Our study provides a model for the history of communication studies that is developed from the state of research and from the sociology of science, and that meets the demands of intersubjectivity. The model provides a system of categories for research and helps to systematically and transparently analyze the development of communication studies. After discussing traditional biographical, institutional, and intellectual approaches in German and U.S.-American historiography of communication studies, we develop a model that integrates the existing perspectives and also considers influences from the constellation of surrounding disciplines and relevant fields of society. Finally, we demonstrate by means of a study on the history of critical theory in German communication studies how the model can be applied.

doi:10.1111/j.1468-2885.2010.01373.x

In the middle of the 1990s, Wartella (1996, p. 169) wrote about American communication studies that “over the past decade, there has been considerable interest in writing and reconsidering the history of the field of communication study.” Among others, the Californian scholar referred to the studies of Czitrom (1982), Delia (1987), and Sproule (1983). Today it seems as if during the past decade there had been an increasing attempt to reflect on the way historiographic inquiry can be carried out (Dennis & Wartella, 1996; Park & Pooley, 2008; Pietilä, 1994; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2000). Some of these authors sharply criticized the traditional historiography of the field. Robinson (1996, pp. 158–159) spoke of “supposedly ‘historical’ accounts” that continue to perpetuate myths (e.g., the “fourfather” myth) and are lacking social perspectives. Carey (1996, p. 21) found that, generally speaking, the field was not interested in its own past. Pooley and Park criticized the “amateur history of unresearched introductory comments, taken-for-granted textbook versions and orally transmitted understandings.” They complained about “thin hagiography” and an “airbrushed and Whiggish” historiography, which they called “notably unreflective” (Pooley & Park, 2008, p. 1, 4; cf. Butterfield, 1931/1963). These statements suggest
that, so far, a subdiscipline that addresses the past of American communication studies in a systematical way is still lacking.

Interestingly enough, efforts are also being made in Germany to refine the theoretical and methodological foundations of the historiography of communication studies (cf. Averbeck & Kutsch, 2002; Meyen & Lüblich, 2006). We would like to contribute to the debate about what a “proper historiography of our field” should look like (Robinson, 1996, p. 158). Our study provides a model that is intended to serve as a heuristic and to help to systematically and transparently analyze the development of communication studies. It is developed from the state of the art and from the sociology of science and shows how the intellectual and social dimensions within a discipline are linked to each other as well as how a discipline and the constellation of surrounding disciplines and relevant fields of society are connected. Thereby, the model integrates both existing approaches and factors of disciplinary development that have been reflected on in an explicit way only scarcely so far.

We developed this model from research into the past of German communication studies that we have undertaken during the last few years. It is quite remarkable that the development of communication studies has been similar in many respects in the United States and in Germany. This common ground encourages us to submit our approach for discussion by the U.S.-American scientific community. In both countries, the field has problems relating to its historical identity: its short tradition as an academic discipline, the external influences coming from the media industry and the state, its legitimacy deficit, its diffuse research topic “communication,” the heterogeneous academic backgrounds of its scholars, and the fact of being “scattered” all over places at universities. In Germany, as well as in America, these characteristics lead within the field to a “lack of consensus” on its subject matters and to difficulties in shaping a self-conception (Delia, 1987; Meyen & Lüblich, 2006; Pooley, 2008; Saxer, 1995).

In this study, we will at first discuss the three different approaches in German and American historiography of communication studies: the intellectual, the biographical, and the institutional approach. This discussion will allow us to show the advantages of a proceeding that not only integrates these three perspectives but also includes the disciplinary context and the context of society. Thus, in a second step we will explain our model and discuss its theoretical background. Finally, we demonstrate by means of an example how the model can be applied in a concrete study and how it can be linked to a theory.

We are aware that there are different concepts of historiography. This study is based on the systematic and social-scientific understanding of writing history that originates from the “historical social sciences” concept (cf. Kocka, 1977, 2000). The use of theory and the orientation toward intersubjectivity belong to this understanding of historiography. Of course, historical findings are always based on interpretation and therefore are conditioned by the researcher’s subjectivity (Prüfer, 2003). However, this does not automatically mean that historical scholarship has to be conducted intuitively or that its premises can only vaguely be articulated. Quite on the contrary,
The steps of procedure can be made transparent by describing explicitly underlying assumptions and theoretical framework. One strategy to achieve this is working with categories—analytical concepts developed from theory and the state of the art. We assume that a theoretical approach can help to structure the whole process of historical research, to clarify the subject matter, and to select as well as to analyze sources (Kocka, 1977; Welskopp, 2002).

