

# Functions of Rhetoric and Social Science Origins in Communication Study—Based on *Boxing Plato's Shadow: An Introduction to the Study of Human Communication*

WANG Hai, HUANG Dai-ming

Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, 510420, China

With the development of the rhetoric study from the origins in ancient Athens and *The Rhetoric of Aristotle* to the formation of modern Communication Study at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Rhetoric Study changed in dynamic and its concepts and theories merged and formed the foundations of Communication Study which focused on personal communication and speech rhetoric skills at that time. At the beginning of the twentieth century, although the Neo-Aristotelian rhetorical scholars from classic rhetoric approach created methodologies and enriched the content of Communication Study under the influence of humanistic study and social science study, but the Communication discipline was still in the embarrassing position. During World War I and World War II, most scholars with backgrounds of social science, history and anthropology carried out the studies of propaganda wars and the message disseminating, and explored the military powers and governments' access to the media and developed serial communication modes from the social science perspective, which laid the foundation for Communication discipline in the academic field. The author analyzed the Rhetoric and Social Science origins of Communication study in *Boxing Plato's Shadow: an Introduction to the Study of Human Communication*, which is beneficial and helpful to understand the academic origins of Communication study and its cross-disciplined and embarrassing positions.

**Keywords:** the origins of communication study, rhetoric origins, social science origins, *Boxing Plato's Shadow*, an introduction to the study of human communication

One of the contributions of ancient Greek and Roman civilization to oral communication and social progress is the birth and influence of classical rhetoric. In the 5th century BC, the adversarial and democratic systems of the Athenian judicial system led to the formation of markets in which “wise men” (sophists) taught the art of speech and persuasion. The sophists provided important and insightful insights into the observation and study of “rhetoric”, of which views and theories continue to this day and have influenced contemporary communication practice and research. Plato questioned and criticized the sophists and their persuasion techniques which causes

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WANG Hai, Professor, School of Journalism & Communication and School of Interpreting & Translation Studies in Guangdong University of Foreign Studies. His research areas are Sinology and Translation, Journalism History.

HUANG Dai-ming (correspondence author), postgraduate from School of Journalism & Communication in Guangdong University of Foreign Studies. Her research areas are International Communication, Journalism History.

the academic world debating the status of communication for centuries, but the basic ideas of Aristotle's rhetoric do provide a theoretical basis for the study of persuasive communication. From the "sophists" and their rhetoric skills in the Greek and Roman period to the rhetoric of the Neo-Aristotelian school, then the establishment of communication discipline in the early 20th century, the changes of rhetoric, its academic school classification and research core have injected major connotations into the development of the discipline of communication in this 2,500 years.

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the disciplines of higher education institutions in America were reorganized. From two representative standards of United States to judge whether a research field in colleges and universities should be a subject, communication neither covers the basic and independent discipline research field, and lacks its own research methods, although communication has a long history of academic tradition and considerable value of social practice. And Plato for "sophist" and the influence of the rhetoric question still exist, the awkward position of communication discipline highlights again. Faced with the weakness of discipline and its complicated research history, communication scholars in the early 20th century made efforts to define their discipline scope and boldly expanded the communication research approach of social science advocated by Francis Bacon and John Bulwer in the 17th century, introducing sociological research methods into communication study. From 1920s and 1930s to the 1950s, the research contents of the discipline represented by sociology and its research methods were integrated into communication science, which laid the interdisciplinary foundation of communication science. It is based on the origin of rhetoric and sociology, as well as the research results of human communication activities and communication laws, that modern communication was really established in the early 20th century.

Communication has developed rapidly since it was established as a discipline, and its research scope ranges from interpersonal communication to communication effect. In the seemingly prosperous academic activities, communication still faces the embarrassing situation of being isolated from other disciplines. Up to now, people still believe that it is an emerging discipline that needs to clarify its research topics and subject categories. The academic legitimacy of communication in social sciences has been constantly questioned for a long time (Mattelart, 2008, introduction), Robert Gunderson and even described the communication as "a discipline used to shelter" (Dues, 2004, p. 1). Communication scholars are still fighting for legal academic status.

Communication studies are constantly questioned by scholars of other disciplines and thus find themselves in an awkward position in the whole disciplinary system, which can be attributed to three aspects. First of all, communication scholars face a similar dilemma. Their understanding of the basic contribution of collective goals is confused (Dues, 2004, p. xvii). Communication scholars have been studying human communication activities for 2500 years, and the focus of research has shifted many times. The name of the subject has also evolved slowly under various labels. Most communication scholars have a vague understanding of their disciplinary origins, historical evolution and research focus.

Secondly, the origin and awkward position of communication science promote its interdisciplinary development. "This awkward position forces communication science to frequently borrow and transform the mode of natural science to develop itself" (Mattelart, 2008, Introduction), communication scholars research program to infiltrate, including natural science, academic field, anthropologists, sociologists, historians, political scientists, theologians, clinical, and social psychologists, health education experts and organization theorists both

in research fields such as the spread of the program, its internal procedure is indispensable to human activities, it is difficult to use simple words to distinguish communication and other subjects of research topic and the defined (Dues, 2004, p. xviii).

