Chapter 12
Critically "Trending" Approaches to Communication Theory and Methods of Inquiry in Ghana

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Introduction

This chapter is a response to the centrality of theory and method in the search for accurate description, explanation and prediction of communication as a social phenomenon in Ghana. Essentially, the chapter critically examines the form and substance of changing traditions in communication theory and research within the Ghanaian context. It probes, for example, the implications of the expanded space for free expression following liberalization of media. The critical trending traces applications of communication theory and method, revealing a latent incidence of continuity in change; that, in essence, the more things change the more they remain the same.

The main issues discussed include conceptualizing communication as "mass communication" or "media" to the exclusion of other and equally important communication approaches, modes and forms. The technologically mediated interpretations of communication have been inspired by, and in many cases are still derived from eurocentric theoretical perspectives including the modernization theories as espoused through, for example, technological determinism. Among other perspectives such as diffusion of innovation theory, they are ostensibly and fallaciously (Ugboajah 1984, p. 105), projected as the panacea catalyst for fast-tracking national development.

It is also noted, regrettably, that the Ghanaian and African experience with communication theory and research is a replication of western norms. It has included concepts of individualism unfamiliar to the African milieu, as building blocks of theory to explain the African setting. The practice is inconsistent with a fundamental recognition of context or perspective or the reflection of the prevalent values and norms embedded in a culture as referent for the communicative act (Boafo and Wete 2002; Odhiambo et al. 2002). There is an apparent reliance on structural functionalist traditions to the virtual exclusion of political economy and even the semiotics tradition as justifiable approaches of inquiry.

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Communication or Communications

Communication as an omnibus term is in many respects amorphous (Odhiambo et al. 2002). Among the many interpretations of communication are the spheres denoted in professional practice by bodies such as the African Council for Communication Education (ACCE), International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR), and International Communication Association (ICA). Organized programmes and courses of study (Odhiambo et al. 2002) provide another frame for interpreting communication in the attempt to develop an overarching understanding. Fiske (2002), for example, prefers "communication studies" as a discipline.

Articulations of communication are so many and varied it is obvious that no single definition would easily be developed. Without doubt, scholarly and professional organizations in their own way drive such interpretations. An examination of structures and activities of IAMCR and ICA suggest areas and themes by which communication may be researched, theorized or critiqued. A professional organization such as IAMCR has 15 divisions and 16 working groups for examining it. ICA, on its part, has a total of 21 areas (16 divisions and 5 special interest groups).

Without attempting to discuss everything that is communication, this chapter is restricted to the study of communication in the most general terms to be inclusive of communications. Even then, a relationship between the concepts—communication (content/process) and communications (the technological aspects), would still be important. It must also be said at this point, that going by the traditions of the social sciences, communication theories may be classified into the dominant paradigm, critical and post-modernist approaches.

With miniaturization, digitization, multimedia and convergence,[1] communication seems to be assuming broader use and application without the "s." The technological developments suggest medium-specific theories may require rethinking. In the African context, the restriction of the definition of communication to the technologically mediated formats (which exclude indigenous systems) constrains an understanding of communication in development efforts.

Communication and Traditions of Social Thought

The theory and method of communication is informed by the traditional social science disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, psychology, political science and economics. It is, actually, not unusual for theory and method textbooks in communication to often begin with philosophical foundations of knowledge. According to Miller (2002), there are issues of ontology or investigations into the nature of being or the nature of reality. Epistemological questions about the creation and growth of knowledge or what we can know is another. Axiology or value-free

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[1] Internet TV is now on the market in addition to the multiple and multitasking functions of the mobile phone.

research bordering on the study of knowledge is yet another philosophical under-pinning in communication studies.

Severin and Tankard (2001) also note the socio-psychological roots of communi-cation theories such as those that engage cognition, persuasion and perception while Taylor et al. (2004, p. 7) discuss "psychology-based solutions to media uses and ef-fects". Society, or the communication context or host culture is central to a number of the communication theories described by DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1989) and Berger (1995). In advertising, the "interference theory" (Keller 1991) and the terms "primacy" and "recency," as in "order effects" originated from the social psychol-ogy works of Lund and Asch, among others, as observed by Weinberg et al. (2004).