**Intellectual, biographical, and institutional approaches to the history of communication studies**

There are many ways to write about the history of communication studies. Even though contributions to this subject are usually not exclusively committed to only one perspective (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2000), in the past they have often either concentrated on individual researchers (biographical histories), on the development of certain ideas and theories (intellectual histories), or on scientific organizations and institutional settings (institutional histories). When applied, each of these approaches not only offers certain advantages and specific perspectives but also shows some deficits so that the discussion below will lead to a suggestion to integrate them.

**Intellectual histories**

Intellectual histories focus on cognitive developments in the field of communication studies and deal with the origins, singularity and coherence of theories, paradigms, research problems, and methods in this discipline (cf. Averbeck, 1999; Hardt, 2001). By following ideas in the course of time, historians also gain access to the development of a discipline’s cognitive identity.

The chronological narration of theories and paradigms employed in most of the early contributions did sometimes serve the purpose of separating the wheat from the chaff, the few true from the many false beliefs (Lepenies, 1981). It was Thomas Kuhn (1962), if not an earlier scholar, who criticized the uncritical affirmations of “victorious ideas” within the historiography of science. And Robert K. Merton criticized those histories of sociological theory that offer only a collection of critical summaries of earlier theories without any underlying concept of writing the history of theories (Merton, 1967).

More recent intellectual histories “offer potential space for rebellious reflections on the conditions that gave rise to and shaped communication study” (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2000). This is true for many intellectual histories, we just mention Lang’s “The European Roots” (1996), Schiller’s *Theorizing Communication* (1996), or Hardt’s *Critical Communication Studies* (1992) as examples. They provide alternative stories of the development of American communication studies and try to contextualize them. Averbeck (1999) or Rühl (2008) have a very similar approach in the case of the intellectual history of German communication studies, but biographical details, subjective intentions, social motives, or the relevance of a scientist’s reputation in the process of the diffusion of ideas play minor roles at best. Altogether, within
German historiography of communication studies, there are more biographical and institutional than intellectual studies even though most of the biographical and institutional ones also deal with certain aspects of intellectual history (cf., for further intellectual histories on German communication studies, Averbeck & Kutsch, 2005; Pöttker, 2001).

Intellectual history has many advantages; one is to show the analytical potential early theories still can hold, and another one is to emphasize that the ideas and theories that are announced as original and new today sometimes have been suggested a long time ago (cf. Merton, 1967). In cases where intellectual history is not only focused on continuities, it also creates awareness of disruption and stagnation, and thus relativizes the notion of linear progress of knowledge in communication studies (Hardt, 2008; Pöttker, 2001). This applies to biographical and institutional histories, too. If too narrowly defined, this approach tends to overlook the role that factors such as the social background, status, and changes in the organization of sciences have in the acceptance or the failure of ideas in the field of communication studies.

**Biographical histories**

Biographical histories of communication studies use individual scholars and their lives as narrative threads and show the course of a scientist’s life and his or her work. Histories of classics fit into this category; in the United States, examples include Wilbur Schramm’s (1963) “Communication Research in the United States” and Everett Rogers’s (1994) *A History of Communication Study*. However, biographical perspectives such as Rogers’s that concentrate on the personalities of scholars, their works, and their contributions to the progress of science, have been criticized as “great-men-make-history.” The argument was that these approaches construct scientific development as a sequence of individual achievements, that they have historical and conceptual shortcomings and consider neither the scholars’ socialization and social milieu nor the political, social, and religious orientations scholars also adhere to apart from scientific orientations (Abbott, 2005; Lepenies, 1981; Simonson, 2009). Moreover, an individual’s key experiences like war or dictatorship are important aspects to be taken into account in order to understand a scholar’s life and work. As a result of this discussion, branches in German history and sociology have forwarded a biographical history that conceives individuals as embedded in social milieus and acting in multiple social roles while traversing time and space. For writing the history of a discipline this means to integrate both the scholar’s guiding nonscientific orientations and the social contexts influencing his or her scientific work (cf. Koenen, 2005). This type of biographical research is based on theoretical and sociological principles and developed after T. Kuhn (1962) challenged the idea of scientific development as an exclusively rationalistic process (Pooley, 2008). It provides a systematic way to explore how the course of an academic’s life and the development of concepts, ideas, and problems are related to each other (Kaesler, 1984, 2006).