Just as doubts about the misuse of communication led Plato to strongly oppose classical rhetoric, scholars now regard communication as a peripheral discipline and interpret it from a wide range of disciplines, with the result that they all choose communication as a second or third profession (Dues sophisticated, 2004, p. xviii). The origin of rhetoric and sociology determines that communication is the second discipline of choice for many scholars, who usually start their communication studies as other disciplines. Harold Lasswell, Paul Lazarsfield, Kurt Lewin, Carl Hovland and other pioneers of communication studies all came from disciplines other than communication, which is a clear proof. However, Wilbur Shramm, the master of communication studies, still had some influence on his life due to his stuttering and his difficulty in expression, which eventually led him to enter the field of communication as a second career (Rogers, 2001, p. 4).

The third reason why rhetoric, as the source of communication, is controversial is that people can use rhetoric skills and communication activities to deceive others. It was this skepticism that led Plato to strongly object to the teaching of rhetoric in Athens, and the sophists' so-called persuasion techniques often led people to question the words of politicians or the honesty and sincerity of judges. For this reason, many scholars and professionals regard communication as a peripheral discipline.

In the current popular works on communication (history), there are few discussions on the origin of rhetoric and sociology of communication and its role in the formation of the discipline. French scholars Armand Mattelart and Michèle Mattelart's *Histoire de théories de la communication* use historical perspectives to clarify the various factions and their differences in the field of communication. From the perspective of its argumentation, the academic circle has not yet made clear the origin of communication and the relationship between the interdisciplinary disciplines and the development of the discipline. These tensions and confrontations that keep emerging in different historical contexts and in different ways of exposition.... "And because of these endless arguments.... The rise and fall of various ideological trends makes it impossible for scholars to see the pure clues of the development of communication theories" (Mattelart, 2008, introduction).

In *A History of Communication Study—A Biographical Approach*, E. M. Rogers, an American scholar, discussed the important role of Wilbur Shramm in modern Communication. Rogers discussed the evolution of Charles Darwin, the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud and the critical school of Karl Marx and other three origins of European communication studies, and then he analyzed the pioneers of communication studies and the formation of their theories and schools like other communication writers. However, he neglected the rhetorical source of communication, and the narrative context of sociology and its research methods introduced into the field of communication was not clear.

Since the 1990s, communication has attracted the attention of Chinese mainland scholars. When they introduced Western communication, they tried to study the localization of communication. However, the established model of domestic communication writing is basically a macro description of foreign communication theories and models, and seldom a scientific and accurate discussion is carried out from the perspective of the origin of communication. Because Chinese scholars have not yet clarified the origin and origin of communication, and their understanding of its embarrassing position and its causes is also unclear, the domestic research on

communication and its localization is still in the exploratory and descriptive primary stage. Therefore, to clarify the research topics and subject categories of communication is the first way to solve the confusion of Chinese and foreign scholars and establish their disciplinary status.

In Michael and Mary Brown's book *Boxing Plato's Shadow: An Introduction to the Study of Human Communication* (Hill, 2004), the rhetorical origins of Communication and the contributions of sophists such as Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle, the social activists of the ancient Greek and Roman times, are described. The development of communication from Aristotle to the 20th century; To summarize the research path of communication in the 20th century and the contribution of the Neo-Aristotelian school to communication; The emergence of communication research in the path of social science makes communication research enter the period of scientific and systematic research, and then presents the current situation of communication research and looks forward to the future of communication research.

## **I. The Origin and Evolution of Rhetoric in Communication**

Rhetoric's research on human communication activities has been spread for 2500 years, during which the connotation and research focus of rhetoric absorbed by communication studies have undergone diachronic changes. From ancient Greece to the 18th century communication research focused on speech to persuade others "rhetoric" art, nineteenth century Europeans and Americans by learning "eloquence" and appeal to build decent and effective speech ability, teachers of public speaking in the early 20th century managed to distinguish their courses from those in English and called the subject "speech", since the 1960s, scholars have commonly named the subject "communication", which was introduced into English by John Locke in 1690. Communication, with its long history, has developed slowly under the labels of western civilization.

### **1.1 The Rhetorical Origin and Historical Evolution of Communication**

The history of news communication is as long as the evolution of language. The earliest news was passed from family to family by tribal leaders and oral history scholars (Campbell, 2015, p. 271). The origin of ancient Greek rhetoric in the 5th century BC is a concentrated reflection of ancient Greek and Roman civilization during the period of oral communication. The prosperity of Athenian maritime trade and commerce and interpersonal communication provided the ground for the birth and development of rhetoric. In the traditional economic, cultural and artistic atmosphere of ancient Greece, the bard has inherited Homer's epic, and the theater marking ancient Greek culture has been very popular, rhetoric and speech skills have been the pursuit of all social strata.

The birth and development of rhetoric was closely related to the Athenian system of justice and democracy. The emergence of the wise (sophists) in the context of the adversary system of justice and democracy in Athens in 500 BC and the market of speeches in which they taught the art of persuasion facilitated the study of rhetoric that reflected the laws of interpersonal communication. As the pioneer of the wise (sophists), Socrates established Socratic discussion or dialogue through public conversation and debate, while his student Plato denied the sophists' glib discussion (Campbell, 2015, p. 7). Communication scholars cite the works of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, Aurelius Augustine of Hippo, John Lock, George Campbell, Hugh Blair and other scholars of rhetoric, whose academic thoughts are rooted in the deep rhetoric soil of ancient Greece and Rome. The sophists who study and teach persuasive public speaking refer to this discipline as "rhetoric". They initiated

the study of rhetoric based on the basic concepts of communication, whose ideas and theories continue to this day and have influenced the practice and study of communication (Dues, 2004, p. 3).