The political economy of communication (Mosco 2009) is an omnibus or over-arching theory that combines aspects of politics and economics. A grounding of any or a combination of these disciplines, therefore, leverages communication theory and methodology. Indeed, to define communication is to beg "a multitude of psy-chological, aesthetic and sociological questions," and issues of the "psychology of communicant" (Gordon 1987, p. 673). The study of communication, thus, appears best approached or researched as a "multidisciplinary inquiry" (Odhiambo et al. 2002, p. 14).

Miller (2002) proceeds to group communication theories into two broad cat-egories: "theories of communication processes" and "theories of communication contexts." The categorization almost follows the earlier sketching of process and effects of mass communication by Schramm and Roberts (1977). It is a case of mass communication, a limitation to mass and not accommodating of African indigenous communication systems.

In essence, "communication has appropriated for itself a central role in societal cohesion, integration or change" (Odhiambo et al. 2002, p. 8) in the study of society as organized through the other fields of social science or the study of society. Its strong affinity with other fields of social inquiry and perhaps even its dependence on concepts emanating therefrom, is underscored by Gordon's (1987, p. 673) con-tention that:

> a communication expert may be oriented to any number of disciplines in a field of inquiry that has, as yet, neither drawn for itself a conclusive roster of subject matter nor agreed upon specific methodologies of analysis.

The Dominant Paradigm

The "two constellations" of social theory: the structural functionalist perspective and the neo-Marxist critical approach underpin the formulation and explication of communication theory and methods of inquiry. The theory and method of commu-nication are the driving determinants of its applied modes and forms. Many trace the beginnings of communication theory to mathematical linear models developed by Shannon and Warren (1949) and others, in some cases in response to the question posed by American political scientist Harold D. Lasswell (1948): "Who said what,

to whom with what effect?" The Lasswellian paradigm was later to be adopted as a framework for newsgathering and reporting in the 5Ws and H (who, what, whom, where, when and how).

Fiske (2002) outlines other models and describes them. Some draw their frame of discourse from the Aristotelian logic of meaningful interactions between individuals, as collectively largely lacking predictive, descriptive and analytic powers. They tend to describe the process of communication by isolating its constituents as source, encoder, message, channel, decoder and receiver. A feature that distinguishes models from theory is that they can be diagrammatically represented with arrows directing from one constituent to another, sometimes not just linear but cyclical.

Later, a group of theories developed out of these models which postulated positive social change engineered by communication media which were said to have modernized society and, therefore, became known as modernization theories. Among them were the interpretations by Inkeles and Smith (1974), Schramm (1964), McLuhan (1964) later rehashed by Rogers (1969) in his diffusion of innovations and Schramm and Roberts (1977).

The pervasive nature of the process and effects approach to communication earned it the accolade of the "dominant paradigm." The dominant paradigm reflects a quest for description and explanation of the presumed predictive power of communication phenomena in the organization of society. Communication was projected as a catalyst and animateur in fuelling and hastening the processes of development, especially in nonwestern cultures described at various stages as underdeveloped, low income, developing or Third World. A fundamental assumption in the dominant paradigm is Daniel Lerner's (1958) seminal work, the passing of the traditional society. Obviously, Ghanaian and Africansocieties were "passing," and became the target for ceaseless programmes, projects and campaigns supported by international governments and organizations spearheaded by UNESCO.

Critical Approaches

Taylor et al. (2004) note shifts and dilemmas in the postulation of communication theories. Sooner than later, the dominant structural-functionalist approaches to defining and projecting communication (communication for development or development communication) in positivist interpretation began to attract criticism. Criticisms which began in the 1960s gained currency in the 1970s. It was the period both non-western and western scholars such as Inayatullah (1967) and Stuart Hall (1982) observed western cultural hegemony, including Gunder Frank's (1966) development of underdevelopment. Gathering steam in the 1970s and 1980s it continues with contemporary postmodernist (Mumby 1997) analyses such as Bourdieu's (1984) culture as commodity and globalization in its glocalization posture and interpretations. Critical views include those of Hamelink (1983), Fuglesang (1984), Habermas (1991), and Servaes (1984) and his collaborators' articulations of participatory communication. Recently, Appadurai (1999) identified mediascapes among

five key waves driving the world economy; the others being ethnoscapes, finances-capes, ideoscapes, and technoscapes.

Indeed, the strong theoretical commitment to westernizing the non-western as promoted by Rogers (1962) and Lerner (1958, 1967) was criticized by many in-cluding Hutton and Cohen (1975) who faulted Rogers (1962), in particular, for not attempting, to justify the central role cultural factors play in communication (Ansu-Kyeremeh 1992). Others such as Bourdieu (1984) see communication more as cultural commodity governed by the laws of social relations.