In summary, the advantages of biographical histories are firstly that they give an insight into the role of individuals in scientific development. Secondly, the
biographical approach offers a wide range of methodological possibilities and available sources (Bödeker, 2003; Simonson, 2008). Their disadvantage is that they may tend to overestimate this individual influence and may tend to overlook the weight structures do have in science—structures that concern ideas (e.g., governing paradigms and quality standards or the intellectual development in the broader academic field) and structures that concern the social organization of a discipline (e.g., social positions and functions, reputational and institutional status, and financial resources of academic organizations).

**Institutional histories**

Science is not only made by persons but also within institutions. Research is “both a source and an outcome of the institutions that surround it” (Nordenstreng, 2008, p. 225). “Institution” can be understood both as a set of rules and as organization within science (Pietilä, 2008). Institutional histories in communication studies deal with the development of institutes of communication research inside and outside of university departments and within the media industry, and they deal with scholarly associations, “invisible colleges,” or with the resources of communication research (cf. Nordenstreng, 2008; Peters, 2008; Simpson, 1994). This approach also involves the question of how new theories or research programs get stabilized by social arrangements or by the mobilization of resources—in short, by way of institutionalization (cf. Pietilä, 2008). Institutional histories sometimes build myths around a community of researchers, or around an institute, and spread the idea of their scientific progress. They especially do so if they originate from inside the institution and serve implicitly or explicitly public relations purposes (cf. Wagner, 1997). Besides, excluding conflicts within a scholarly organization can be a further pitfall for institutional histories that adhere too much to a linear thread of narration.

The German sociologist Lepenies emphasized that a theory’s capability to survive depends essentially on its chance to get institutionalized and not only on its “qualities” such as the clarity of concepts, the inner logic of a theory, or its innovative potential (Lepenies, 1981). Following this argument, the institutional perspective allows to pose the important question why certain theories and concepts within communication studies have been more successful than others—and to ask, for instance, why the socioscientific paradigm focusing on quantitative empirical methods established itself as the dominant perspective in West Germany during the 1960s and 1970s (Löblich, 2010), whereas the competing perspective of critical communication studies has not been able to develop stable social and cognitive arrangements (Scheu & Wiedemann, 2008).

Because it is possible, from this perspective, to integrate individuals as well as intellectual development, researchers are enabled to investigate the scientific output of actors that work under the same roof (cf. Meyen & Wendelin, 2008) as well as the process of institutionalization of certain schools or theories over a longer period of time, as, for example, Carey (1996), Klein (2006), or Sproule (2008) did.
Summary
The discussion has shown that each of these approaches provides its own special perspective of the history of communication studies. None can be replaced by one of the others, but they can complement each other. This does not mean that a study should not focus either on biography or on institutional or intellectual history. But regardless of the particular research question pursued, given the complexity of historical processes in science, it seems most promising to link biographical, intellectual, and institutional perspectives with each other. This means at the same time to recognize that social factors have to be included systematically in disciplinary historiography. Cognitive factors alone cannot adequately explain scientific change.

There are already studies that put the integration of biographical, institutional, and intellectual approach into practice (cf., e.g., Delia, 1987; Meyen & Löblich, 2006; Simonson, 2008). But the amount of theoretical work is still very limited. The model of Averbeck and Kutsch (2002) proposes a way in which social factors can be integrated in the intellectual approach. It was developed for studies into German Zeitungswissenschaft (newspaper science) between 1900 and 1960 and described its development by identifying different intellectual stages and focusing on generations of scholars. This model considered the development of the discipline, the scientific field, and social environments and regarded the individual actor as an intermediary instance between the intellectual and the social structure of Zeitungswissenschaft. It showed how intellectual histories can be analytical and critical when they are linked to social and institutional processes.

As the discussion has also made clear, adhering to a linear and progressive notion of scientific development would imply overlooking disruption, stagnation, or even regression, and thus limit the opportunities to reflect upon the history of a discipline from these angles. Thus, if the historiography of communication studies is more than stringing together biographical facts and theories, then a theoretical model is required that describes systematically the assumed connections between ideas, institutions, and biographies. The next section introduces such a model for the research into the history of communication studies.