As a classical work of rhetoric in ancient Rome, Aristotle's rhetoric laid the theoretical foundation of western rhetoric. Aristotle himself defined rhetoric as "the function of identifying possible modes of persuasion on any question" (Rogers, 2005, pp. 285-329), "the art of discovering all available means of persuasion in a given situation" (Aristotle, 350 B.C./1991). As a student of Plato, he not only developed Plato's thought of rhetoric, but also criticized his extreme negation of rhetoric. Aristotle rejects Plato's view that rhetoric and its orator skills are the deception of the sophists. He argues that rhetoric both promotes falsehood and seeks truth, and that it is the duty of the honourable citizen to arm himself with knowledge and rhetorical skills in order to defend truth (Dues sophisticated, 2004, p. 9). Based on this, Aristotle absorbed a lot of sophists' ideas in the study of rhetoric and created a complete system of rhetoric. His relevant theories provided the basis for the study of persuasion in the 20th century.

After Aristotle, rhetoric gradually intersected with other majors in the process of localization development under different cultural backgrounds. Rhetoric and its derivative speech (study) gradually became the core curriculum of higher education, and gave birth to the basic concepts and theoretical basis of related majors, including communication. Rhetoric originated from the language and cultural practices of ancient Greece, and according to the growing needs of culture and intelligence, a number of different concepts were formed in different degrees of professional fields (Cong, 2007, p. 11).

Aristotle's rhetoric and the writings of the sophists can be regarded as the main sources to understand the rhetoric theories of Marcus Tullius Cicero, the Roman orator, and later Marcus Fabius Quintilian, who taught rhetoric in Rome (Clarke, 1953). For the next two thousand years or so, rhetoric has been regarded as one of the fundamental arts that all educated people expect to know. Aristotle's rhetoric inspired George Campbell Morgan, Richard Whately and Hugh Blair (Smith, 1998). In American universities in the 20th century, rhetoric has become a milestone in the academic field of speech communication.

The seventeenth century was the time when the basic idea of "modern science" was established, since John Locke in 1690 for the first time put forward the concept of communication in the modern sense, Bacon is put forward after sign language (body language) approaches to the study of the human communication, John Bravo published *Chirologia* in 1644, appeals to the nonverbal expression of thoughts and emotions, this marks the beginning of communication studies and non-verbal communication studies (Dues, 2018, p. 25); Locke stated in the third volume of *Essay on Human Understanding* that man is "social", language is "a great tool and social glue", and discourse is the symbol of "the transmission of Human thoughts", and all utterances and languages should serve the purpose of communication (Dues, 2018, p. 25).

In the 18th and 19th centuries, Locke's ideas on human rights and democratic government were put into practice in Britain and the United States, and democracy set off a new upsurge in the study of the art of persuasion and rhetoric. The constitutional monarchy in Britain provides fertile soil for the theoretical study and practice of rhetoric. George Campbell, Hugh Blair and Richard Whately, three British scholars, enriched the scope of Aristotle's rhetoric research, combining rhetoric with psychology, logic and aesthetics, and turning to a wide range of communication to construct rhetoric.

The industrial revolution and the rise of the middle class provided opportunities to broaden the study of human communication, and the process of democratization led to the development of rhetoric in Britain, France, and the United States. Farmers poured into the cities and grew into the middle class, which needed to learn to express themselves in businesses and corporations. Thomas Sheridan and Gilbert Austin absorbed the nourishment of classical rhetoric and created the art of eloquence, which advocated correct pronunciation, proper posture and proper manners. People should learn to express themselves in social intercourse and etiquette. The study of eloquence flourished throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. Henry Ward, a protege of oratory who advocated changing one's own way of speaking to change one's life, became the inspiration for Henry Higgins's *My Fair Lady* (Dues, 2018, p. 27).

The art of oratory and the important contribution of orators to communication is to treat human communication as a science. They extracted clues from Bacon and Blair to come up with basic conclusions about human expression based on scientific observations. Francois Delsarte, a French orator, constructed complex theories and elaborate paradigms and definitions to describe effective human expression. The study of communication deduces enough classified knowledge to make communication a recognized discipline. The spirit in which the orators founded the science of communication has sown the seeds for its development.

### **1.2 The Influence of the Neo-Aristotelian School on the Formation and Distribution of Communication**

In the late 1930s, the classical sources of communication underwent a Renaissance in the United States, marked by the rise of Neo-Aristotelian Rhetoric. Communication scholars based on the rhetoric of the communication course, mainly Aristotle's rhetoric criticism method, create detailed speech analysis and evaluation methods and standards, known as the new Aristotle (critical) school (Cong, 2007, p. 66).

The emergence of the Neo-Aristotelians was no accident. At that time, modern communication was established. Rhetoric, as an important source of communication, experienced more than 2,500 years of development. When the new Aristotelian school emerged, the academic circle began to treat speech as a communication process of practical information and established various criteria for judging the process of speech. His diachronic rhetoric theories and methods had a profound impact on the establishment of modern communication and its branch of schools.