In development communication, often associated with communication con-texts such as Ghana, there has been the poignant Freire (1981, p. 130) chal-lenge of "all development is modernization, [but] not all modernization is development."Ansu-Kyeremeh (2004) recently posed the question of the longevity of the concept as a field of study given its association with societies in transition.

"Africanness" in Theory

In his "consciencism" philosophy, Nkrumah (1978, p. 78) observed, "our philosophy [as African people] must find its weapons in the environment and living conditions of the African people." Nkrumah (1978) had earlier proposed Western and Islamic experiences in the African attitude he feels "must be purposeful." He further ob-served "a connected thought" which incorporates all three (western, Islamic and African) but for "this unification to take account, at all times, of the elevated ideals underlying the traditional African society" (Nkrumah 1978, p. 78).

Implicit in the criticisms against the dominant modernization theories is their inability to sufficiently address the African and other non-western cultural contexts. Ugboajah (1984) was blunt in his response to the decision by the government of the United States of America to withdraw from UNESCO in 1980. The US was dissat-isfied with attempts by the UN body to redress imbalances between the communi-cation-rich and communication poor countries with a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) agenda. Ugboajah (1984, p. 105) wrote:

> … dubious theories of the 'passing of traditional societies,' of urbanization leading to mod-ernization, of westernization leading to civilization, of metropolitanism leading to develop-ment and adoption of innovations, of high correlation of radio sets, television sets, copies of newspapers and cinema seats with certain population units leading to economic and social progress in a society. Such research theories and concepts succeed in selling costly equip-ment, 'expertise,' and more propaganda but resulted in revolutions of rising frustrations and a trend toward socioeconomic deterioration in Africa and many Third World countries, with neither development nor modernization in sight.

Ugboajah (1984) could have added that it was as if massification and individuation of the community-oriented African social system would yield societal cohesion and harmony with a unified sense of purpose for pursuing growth and development. Pratt and Manheim (1988) had obviously misrepresented the close links between members of the African community in "groupthink" implicit in Obeng-Quaidoo's

(1987) focus group data collection method, or lack of individual independent think-ing.[2] Kwansah-Aidoo's (2011) analysis could similarly have been a little more Afrocentric.

The critical literature of the 1970s and 1980s also captured views, contentions and empirical evidence of assertions by those proposing westernizing the continent and her people in ways that would clearly be seen as un-African. Rogers (1969) had described communities of the African typology as characterized by mutual dis-trust, belief in limited good, familistic, lacking innovativeness, fatalistic, and lack-ing in deferred gratification (Hutton and Cohen 1975). Hutton and Cohen (1975) described such analysis as simplistic and ignoring the possible range of variation of peasant economies other than those Rogers (1969) considered. Even today, Africa is lumped together as a retarded society despite the many levels of economies from low income to upper middle income, including South Africa's BRICS[3] status.

Perhaps, to include the African context in communication theory, recently, Taylor et al. (2004, p. 20) proposed a "paradigm shift" in communication education in Africa; advocating "transformation" from "media-centred curriculum emphasis … towards greater embrace of the human communication disciplines." Nwosu (in Taylor et al. 2004, p. 18) had earlier touted, iterating Nkrumah (1978) that:

> … the need to understand how Africans interpret reality must become the indispensable starting point for studying communication in different contexts in Africa.

Yet, the trio's "paradigm shift" hardly challenges the non-incorporation of Afri-can originality or anything radically or substantively African such as "indigenous knowledge and knowing," in the theory or method of communication.

The Akan system of thought, small as it is within a larger African context, but with its matrilineal social construction, provides alternative thinking frames to the western patriarchal individualistic thought systems. Not much is known about it in gendered communication analysis where it could be crucial in helping understand communication better. Beginning from distinguishing between *nyansa* (wisdom) and *nimdeɛ* (knowledge), a deeper analysis of concepts and constructs within the Akan contextual backdrop, such as *tie* (listen), *ma me nka asem bi nkyerewo* (let me tell you something), *kɔkakyerɛ no sɛ* (convey to her/him), *ka* (say it), *kanaɔnte* (say it to her/his hearing), *kasakyerɛ no* (advise her/him), *bɔamaneɛ* (state your mission) are all situations of communication or acts of communication. An analysis of their nature, form, intention, expectation and result would suggest what communication is or how it should be understood in that context.