A model for the history of communication studies
We will propose a model (Figure 1) for the history of communication studies. It not only aims at combining the above-mentioned perspectives within the concept of the academic discipline and thus overcomes the deficits of using just one single approach. It considers the constellation of disciplines—which also contains the relation of the same discipline in different national contexts (Delia, 1987)—and the interrelations between a discipline and different fields of society such as politics, economy, and media system.

Our model is developed from the state of historical research into communication studies (see our discussion above) and from findings in the sociology of science. We
refer to a sociology of science that both studies the social factors within a scientific community that influence the development of science ("internal" conditions such as social interests, norms, reputation system, social structure, and organization of science; cf. Clark, 1974; Kuhn, 1962; Merton, 1942, 1973) and the relations between science and other areas in society ("external" influences; cf. Weingart, 2001). It was this latter perspective that provided us with theoretical arguments in order to include wider contexts into the model.

We understand our model as an analytical and heuristic framework that consists of a system of categories. The categories in the model represent the research dimensions in a historical study that have to be taken into consideration. They serve as analytical concepts. Categories help not only to structure the subject matter but also guide the whole research process as well as the production and choice of sources (e.g., interviews). Beyond this, the purpose of working with categories is to provide for intersubjectivity (cf. Löblich, 2008). Our model does not assert a direction for interpretation and explanation. It does not specify how the categories influence each other. Its "openness" in this regard is symbolized by the double arrows. We believe that the model should be connected with a theory depending on the concrete research questions and objectives. In this way, explanations can be introduced that specify how the interrelations look and work.

Because this study deals with the history of communication studies as a discipline, the discipline under study is situated in the core of the model. To explain the model, we start with this category and then we will proceed to the wider contexts of the discipline. A scientific discipline constitutes itself around a specific subject or a particular field of investigation such as communication and media in the case of

![Figure 1 A model for the history of communication studies.](figure_image)
communication studies (Laitko, 1999). We extend this definition that reflects only on the subject and include the social dimension of a discipline. Here we refer to Thomas Kuhn’s concept of a “scientific community” whose members believe (at least for a certain time) in a paradigm (or a prevailing “idea”), interact within specific forms of social organization (or “institution”), and develop and convey their ideas through institutionalization and socialization (Kuhn, 1993). A discipline represents a specific scientific reward system (Merton, 1957) that on the one hand serves its members as an orientation as to which fields of research it is worthwhile to get involved. On the other hand, it is the outcome of struggles between scholars, ideas, and institutions. Sociologists like Niklas Luhmann (1990, 1998) or Pierre Bourdieu (1998, 2004) arrived at similar conclusions. The scientific community ascribes reputation to its members according to what Luhmann calls the scientific code and Bourdieu the rules of the scientific field. This explains the relative stability of disciplinary structures, even though scholars continuously produce new ideas, claim to make innovative “breakthroughs” (Kuhn, 1993), and try to challenge the existing body of knowledge.

According to our model, the development of a discipline is shaped by ideas, individual biographies, and institutions that are interrelated and change over time. With ideas we mean cognitive elements produced by the members of a discipline such as paradigms, theories, concepts, and methods. We understand “institution” as a form of social organization by which, in the long term, ideas get stabilized. This concept of institution includes a range of forms of organization, not only departments of communication or scholarly associations but also textbooks, courses of studies, and chairs (cf. Whitley, 1974). Karl Mannheim described the relation between knowledge and social actors—and now we approach our concept of biography—as Seinsverbundenheit des Wissens (relation of knowledge and being) (Mannheim, 1952, p. 229). Scientific knowledge is produced by people who have their particular biographical experience, their interests, and who are embedded in different social contexts. Therefore, a scholar does not always act exclusively according to scientific principles. His or her actions are also influenced by political, religious, and economic orientations and by certain “opportunity structures” (Morrison, 2008) that make certain developments more likely than others. In this sense, we proceed from an understanding of science as a social activity (Mendelsohn, 1977).