#### **(1) The formation of the Neo-Aristotelians**

In the 1930s and 1940s, communication scholars used the classical discourse of Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian and 19th-century British and American rhetoric as the theoretical basis for analyzing and evaluating speakers and their speeches. The central question they answered was Aristotle's definition of rhetoric as a speech intended to change a particular audience for a specific purpose at a specific time, place, and context (Rogers, 2005, pp. 285-329). The Neo-Aristotelians tried to understand how the speaker could adapt to a particular situation and use his persuasion methods to achieve his purpose.

The Neo-Aristotelians made a systematic study of public speaking. Their insights and models proved the practicality of public speaking education and guided social scientists engaged in the study of information sources, information and communication processes. Thonnsen and Baird suggest in *Speech Criticism* that there are three steps to speech-making: studying history, setting out the criteria for Criticism, and using them to measure Speech; Speech evaluation includes the nature of the speech, the composition of the speech environment, the purpose and

function of the speech, the type of speech, the part of traditional rhetoric and the effect of the speech (Aristotle, 1991, p. 24).

The Neo-Aristotelian approach to research became the prevailing method of communication studies in American universities between 1930 and 1965 (Dues, 2004, p. 40). Following this path, the department of public speaking (the department of public speaking and communication) has established a curriculum based on classical theories of rhetoric to develop students' practical communication skills. Typical courses include classical, medieval and modern theories of rhetoric, methodology of rhetorical criticism, public speaking, debate and the art of persuasion.

#### (2) The limitations of the Neo-Aristotelians

The Neo-Aristotelian school adopts classical rhetoric as its theoretical basis, and its limitations and defects are obvious. First of all, this research method leads to people's misunderstanding of communication—the simple cause-and-effect relationship that the speaker consciously changes the audience through speech. This limited way of thinking prevents people from observing the complex relationship of human communication, and its narrow research horizon excludes many communication activities. Second, Neo-Aristotelians turned to public speaking as a separate event, always positing a simple linear causal relationship between speech and outcome.

In the 1960s, with communication scholars appeal to the new path, Edwin Black's *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method* (1965) marks the decline of rhetoric theory of new Aristotle school. Blake sums up the reasons for rhetorical critics to look for other research methods beyond Neo-Aristotelianism: speech represents only a small part of human communication activities and is hardly a major aspect of human communication, and critical research needs to be expanded. The social sciences offer a better method than rhetorical criticism. People measure the effectiveness of information by surveying their audience. Effectiveness is not the only criterion for evaluating speech (Dues, 2004, pp. 40-41). Therefore, it is necessary to broaden the research focus, create new theories and get rid of the limitations of the new Aristotelian school.

#### (3) The influence of the Neo-Aristotelians on communication

After the 1960s, the decline of new Aristotle continues to give influence communication, because of the contemporary theory of persuasion must be traced back to Aristotle's concept, the definition and the rhetoric principles (Dues, 2004, p. 42), the contribution of the new Aristotle scholars lies in the Aristotle's ideas about communication in the 21st century. Public speaking based on Aristotelian principles of rhetoric is still a popular course in American universities, criticism of rhetoric is still an important academic activity, and debate is still a daily activity of research and education. The sophists saw educational purpose as a necessary skill to help students build public and private lives, and the theory still guides communication courses.

European and American scholars developed new rhetorical approaches and theories based on the Neo-Aristotelian theories to better explain information transmission, including debate theory, interpretation of classics, drama, critical theory, postmodernism and epistemology. These research approaches provide a new dominant paradigm for contemporary rhetoric and communication, which gradually permeates rhetoric and forms various schools based on their own research approaches.

The practical study of the Neo-Aristotelians in oratory or eloquence provides a theoretical basis for the shift of communication and rhetoric from purely humanistic studies to communication studies. As Wilbur Schramm put to rest the conflict between the "green-eyed man" and the "chi-square man" in American journalism and

communication, communication gradually penetrated into the department of speech, and the humanistic study of rhetoric in communication was transformed into a scientific analysis of interpersonal communication or international communication (Cong, 2007, p. 21). In the process of gradually defining the scope of modern disciplines in communication, scholars have adopted humanistic methods and scientific methods such as sociology, anthropology and psychology to study mass communication and interpersonal communication based on oratory, forming the leading school and paradigm of mass communication or media studies and broadening their research scope.

### 1.3 Limitations of the Rhetorical Source of Communication

Aristotle's theory provides the basis for the study of interpersonal communication, but his works do not completely solve Plato's question about rhetoric. To this day, rhetoric is often used to refer to persuasive messages that lack substance and are vague in language. Sophistry was understood as a kind of plausible Sophistry of argument designed to deceive the reader. In contrast to Socrates, the martyr of moral belief, the sophists are still generally regarded as ideologues and profiteers lacking in moral values. Plato's negative description of rhetoric and his lecturer in the dialogue *Gorgias* still remains true to the reader.