The criticisms against westernization which expose its limitations in describing, explaining and predicting the communicative act, themselves lack the Africanness that would complete its universalness and deepen understanding despite the efforts of Ugboajah and others. There is thus, largely, a muted Africanness in the whole en-terprise and industry of understanding communication. In fact, there is little to say against a view that Africa is a captive consumer of communication technology and is constantly striving to bridge the digital divide that is created within the comity

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[2] Contested by Ansu-Kyeremeh (1995, pp. 193–201).

[3] BRICS represents the High Middle Income economies of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

of continents. Africa is largely a client continent (excepting only the small enclave of South Africa) and may continue to be so for a long time without anything like an African communication as distinct from simply communication in Africa. It is unacceptable to insist upon an African "mass" and "technological" condition to be able to describe, explain and predict her communication.

Africans themselves have probably been the problem. Wiredu (1984, 1998), for instance, contests how philosophical is African philosophy. Odhiambo et al. (2002, p. 8) reiterating the dominant paradigm of the passing of traditional society (Inkeles and Smith 1974) postulate technology accelerated inevitable and unavoidable "breakdown of traditional authority upon which the kinship systems of traditional African societies depend." They proceed to predict the emergence of "new communities with new defining characteristics."[4] This is globalization theory. It is true there might not be a single village in Africa without a single mobile phone. The problem is that issues of penetration of communication technology are treated as if they provide the wherewithal for African development as in the messianic World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) enthusiastic agenda of a move from digital divide to digital opportunity.[5]

Not enough African philosophy or posturing pre-empts any argument that societies may develop in any other way such as Gandhi's centripetally structured enculturation or Gavua's archaeological viewpoint of "normative and adaptive" thesis[6] and not the concomitant cultural erosion that is associated with linear progression of societies predicted by the dominant paradigm. For example, ownership interpretations may vary within the western and African contexts.[7] Consistent with the linear progression paradigm, to a question asking whether there was "African economics," internationally acknowledged economist Paul Collier[8] answered no. But one will argue that the Akan practised competition within cooperation in *nnɔboa* and *abusa* systems of economic organization do not exactly fit into western economic concepts and models. The Akan system defines production as consumption; that one cannot consume before producing and that economic chaos could be expected from the defiance of that basic law.

All said, as shown already, the dominant positivist theoretical and methodological formulations tend still to reinforce analytical approaches to communication inquiry that end up deepening the incongruous application of those theories in the Ghanaian/African context. Evidence of critical perspectives advanced to unearth the "hidden" indigenous communication forms and seek a fusion of the indigenous and the technology-based systems for optimal communication is hard to come by. In other words, little attempt has been made to generate theories and methodological designs that would encourage Ghanaian/African knowledge as a contribution to mainstream western normative orders that tend to dominate, or even interchange with, "universal knowledge."

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[4] Social media communities have emerged in recent times.

[5] The relevant documentation is available at http://itu/wsis.

[6] Conversation with Senior Lecturer Dr. K. Gavua in the Deparment of Archaeology and Heritage Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, Tuesday, July 8, 2012.

[7] The unorthodox way in which METRO TV and JOY FM were handed frequencies to broadcast is unlikely to exist in any western context.

[8] Also authored by Collier (2008).

Indeed, one is unsure why in an African setting a communication researcher may want to isolate mass communication (M'bayo et al. 2012) from other forms of communication for study when the former hardly functions in isolation of the others.

Having bought into the "passing" of the traditional African society, African and Africanist researchers have contributed to progressively diminish whatever African concepts and notions that could have helped shape theory and method. Thus, today's state is that of no one knowing what exactly is left of indigenous or autochthonous African communication that can still be appropriated to enrich the universal while debunking westerncentric theory.

The Experience

In addition to a review of the general literature of communication theory and method, graduate student research and scholarly publications by faculty of the School of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, were examined to provide context to the discussion and analysis. The objective was to verify the claim of the nonexistence of theories and methods that reflect 'African communication values' (Boafo and Wete 2002, p. 4) as well as the relative underrepresentation of the political economy and semiotic frameworks for theory construction and the indigenization of methodological approaches of communication studies. In addition, course outlines, reading lists, course content and curricula for communication programmes provide further evidence of what pertains or is the status quo or trend in the use of communication theories and methodological designs.