Actors, institutions, and ideas are interrelated and thus constitute the structure of a discipline. The double arrows in our model symbolize these interrelations. Interrelations between biographies, institutions, and ideas can explain why the scientific process is not linear but shaped by crises, changes, rediscoveries, and losses of knowledge. Which insights does the perspective of interrelations give? Interrelations can be investigated, for example, by looking into socialization processes by which, according to Thomas Kuhn (1962), ideas (or what he calls “paradigms”) are passed on and inscribed on biographies. In lectures, within professor–student relationships, and by the reception of exemplary works, young scholars get socialized. Another example
concerning biographies and ideas is the relation between prevailing paradigms and interests. This relation can be traced, for instance, within scholarly debates. Common interests within the generation of the so-called Young Turks in West German communication studies were one reason for the opening of the discipline to the expectations of media practice in the decades after 1945 (Meyen, 2007). The goal to stabilize a certain subject or to consolidate the whole discipline can unite a biographically dispersed group of scholars: The West German professors who shaped the socioscientific shift in communication studies in the 1960s belonged to different scientific, political, and religious camps. They had worked as journalists, politicians, or opinion researchers before and therefore brought with them quite diverse understandings of the discipline when they became professors. But the discipline’s miserable institutional situation after 1945, the changes within the media system, and the expectations of the political leaders got all of them to mobilize resources in order to forward empirical research (Löblich, 2007). The case of the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University demonstrates how the course of an individual actor’s life can influence an institution: The Bureau was closed after Paul F. Lazarsfeld’s death in 1976 (Lepenies, 1981, p. XIII). Finally, empirical studies have shown how important strategic actions of groups of scholars have been in regard to the institutionalization of ideas (cf. Griffith & Mullins, 1972; Weingart, 2003; Whitley, 1984). But ideas and research are not only a source or an impulse of institution building, they can also be an outcome of institutions as Nordenstreng (2008) has shown describing the case of the International Association for Media and Communication Research.

From the internal description of the discipline in our model, we now proceed to its contexts and look first into the category “constellation of disciplines.” Disciplinary development is affected by the development of science as a whole, or, in the terms of the sociologist Lepenies, by the constellation of surrounding disciplines (Lepenies, 1981). The history of a discipline, we believe, can only be adequately written if “mother,” neighboring, and competing disciplines are included (Laitko, 1999). Both in the United States and in Germany communication studies emerged between and across diverse disciplines at the turn from the 19th to the 20th century (Delia, 1987). In Germany, the two “mother disciplines” of Zeitungswissenschaft were history and political economy. It is not surprising that the first professors in Zeitungswissenschaft were political economists and historians who shaped the intellectual structure in the first decades of the discipline by their specific orientations and research styles (vom Bruch, 1980). Pursuing the relations of a discipline to its neighboring disciplines can give an insight into the professional standing or reputation of communication studies at university—reputation has always been a central factor for the developmental possibilities of German communication studies (cf. Meyen & Löblich, 2006)—and into the way ideas have been transferred from one discipline to another, for instance, through cooperation or migration (Mulkay, 1972). An example for the latter is how, because of their work as World War II propaganda researchers, Carl I. Hovland and other social psychologists came to have a major impact on communication research in the United States after 1945 and how they placed the methods of experimental...
social psychology in the mainstream of communication research (Delia, 1987). Last but not least, neighboring disciplines can be studied as competitors for resources within an organizational structure such as a university.

Although Karl Popper or Imre Lakatos assumed that science is autonomous and socially detached, we proceed from a concept that regards science as being not autonomous but influencing other fields of society and being influenced by them (cf. Weingart, 2001, 2003). Many studies on the history of communication research both in the United States and in Germany have drawn attention to the fact that there were considerable influences that shaped the disciplinary development. This is the reason why our model contains the category “nonscientific fields of society.” Investigating the history of communication studies this means that one has to pursue if and which relations between relevant fields of society and the discipline have existed in a time. Which fields have to be chosen and considered in a study depends on the concrete research question. But it is known that because of the need for funding and nonscientific legitimation, politics, economy, and media can exert considerable influence on science (cf. Weingart, 2003; Whitley, 1984). Also, the state of the art in communication studies contains plenty of examples suggesting that influences on the discipline came mostly from politics (and military), economy, and the media (cf., e.g., Bohrmann, 1986; Delia, 1987; Simpson, 1994; Weingart, 2001). That innovations and changes within the media system have led to shifts within communication research because its subject matter changed seems to be evident. We set an example to demonstrate the influence of economy: The consumer goods industry fed the interest in research on advertising. With the significant increase of professional advertising (in America from the last decades of the 19th century), questions concerning the effects of publicity campaigns were raised (Delia, 1987). There can also be effects on the reward system of a discipline. This was the case during National Socialism in Germany, when the professors of Zeitungswissenschaft were appointed because of their ideological reliability and not because of their scientific contributions (cf. Kutsch, 1988; Averbeck, 2001). When the political circumstances changed after 1945, the reward system for science changed again: The ideologically motivated research and the personal involvement of professors during the “Third Reich” (Pöttker, 2001) now led to the legitimacy deficit of the discipline in society and to a deep crisis of its institutions (Meyen & Löblich, 2006).