On the basis of classical rhetoric, the early scholars of rhetoric and communication integrated Locke's views on communication, and catered to the sociological research methods focusing on human communication behavior, trying to establish the discipline foundation of communication in the 20th century. This marks the beginning of the study of human communication using scientific research methods, but such research is fragmented and immature, and communication has not really become a modern academic field. At the beginning of the 20th century, Plato's reputation for questioning rhetoric and "sophists" remained. Like the ancient Greek term for a sophist, a teacher of communication or public speaking who teaches rhetoric and oratory skills is called a "busker". At the same time, communication does not have an independent academic category, including rhetoric, public speaking, eloquence, comedy, debate, etc. Communication scholars lack complete and clear academic research methods. They only use methods of anthropology, psychology and sociology, and communication studies intersect with such disciplines as philosophy, logic, psychology, sociology, political science and history.

Due to the disadvantage and embarrassment faced by communication, communication scholars try their best to define the scope of their discipline, and put forward the basic question "what is the research scope of communication?", "what is the basic principle of building communication studies?". In December 1915, 17 scholars from major communication research institutions of the world gathered to discuss the disciplinary basis and name of communication, which marked the beginning of modern communication. These scholars were awarded the title of "pioneer" of communication (Barrett, 2004, pp. 285-329). Since then, the American toastmasters association has held annual meetings to disseminate the results of their research and discuss the scope and methods of their research. Schramm founded the first "communication" departments in American universities, wrote the first communication textbook and awarded the first doctoral degree in communication, which marked the true establishment of communication (Rogers, 2005, p. 395).

Communication scholars seek to build their research system on the basis of classical rhetoric, pay attention to public speaking, and explore the origin of communication studies. "Communication has begun to infiltrate the



department of speech, transforming it from a humanistic study of rhetoric to a scientific analysis of interpersonal communication” (Dues, 2018, p. 35). Under the influence of the Neo-Aristotelian school and modern communication theory, communication scholars promote the formation and development of communication.

## **II. From Rhetoric to Sociology: Changes in the Content and Methods of Communication Studies**

From the 1920s to the 1950s, the Neo-Aristotelian rhetoricians dominated the orientation of communication studies with rhetoric (oratory) as the source, the avant-garde scholars of related disciplines developed a sociological approach to communication studies. Mass media, war and technological progress have profoundly affected human communication activities, revealed unprecedented social problems and stimulated social scientists to pay attention to communication. Scholars have used their research to solve social problems: Harold Lasswell’s research on propaganda and public opinion, Paul Lazarsfeld’s research on communication effects and audiences, Kurt Lewin’s research on social environment and group dynamics, and Carl Hovland’s persuasion and attitude research have broadened the scope of communication research.

During this period, the study of communication derived from rhetoric shifted from the narrow sense of persuasion to the field of sociology, including small-group communication, interpersonal communication, mass communication and other sub-disciplinary fields. Based on classical rhetoric concept of communication studies at the same time to absorb nutrition from other disciplines and develop its theory, especially in sociology and communication scholars to redefine the whole of the human communication, their contribution for the establishment of the position of communication discipline of theoretical framework, methodology and practical knowledge, promote communication from rhetoric to the transition of the sociological study path.

### **2.1 Communication Studies from Rhetoric to Sociology**

During the two world wars, communication scholars based on rhetoric path were devoted to exploring the traditional sources of communication studies, paying attention to speech and rhetoric, and calling for a research system based on classical rhetoric. Another group of communication scholars put communication into the category of sociology or psychology, emphasizing the need of sociology for communication research. The study of communication derived from rhetoric excluded scholars who advocated a broad field of study, while the first term of modern communication research was “speech”, which also referred to the communication connotation of rhetoric and sociology (Dues, 2018, p. 35). At that time, “communication” was not recognized by people, but it has become the research object of sociology, political science, psychology, public speaking and management.

The study of communication in the context of rhetoric is quite different from that in the context of sociology. The former focuses on verbal persuasion in individual cases, such as one’s verbal skills in a particular speech. The research text of communication based on rhetoric also includes analysis of historical, cultural and sociological backgrounds. Communication studies in a sociological context emphasize the sociological context in which inequality and constraints in communication practices and structures are understood. Sociological communication scholars focus on the semiotic study of information construction, communication effect and significance (Keyton, 2006, p. 8).

In the early academic history of journalism and communication in the United States, philosophical and historical writings attempted to explain the nature of news and print media. From the mid-19th century to the late

19th century, the main model of media analysis was based on moral and political arguments (Fore, 1993, p. 10). In the 1920s and 1930s, more scientific approaches to mass media research began. A group of scholars call for the inclusion of communication studies in psychology or sociology, emphasizing the necessity of sociology and its research methods for communication studies. In *Liberty and the News* (1920), Walter Lippmann called on journalists to collect and analyze factual information as scientific researchers do. In *Public Opinion* (1922), he applied the basic theory of psychology to journalism, which was regarded as the “foundation work of American media studies” (Carey, 1989, p. 75), making people understand the influence of media and paying attention to the characteristics of data collection and quantitative research. Under the influence of communication scholars represented by Lippmann, the empirical school emphasizing quantitative and empirical studies has become a typical representative of modern communication studies in the United States (Campbell, 2015, p. 271).