Faculty Research and Publication

The ideological leanings and theoretical cum methodological gravitations of SCS faculty in their research and publication seem far more towards the dominant positivist paradigm of fixing context to fit the medium than questioning the very existence of the medium and its relevance to the context. Ansu-Kyeremeh and Karikari (1998), though, attempt a political economy interpretation of the application of communication technology by the colonial administration. They observe, for example, that "British administrators found it [the telegraph] to be a useful tool for their activities" (Ansu-Kyeremeh and Karikari 1998, p. 6). Ansah had earlier noted that radio followed the flag serving the purpose of the colonial and the local comprador elite class (in Ansu-Kyeremeh and Karikari 1998, p. 4). Ansu-Kyeremeh (1992) also identified some cultural aspects of constraints on village education by radio. The closest Ansah (1979) came to any radical interpretation of western theory and method in the critical 1970s was his insistence upon "localization" of shortwave radio, in those days, to bring radio closer to the people through FMization.

Obeng-Quaidoo (1985, 1987) and Amoakohene (2004, 2005), emphasizing a need to contextualize the application of (the westerncentric) method in Africa, identify the FGD as one approach that responds most effectively to the group-oriented

decision-making of African communities. Obeng-Quaidoo (1985, p. 111) holds this view because of the "non-individuality of the African." This, however, still leaves the question of what is the African mode of knowing and understanding of social forces for the description, explanation and prediction of phenomena. Indeed, whether there could be an African theory and method seems to have been avoided. Amoakohene (2005, p. 186) states: "Focus groups are the most suitable research methods for Africa." In reality, she joins the chorus and confirms the trend of the dominant paradigm of western-originated mainstream theory applied to Africa and thereby, somehow, closing the door to finding an answer to Afrocentric theory and research.

A number of Gadzekpo's works (Gadzekpo 2009; Newell and Gadzekpo 2004), framing included, have tended to be, eclectic with elements of historiography and gender-focused cultural studies. Thus, overall, the intellectual output of the SCS faculty appears to be token criticisms of portions or aspects of the dominant paradigm rather than a radical attempt to postulate a shift in paradigm.

Perhaps, the only seeming shift from the dominant paradigm have come from SCS founding professors Hachten (1971), in a rather veiled attempt, and Ripley (1978) (in the School's first professorial inaugural lecture). Ansu-Kyeremeh's (1997, 2005, 2008) (including in the second of the School's professorial inaugural lecture) "indigenization," seems little more of a shift. The perspective draws on the existence of indigenous communication to posit thought and approach to describing, finding explanations and possibly predictive qualities for the non-technology mediated communication that occurs and pervades communities, especially within the rural environs. He even attempts gendered interpretations (Ansu-Kyeremeh 1997) of these systems which Wilson (2005) believes through diachronic and synchronic approaches could form hybrids with technologically mediated formats for maximized communication. Key in the articulation of indigenization is democratized communication enabled by centripetal (periphery-centre) directional communication rather than the western propounded centrifugal (centre-periphery) communication systems. Research emanating from the SCS is, thus, essentially normatively and axiologically framed in: "this is what it ought to be," or hardly questioned acceptance of the western experience and the status quo.

Reading Lists

Given the background of faculty engagement with theory and method in research and publication, it is not surprising that items on student reading lists would exhibit the characteristics of the dominant paradigm. Babbie's (2009) seminal publication on social science research methods is constant on the reading list, while Twumasi's (1986) work on methodology is a loner.[9] As noted by Boafo and Wete (2002) prescribed readings are largely European and North American. Works of Latin American and the Caribbean radical thinking, such as Gunder Frank's (1966) development of underdevelopment, Walter Rodney's (1972) *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*

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[9] Not that it provides any radical African alternative.

and Paulo Freire's (1981) grassroots oriented theoretical postulations (anchored in ontology) hardly feature on reading lists.

This is contrary to Asian attempts (Ito 1990; Dissanayake 2006; Rama 2008); and the fact that nonwestern thought systems are generally missing from mainstream theory and method as observed by Inayatullah (1967). Marx himself only mentioned Asiatic people, and not once Africa in his writings. Neo-Marxist theoretical approaches are thus as anti-African as the dominant paradigm. Today, only South Africa is mentioned in Africa country profile for Internet television.[10]

Programme Labelling

In the works by Taylor et al. (2004) and Odhiambo et al. (2002) are identified communication education programmes mounted under certain labels. Among the labels are: mass communication, media and cultural studies, communications, journalism and media studies, mass communication, journalism, advertising and public relations. Degrees and diplomas are awarded in communication arts, journalism, mass communication, or media and cultural studies.

