scientific" obliviousness to the hot issues of the times may have given these books all the more rhetorical power. Their recourse to empirical data as the warrant of their claims meant they could enter the debate not as contentious (and hence contestable) participants but as impartial science. The rhetorical mode of these works gives them legitimacy (as science) and makes them less than fully articulate (as analysts of the condition of society or of the possibilities of democracy in an time of burgeoning mass media).

CONCLUSION
This analysis is not intended to be one more product from the flourishing academic industry of criticizing Lazarsfeld. Works of Lazarsfeld and his students are real achievements; moreover, the tradition he authored is today alive and well and has gone down unanticipated channels (as can be seen in the work of Katz, for instance). Rather, this essay is one reading of the history of mass communication theory. If the prohibition on political story-telling had been less severe in the early days of American communication research, then the resultant theory might today be far more coherent in its political--and theoretical--commitments. Part of the reason for this prohibition, perhaps, can be found in Lazarsfeld's biography. In his youth in Vienna, it was possible to believe in science and socialism as a unity (as he did); the failure of the revolution sundered his

positivism from his Marxism, his research from his politics, forever. In the United States, he called himself "a Marxist on leave" (Morrison, 1976:7). Though keenly interested in politics, Lazarsfeld repressed any intellectual engagement with them (Lazarsfeld, 1969). Of course, Lazarsfeld's biography intersected neatly with the reigning spirit of social science in the American academy; the reasons for the prohibition on political self-consciousness in the history of American mass communication theory are many.

The rules which defined academic story-telling in the days of Lazarsfeld centered on the separation of facts and values. Under these rules, if one's political commitments were explicit, then one relinquished the authority of objectivity; if one wanted that authority, then one had to bracket questions of "value" and risk being driven by unacknowledged values. A resultant irony is that the unwitting price of "objectivity" in much research of this period is inarticulateness on political and philosophical matters.

The development of American mass communication theory took place in the postwar period outside of discussion about political issues or commitments. Political commitments were either taken to be self-evident or non-existent. Its interpretations of data fought off critics who saw America as a mass society, while the data themselves argued the bankruptcy of liberal ideas of democracy. In the fifties already American mass communication research ran into an impasse that needed explicit political debate, but its rules forbade such debate: revise liberal democracy or welcome mass society? The question was not answered, just ignored, or rather, postponed. The 1980s seem to be the time when the bill for procrastinating debate has become due: the most fundamental issues debated in communication studies today, in the United States as well as Europe, have to do with the political commitments of the field and uses of research. It is striking that a label such as "liberal pluralist" has come not to refer to a political ideology at all but rather to a failure to think in larger terms of political theory or social structure. Ancestral refusals to engage or acknowledge political horizons have made liberalism synonymous with oblivion, nonpolitics, and naiveté in communication and cultural studies.

This is unfortunate for liberalism, which historically has been a worthy partner in political dialogue with Marxism, and is a rich source of progressive political ideas and programs, as can be seen in the theory, and lives, of such liberals as J. S. Mill and John Dewey. In terms of theoretical vision, the tradition of mass communication research that runs from Lippmann through Lazarsfeld to Klapper ends where Dewey begins: in a crisis of liberal democracy. Dewey's vision of how speech connects to community life, and how that in turn connects to both personal and political life, can help revitalize the life of mass communication theory; it is at least a place to start.

NOTE
1. Dewey exegesis faces severe challenges. It is sometimes tempting to follow Morton White (1949:244) in talking about "two John Deweys," so contradictory do his writings sometimes seem. In this essay, I try to be faithful to the spirit of Dewey, rather than becoming mired in some of the sentences that jar late twentieth-century ears. The split allegiances Dewey encourages can be seen in the debate between Gonzalez (1988) and Peters (1988) about the link between Dewey and American mass communication research. Gonzalez argues that American mass communication research as it is accords

with Dewey's vision of social science, and I respond that Dewey offers an alternative to present practice, however much that practice owes to social-engineering strands of his thought. The issue is whether Dewey is a forgotten hero or triumphant forefather: I have to think that while his modes of thinking survived, they were corrupted and narrowed. We can use Dewey to critique the consequences of Deweyan ideas.

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