Even James Winans, a leading figure in rhetoric at Cornell, proposed a sociological approach to communication as early as 1915. Charles Woolbert, representing a minority of oratory scholars in the early 20th century, advocated a sociological approach to the study of human communication. In 1920, he published his first experimental report on persuasion theory. In the following 80 years, his views gradually became accepted by most communication scholars, and sociological research methods emerged in the field of public speaking and communication.

World War II had a great impact on the study of communication. The American military even regarded communication as a key way to influence public opinion and train service personnel in wartime. The behavioral scientist Clark Hull created the theory of learning based on the classical view and Sigmund Freud’s theory, and Carl Hovland created the “information learning method” from the theory of learning—since attitudes can be learned, people can change their attitudes through the learning process. In 1942, Carl Hovland, Paul Lazarsfield and others co-chaired the U.S. war intelligence agency’s experimental research program, which examined the results of persuasive information, the credibility of sources, and fearful appeals about soldiers’ knowledge and attitudes. Karl Hovland used Shannon’s linear communication models—source, channel, and destination—as variables in his creative experiments on attitude change, which later had a major impact on sociology and interpersonal communication. Schramm was influenced by Paul Lazarsfield and Carl Hovland when he designed public propaganda and studied the effects of information dissemination for the federal government during the World War II.

In the decades after the World WarII, communication eventually formed its own unique field of study. Sociologists who study communication take the term “communication studies” and create a common vocabulary for communication. They agreed on Lasswell’s “5W” framework and Claude Elwood Shannon and Weaver’s linear propagation model. Communication scholars such as Lasswell, Lazarsfield, Lewin and Hovland turned to quantitative research, emphasizing the theoretical orientation of source, channel, destination and communication effect. Their multidisciplinary research has helped define new areas of research in communication. Karl Hovland and his colleagues continued to work on persuasion theory with funding from the Yale communication studies program, and their experimental methods and models have been used by other communication scholars for decades. Carl Hovland’s research results made sociology fully integrated and was praised as a persuasive theory that made “the greatest contribution to communication”. Kurt Lewin’s research on small groups follows a multiplicative path, observing topics such as group member tasks, group decision making and problem solving,

leadership, social networks of groups, stages of group development, conflicts, and interactions among group members.

With the development of higher education in the United States, many colleges and state universities have changed from teaching universities to research institutions. Communication and its curriculum are designed to conduct research in communication and train future communication scholars. In the 1950s, many contemporary topics were in the field of communication, and these topics needed to be studied in different ways from several disciplines. Communication education and research institutions in turn incorporate the theoretical content and methodology of sociology, psychology, anthropology and political science for in-depth research.

The advent of television in the 1950s and 1960s greatly expanded the scope of the study of effects of mass media in the United States. By the end of the 1970s, communication scholars had recognized a variety of factors influencing media effectiveness, including the role of media's agenda, the influence of social networks and the general support of audiences, as well as the impact of repeated media exposure. Researchers pay more attention to the impact of public propaganda activities, the influence of media on audience's thoughts, attitudes and behaviors, the flow of information between media sources and audiences, and the diachronic transmission effect.

## **2.2 Quantitative & Qualitative Analysis: Transformation of Research Methods in Communication**

In the 1920s and 1930s, the research achievements of communication from the sociological path represented by the Chicago school emerged, and the quantitative and qualitative analysis methods created and applied by social scientists had a profound impact on the research of communication. As early as the first decade of the 20th century, communication research topics in the United States worked hand in hand with social scientists based on empirical research. The Chicago school was the first centre of the movement (Mattelart, 2008, p. 13), whose scholars focused on social topics and used empirical methods to "confirm" their findings, including observation and investigation. Scholars of speech communication based on the classical concept of rhetoric (oratory), focus on persuasion techniques and the study of speech texts and their theories. Communication scholars such as Lasswell, Lazarsfield, Lewin and Hovland, who are sociologists, have studied the laws of propaganda and public opinion, persuasion and attitude change, interpersonal communication and organizational communication from a broad sociological perspective. The research of communication adopts the quantitative and qualitative analysis methods of sociology, and promotes the transformation of communication from persuasion and speech analysis to sociological research.

Under the leadership of the Chicago school, sociological research turned to quantitative methods and qualitative approaches. The center of sociological research in the world shifted from the University of Chicago to Columbia University. In the early 1940 Paul Lazarsfield established the broadcasting research institute in Columbia, later the institute for applied society, whose principal research tool was market research. Sociologists believe, based on empirical theory, that data obtained by observation or experiment is the only reliable source of truth; They are dedicated to accurately describing and explaining things to understand social problems, often not trying to improve or come up with solutions to social problems. Scholars who use quantitative analysis rely on data measurements to interpret human behavior as a data vocabulary from which to draw conclusions; Social scientists also use qualitative analysis to look at words and meanings in order to gain a deeper understanding of human behavior in a given context.

Quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis, as the organic components of social science research tradition, are widely popular in the field of communication. Both methods are empirical and based on the experience of observable phenomena (Keyton, 2006, p. 7), so they can be used to observe and describe human transmission activities, helping researchers to explain observed phenomena. In the context of sociology, communication studies use quantitative and qualitative analysis methods to explore patterns of information or communication behaviors. “sociologists who wish to use scientific methods to study mass communication tend to value judgment rather than broad study of mass culture” (Morin, 1968(7), p. 3). These patterns are based on case observations or measurements or deep observations over time.