The label, School of Communication Studies at the University of Ghana metamorphosed over a period of 13 years. In 1972, it began as the Institute of Journalism and Mass Communication. Then in 1974, it was changed to Institute of Journalism and Communication Studies. In 1985, it was renamed School of Communication Studies to "reflect the wide variety of media-related courses that had been introduced into the School's curriculum."[11] Currently, the School's programmes lead to the award of Master of Arts (MA), Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degrees.

Student Research

One way of demarcating the various theoretical perspectives is to follow authors such as Griffin (2000) and Miller (2002). In a content analysis of 54 graduate research output including diploma project work (27), master of arts dissertation (20) and master of philosophy thesis (3) from 1977 to 2011, it was found that 42.3 % of them were guided by a single theory while 37.8 % of them were eclectic with their theoretical frameworks developed from two to three theories. That single theory was the 'uses and gratification theory' which appeared 33.3 %. About one in five (19.2 %) of the works, though, were descriptive accounts that had no underpinning theories. Only 11.5 % of the works had a chapter devoted to developing a theoretical framework. This is understandable since majority of those examined were graduate diploma projects and MA dissertations which usually would not require a standalone chapter on theory.

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[10] Sheehy (2012).

[11] See brochure, "School of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon" (2012).

Table 12.1 Theoretical emphasis of SCS student research (1977–2011)

Em Griffin		Miller	
Categories/groups	Scs research (%)	Categories/groups	Scs research (%)
Interpersonal	15.7	Message production	1.9
Group and public	3.9	Message processing	11.6
Mass communication	76.5	Discourse and interaction	3.8
Cultural context	3.9	Developing relationships	1.9
		Organizational	3.8
		Processing & effects	38.5
		Media and society	32.7
		Culture & communication	5.8

The studies were in the areas of interpersonal communication (15.3 %), public communication (6.8 %) and mass communication (78.0 %). They were overwhelmingly (91.9 %) in the realm of process (18.2 %), effects (14.5 %) or combination of process and effects (61.8 %). Critical/cultural theories underpinned only one in twenty (5.5 %) works. The research approaches were mainly quantitative (67.9 %) or qualitative (18.9 %) with few (13.2 %) employing a mixed method approach. Surveys (44.8 %) dominated, followed by content analysis (36.2 %), in-depth interviews (13.8 %) and only two (3.4 %) case studies. Print journalism saw more study (40.0 %) than the other areas of specialization in the School's curriculum. The other areas were: broadcasting (34.0 %), public relations (12.0 %) and advertising (8.0 %). A small number of studies (6.0 %) were mixed or situated within more than one of the areas.

Extension

From a lean faculty of two in 1974 (University of Ghana 1973–1977, 1991; Agbodeka 1998), the School has progressively developed its faculty in an ebb and flow pattern. In 1981, it seemed to have reached its highest level at seven full-timers. Faculty strength began to shrink soon thereafter with the intensified exodus of Ghanaian academics to Nigeria, back to three in 1993 but picked up to five in 1994. It peaked at eight in 2005, comprising two associate professors, three senior lecturers, and three lecturers.

Dr. Paul Archibald Vince Ansah was the School's first Ghanaian Associate Professor and substantive director. The School produced its first full professor, Dr K. Ansu-Kyeremeh, also its second substantive Ghanaian director (2000–2005) in April, 2006. Currently it has a more settled faculty of six on full-time, comprising an associate professor, a senior lecturer, two lecturers and two assistant lecturers. There is also a full professor on contract. As a professional training institution, it has always had a strong presence of part-time instructors recruited from among experienced practitioners from the fields of journalism, advertising and public relations.

With that kind of faculty staffing, the School has been actively involved in promoting the media agenda beyond theory and research. A key aspect has been helping to deepen Ghana's western democracy by training practitioners, collaborating

with others in good governance surveys (Institute of Economic Affairs 1996, 2000) and a groundbreaking public opinion survey during the 2000 elections. In further fulfillment of its extension responsibilities, the School once edited and published the *Media Monitor* for the National Media Commission (NMC). Professors and lecturers in the School have held and continue to hold membership of local professional organizations such as the Institute of Public Relations, Ghana (IPR, Ghana) and the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), as well as the continental organization, African Council for Communication Education (ACCE). Faculty is equally active in international groups such as the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) and the International Communication Association (ICA).