In American academic history, sociologists who study communication have been influenced by the ideas of 19th-century European sociologists. Charles Darwin and Freud revolutionized human behavior and social ideas in the 19th century, propelling the development of early American sociology, and their views are still evident in current communication theories. Darwin’s theory of evolution promoted the study of human nonverbal communication and influenced Chicago school sociologists, who viewed communication as a process of symbolic interaction. Sigmund Freud psychoanalysis interprets human behavior by looking at the subconscious thoughts of individuals, develops its theories based on case studies (non-scientific methods), the point of view affects the learning theory of Clark Hull, and Hull’s learning theory strongly affect the persuasive research of Carl Hovland in the 1940s and 1950s; Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theory also influenced Lasswell.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the political communication power shaping the national image of America triggered serial studies on propaganda, and propaganda & public opinion became the focus of many subjects. Lasswell published *Propaganda Techniques in the World War* in 1927. He observed and studied propaganda, symbols and public opinion, and proposed the “5W” propaganda model (who says what, in which channel, to whom, with what effect), which provides a systematic research framework for us wartime studies during World War II and later communication studies (Lasswell, 1927-9). Lasswell encouraged the use of quantitative research methods for content analysis, i.e. systematic text analysis. Communication scholars, represented by Walter Lippmann, a famous journalist, use quantitative methods for interpretive research and content analysis (Dues, 2018, pp. 56-57). They analyze media such as newspapers, documentaries, history textbooks, movies, cartoons, political speeches, and magazine articles.

After the outbreak of the First World War, the world centre for psychology and empirical research moved from Europe to the United States. American social psychologists began to study persuasion and attitude change, team formation process, the influence of movies on children and interpersonal communication. Group dynamics studies focus on social issues such as the workplace, group leaders, and decision-making. Kurt Lewin, the first German morphological (gestalt) psychologist to emphasize the cognitive approach to social psychology, is best known for his study of the formation of small groups. His “field dynamic theory” describes the forces in an individual’s social environment, including small groups that influence individual behavior.

### **2.3 Integration of Public Speaking and Sociology: The Establishment and Development Prospect of Communication Discipline**

From the 1920s to the 1950s, the study of media and communication in the United States shifted from propaganda analysis, public opinion research, social psychology research and market research to media effect

research (Campbell, 2015, pp. 513-523), its research approach and methods also adopt the so-called scientific research method of empirical school that relies on experiments and data, which is actually the research method of integrating sociology. These scientific methods rely on objectivity (eliminating bias and based on the judgment of some researchers), reliability (obtaining the same answer or result in the investigation or measurement of a repetitive experiment), and validity (proving that the study did detect what was required) (Campbell, 2015, pp. 513-520).

With the application of sociology and its methods in communication studies, sociology gradually integrates with rhetoric and becomes a reasonable core and research path of communication studies. The communication researchers who adopt the sociological approach are mainly scholars from other disciplines concerned with human communication activities. The research methods of communication science gradually matured from the 1950s to the 1970s, and scholars of oratory communication began to adopt the sociological approach and give it a place in the curriculum of the department of oratory communication (Dues, 2018, p. 51). Wilbur Schramm was a master of integrating rhetoric and sociology into communication studies. His work constructed the framework of communication studies at that time, which was actually the sociological integration of human communication activities. That is, the existing department of public speaking and communication was merged into a comprehensive department of communication, including interpersonal communication and media technology research (Schramm, 1997, p. 3).

Schramm first used interdisciplinary research to integrate the work of sociologists into the study of human communication. While orators focus solely on the skills of public speaking, the broader study of communication has captivated sociology, political science, psychology, and even anthropology. Schramm integrated these disciplines into a new, interdisciplinary field of scholarship, the study of communication, as evidenced by the first doctoral program in the interdisciplinary field of mass communication at the University of Iowa School of journalism in 1943, which included courses in psychology, sociology, and political science.

Schramm's work essentially changed the field of communication studies. From the 1960s to the 1980s, Schramm's idea of integrated communication was adopted by American universities and incorporated into the study of public speaking. Scholars of oratory and rhetoric have expanded their research findings, methods, and curricula on the basis that new knowledge in communication enables the development of social science methods and interdisciplinary vision. In exploring the marriage of rhetoric and sociology, many departments changed their names to "speech communication". In the 1960s and 1970s, Midwestern universities such as Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Indiana followed this path and added courses in interpersonal communication and mass communication (Dues, 2018, pp. 64-65).

Scholars who integrate contemporary communication studies with traditional oratory studies recognize their essence: they study the same discipline. Classical rhetoric theory advocates the establishment of a clear and distinct set of communication parameters for the investigation and research of social scientists. Early sociological studies often validate these parameters.

The development of the professional association of rhetoric reflects the trend of the convergence of rhetoric and sociology. The first organization of rhetoricians and teachers in the United States was founded in 1914. In 1950, the communication scholars of the American speech society used only sociological methods to study communication and established a national association or institution for communication studies, which later

became the international communication association. In 1969, it was renamed the speech communication association; In the mid-1990s, the organization evolved into the American communication association, reflecting the expansion and academic status of the field. Nowadays, the American communication association brings together various communication scholars, who tend to emphasize the research methods of historiography, interpretation of classics and critical school. Most members agree with the discipline scope oriented by speech and rhetoric. In contrast, the international communication association places more emphasis on quantitative research methods and provides a scientific front for communication scholars. There is considerable overlap of membership and research areas between the two academic institutions (Dues, 2018, p. 65).