The School's faculty members have equally been participating in media policy formulation and implementation by serving on the NMC as members. One was on the Court of Governors of the Ghana-India Kofi Annan Centre for Excellence in ICT. They were actively involved in developing a National Communication Policy and United Nations negotiations towards the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS).

Appearances by faculty members on radio and television programmes, as hosts or guests, to discuss crucial national issues is commonplace. Some faculty members have been newspaper and magazine columnists. Examples include Paul Ansah's "Going to Town" (*Ghanaian Chronicle*),[12] Audrey Gadzekpo's "To the Powers that Be" (*Mirror*), as well as Ansu-Kyeremeh's "Ordinary talk" (*Media Monitor*) and "My Beef" (*Daily Guide*). Kwame Karikari once wrote a travelogue for the *Accra Mail*.

A summary of the School's experience (combination of curriculum content, faculty/student research and publication, student reading lists, programme labelling and extension) is, thus, a perspective of communication theory and method steeped in western interpretations and short onAfricanness. The evidence is communication as necessarily requiring techno-deepening.

Looking Ahead

Since the School's establishment in 1972, theory has moved on from its modernization roots through political economy to post-modernism. With technology steadily triggering transformation of means, forms, formats, and systems of communication at a very high speed, one can imagine construction of theories being equally transformatory. A theory such as cultivation is television specific. Today, the multichannel television withcapacity for simultaneous viewing of different programmes on different channels could complicate cultivation analysis. Multitasking as aided by multimedia and convergence poses its own challenges in audience research. Social

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[12] Some were published as *Going to Town* (Ghana Universities Press, 1996), edited by Audrey Gadzekpo, Kwame Karikari and Kwesi Yankah.

media, in their current forms, may not also easily lend themselves to interpretation based on the theories established before their advent. Suffice it also to speculate that any social media specific theories are likely to quickly outlive their relevance given that those communication forms continue to be rapidly transformed by technology.

Positivist theoretical and methodological formulations have tended to and still do reinforce approaches to the understanding of communication in the African context. It all ends up deepening incongruity in their application. The African society is characterized by a fracture of dualism that is constantly creating friction and tension as the forces of modernism and the forces of the indigenous clash in competition for influence. A clear challenge in method is individualism versus communalism or the choice of household or individual as survey unit. Indeed, the complex nature of the individual's relationship with others suggests none of survey or in-depth interview or FGD is capable by its independent self of assembling enough data for the understanding of communication.

What is required, then, is a search for critical evidence of the "hidden" indigenous communication forms and seek a fusion, according to Wilson (2005) diachronically or synchronically, of the indigenous and the technology-based systems. In other words, the generation of theories and methodological designs that encourage Ghanaian/African knowledge as a contribution to dominant mainstream western-biased knowledge passed as "universal knowledge" is necessary.

Acknowledging that culture is both context and content, Wilson (2005, p. 238), concludes that, although communication ought to be viewed "as the expression and reflection of the culture of any society" Africa's case is "where media and cultural imperialism have taken over." Wilson (2005) had earlier proposed diachronic and synchronic approaches to communication in Africa for effectiveness,

The traditional way of looking at feedback as instant or delayed response to the attention or knowledge of the communicator may need to give way to impact or action based on the social communicator's message (irrespective of the communicator's intention) without, necessarily, the knowledge of the communicator. Indeed, it may not be far-fetched to contemplate the shrinking by technology of the boundaries between personal and impersonal modes, forms and formats of communication to the point of a blurred demarcation. A development like that has the potential of convoluting theories based on technology. In SKYPE, cues, even from unstable pictures, transcend the telephone.

Accelerated miniaturization which enhances portability (initially a newspaper and magazine attribute), and convergence by always advancing technology are fast shrinking the personal and impersonal divide of communication theory. One is unsure whether this convergence implies more, or maybe newer or fewer theories, for example, cultivation as television-specific theory.

It is now, probably more than ever, evident that the medium may not necessarily give birth to the theory because of the fast pace of change in communication technology. It is such that media-specific theories (such as television and cultivation theory) seem to be diminishing in utility. A theory becomes redundant when a specific medium with which the theory is associated atrophies in use and influence. And one is unsure if hacking is noise or dissonance. Surely, the more communication diversifies, the more theories get generated and morphed.