Since the 1980s, the sociological study of communication has continued to expand and differentiate. Quantitative methods focus on the application of cognitive structures and programs, interpersonal relationships, computer communication and communication theory to behavioral and public health issues. The methods of ethnology and phenomenology are more used in qualitative research. Communication theory and research focus on specific aspects of communication and broad communication activities. Mainstream research present in the field of international communication “for the development of the telecommunications transmission” model, not the mass of common concern, but the spread of interactive telecommunications network, namely how to use the telephone and the Internet to improve the efficiency and productivity, social integration and social participation, the overall level of (Gudykunst, 2016, p. 277). These developments reflect other disciplines’ continuous exploration of the complexity of human communication activities and their differentiated studies.

### **III. The Historical Value of Communication in Tracing Back to Plato: An Introduction to the Origin of Communication**

*Boxing Plato’s Shadow: an Introduction to the Study of Human Communication* summarizes the origin of rhetoric and sociology of Communication studies, and analyzes the historical evolution in the field of Communication over the past 2,500 years and the advantages of multi-system approaches in Communication studies, which may be regarded as a rare literature on the history of Communication studies.

First of all, it is helpful for scholars to know the status of communication by clarifying the origin of rhetoric and sociology. In the course of the development and establishment of the discipline of communication, while absorbing and innovating the research approaches and theories of communication, communication scholars are constantly fighting for their embarrassing academic status, especially the efforts made by modern and contemporary scholars to integrate communication into the discipline system. Chinese communication scholars are even struggling with the rationality of the existence of communication and discipline evaluation criteria (Hu, 2012, pp. 8-36). Therefore, communication scholars must clarify the origin of rhetoric and sociology of communication, which has a long history of academic background, while Shouting for the embarrassing position of their major. Otherwise, they cannot fundamentally solve the embarrassing position of their discipline and the perplexities in its development. Based on this, the academic value of this book is mainly reflected in providing reference for the academic circle to understand the origin of rhetoric and sociology of communication and its role in the course of establishing the discipline status.

Secondly, this paper is an overview of the study on the history of communication and its effects by using the knowledge of communication. It is very helpful for readers and professionals to clarify the complicated,

controversial and even contradictory concepts, theories and basic viewpoints of the schools in the long development of communication. “Research objects and strategies that are thought to have been solved or outmoded are sometimes suddenly discovered, questioned, and the status of truth that has held for decades suddenly challenged” (Mattelart, 2008, introduction), “There are also obsolete doctrines and ephemeral new words in communication, which, although they claim to be models of ultimate systems of explanation and authority, gradually lose their value amid conflicting interdisciplinary discoveries and the slow accumulation of communication knowledge” (Mattelart, 2008, introduction).

Thirdly, the preface of the book begins by saying that “this book is a systematic study of the history of communication for more than 2,500 years”. Communication rhetoric and sociological source been around for 2500 years, together with its interdisciplinary nature and the concept, theory and problems in the development process and its genre and disputes is complicated, the rhetoric of reason from the aspect of academic history to clarify communication and sociology source and its discipline development of various schools of the debate between theory and other theories is very difficult, and its academic history is of great significance, “Because of these endless debates, it is impossible for the history of communication to be written in chronological terms. The rise and fall of various ideological trends make scholars unable to see the pure clue of the development of communication theory” (Mattelart, 2008, introduction). Therefore, this book is one of the few important documents on the history of communication studies at home and abroad.

### Conclusion

During the development of 2,500 years, Rhetoric’s research on human communication activities absorbed by Communication studies have undergone diachronic changes. From the persuasive and public speaking skills originated from the the wise (sophists) activated in ancient Greece and Rome to the theoretical basis for analyzing and evaluating speakers and their speeches, and the formation of the Neo-Aristotelians in the 1930s, the classic “rhetoric” art and modern Rhetoric consistently provided nutrition and substance connotation for Communication studies. As two disciplines with the same origination of persuasive and speech skills, Rhetoric and Communication studies correlated and infiltrated mutually. The contribution of orators and the art of oratory to Communication studies is to regard human communication as a science, which has sown the seeds for the science of Communication development. And the Neo-Aristotelian school exerted its influence on the formation and distribution of Communication studies.

From the 1920s to the 1950s, with the development of society, the limitations of the traditional rhetoric (oratory) approach based on persuasion and analysis of speech skills became increasingly apparent. Social scientists from different fields studied wartime propaganda and public opinion communication activities from their own vision. They introduced the sociological research methods of qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis into communication research, and integrated rhetoric and communication on this basis to promote the transformation of communication from rhetoric to sociology.

As a work on academic history of Communication studies, *Boxing Plato’s Shadow: An Introduction to the Study of Human Communication* by Michael of and Mary Brown (McGraw Hill, 2004) summarizes the origin of rhetoric and sociology of Communication studies, and analyzes the historical evolution of human communication

studies over the past 2,500 years, which confirms itself to be of the academic value and a rare literature on the history of Communication studies.

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