Intention as a condition for communicator to communicate needs reexamination. For example, updating Facebook status requires security features to determine enabled access. Accessing a wall thus becomes more of unintended than intended message impact. The communicator may not have the least idea of who will be accessing what is placed on a wall. Privacy in intention is regulated using password security features.

Eventually, the expectations are that for theory, an advancement of perspectives that would strive for explanations of the Ghanaian or African experience are most likely to be limited whereas western originated and oriented theories are the most likely to be extant in the literature. Even western critical theories are not likely to have been adopted as frameworks for studies. And non-western, such as Asian perspectives, are likely to be similarly absent. Granting a relationship between theoretical perspectives and the methods that are employed to confirm or refute hypotheses formulated from their tenets, the possibility of continued domination of western methodologies driven by technological change cannot be discounted.

Thus, no matter what has happened, the dominant thought is still that technologically mediated communication is the ultimate communication tool. If it is not working, there is something wrong with its context. To fix the communication problem, then, is to fix the context. The challenge is to come up with postulations of the African knowing and understanding framework for communication. Theories are culture specific. You cannot develop a cultivation theory in a culture where there is no television. They are perspectives of contexts of the socio-culture. A universal theory must accordingly be grounded in a universal culture.

A framework that considers the centrifugal and centripetal forces of communication using dialoguing as a method could be a starting point for an African-sensitive description, explanation and prediction of the communicative act. Indigenization could serve as a guide by which the appropriate principles and tenets could be isolated. Its method could be dialogical, permitting interviewer-interviewee questioning exchange. Africa's exclusion from the universal is epitomized in the Akan proverb: ƐkaaneaɔkɔAburokyirenko a ankaAbibiremabɔ (The wish of the one in Europe is the collapse of Africa). By not aggressively pursuing an African communication theory, African scholarship may be disingenuously exporting facts and experiences for others to construct theory.

A contributor to a BBC business discussion programme (Saturday, November 17, 2012) advanced a "co-creation of wealth" notion by matching access and opportunity, suggesting a cross between market and intervention. Production and distribution are more efficiently aligned or linked. Possible relationship between the bipolarity of"taxing the wealthy" versus "making the poor people richer" is hypothesized. Applied in economics of communication, such ideas are likely to be closer to a competition in cooperation approach to arriving at the communication product as different from pure market (commercial radio) or pure interventionist (state-owned radio) approaches.

The thinking envisages a kind of communication product that is being the combined effort of owner and staff in parity measurable terms. Possible sources of concepts of indigenous African philosophy to inform communication theory and method are embedded in signs, symbols, syllabery, ideographs and proverbs which are seen

as a source of indigenous African knowledge by Olutayo (2012). Indeed, expanding the scope of the indigenous beyond Akan to other Ghanaian and African experiences would help firm up a philosophy behind the development of theory and method.

The anticipated creation of new departments to encourage specialization specific disciplines by the School[13] could encourage greater diversity and radicalism in research approach in the School and initiate a beginning of an infusion of the African thought system into theory and method geared towards an African experience inclusive universal communication thought system for understanding communication. As the theory and method diversify contextually and locally, so can an enrichment of the global be expected. A doctoral (PhD) programme which begins in January 2013, offers even greater possibilities.

Summary

The main objective of this chapter has been to provoke debate on the theory and method of communication in the Ghanaian context. The evidence indicates a preponderance of the dominant paradigm in theory and research in faculty and student research. It observes a rooting of the theory and methodology of the discipline of communication studies in the social sciences. Also evident was less application of western critical theories as frameworks for communication research in Ghana. Non-western theoretical perspectives, such as of Asian origin (Confucius inspired curbs that have yielded "consensus journalism"), were similarly absent. Granting a relationship between theoretical perspectives and the methods that are employed to develop, confirm or refute hypotheses formulated from the tenets of theory that guide research or constructed from research, the possibility of a domination of western-centric methodologies could not have been discounted. Looking ahead, a new theoretical framework, a thought system, that helps describe, clarify, explain and predict as well as guide methodology of communication research in the Ghanaian/African context (rooted in words and symbolic expressions) is as desirable as it could complement the universal understanding of the phenomenon of communication.

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[13] Planned departments/units include Broadcasting or Radio and Television, Journalism, Strategic Communication, Public Policy Communication and Media Studies.

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