An analysis of societal influences on a discipline should not exclusively proceed from a one-sided influence but from interrelations. The history of science in the 20th century has supplied many examples that scholars have taken the initiative, offered themselves for conducting political projects, and tried to mobilize state resources for their own purposes (Ash, 2002). This is the case with science and economy, too. Their relations can fulfill instrumental and legitimatory functions for both. This is the reason why the corresponding categories in our model are linked by an arrow that directs to two sides.

Our model demonstrates the diverse interrelations in the history of a discipline. A historiography of communication studies that follows this model is able to go
further than the past approaches and further than only describing the past—the aim should be to explain developments, identify regularities, and thereby help to reflect the present, too. One way of explaining such interrelations and historical processes is to interpret findings in the light of theory. The following section offers one example of how the model can be applied. Regarding this example the advantages of our model as a basis of research should become clear: systematization of the field of research, structuring the research process, and securing the intersubjectivity (i.e., decisions concerning the theoretical perspective, sources, analytical framework).

Applying the model: The tradition of critical theory in German communication studies

The following example summarizes the research design of a doctoral dissertation dealing with the recent history of communication studies in Germany. At this point, our aim is neither to discuss the research strategy nor give a detailed description of the study. Instead, we try to exemplify the idea of how our model can be applied.

The initial question is: Why are certain theoretical perspectives more successful than others? What are the reasons why certain theories are passed on in textbooks and are installed in curricula at universities and others seem to vanish? The study aims at explaining the history of ideas of German communication studies. As mentioned above, traditional histories of ideas tend to describe a development of ideas that serves to legitimize the present structure of ideas or the perspective of their authors. Considering the model presented in Figure 1, this study is not interested in legitimating or criticizing the development of ideas but tries to research into the interrelations as the model suggests. The subject matter of the study is the theoretical tradition of critical theory in German communication studies. This tradition can be called “critical communication studies” (Hardt, 1992). It flourished in Germany during the 1970s and 1980s but today it belongs to the underdogs within communication studies (Winter & Zima, 2007). The period under study stretches from the late 1960s to the 1980s, a time in which German communication studies distanced itself from its roots in the humanities and became a social science. Two research interests follow from this: On the one hand, the study describes the development of “critical communication studies” in Germany and on the other hand it explains why this theoretical perspective and the scholars adhering to it seem to have vanished from German communication studies by now. Below, we will discuss the application of our model following three basic steps during the research process—steps that are characterized by decisions (a) on the theoretical background of the study, (b) on the methodological approach, and (c) on the process of data analysis and interpretation.

One of the first decisions during a research process is the decision on the theoretical background. In this study, this decision was made in favor of Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of social fields (Bourdieu, 1987, 1988, 1996). There are several reasons for this:
First of all, Bourdieu’s theory meets the requirements of the model and considers all its levels and elements. Secondly, this theory provides an empirical operationalization; thirdly, it offers an interpretive framework to analyze and explain interrelations. Therefore, it seems to be a promising research tool in order to answer the question why “critical communication studies” has not been able to establish itself in German communication studies.

The second step in the research process concerns the methodological approach. To explain why “critical communication studies” has not been successful in Germany, it was necessary to firstly identify the relevant scholars, their influence on the development of the discipline, and their relation to established researchers in the field of German communication studies (biographies). Secondly, the basic principles, which means the methods and fields of research of this tradition, had to be defined and the question had to be discussed how the “critical” tradition relates to other theoretical traditions in the field of German communication studies (ideas). And thirdly, the institutional background had to be reconstructed (institutions). According to the model, the constellation of disciplines and nonscientific fields of society had to be considered as influences on the development of the discipline, too. To do so, research categories have been deduced according to the theory of Bourdieu.1 The model thereby served as a heuristic tool to identify relevant aspects of the development of German communication studies that had to be inquired. The model also guided the search for and production of sources.

At first, the relevant scholars of “critical communication studies” in the field of German communication studies had to be identified. Because the study aims at covering all “critical” scholars in Germany who have been actively researching mass communication during the period of socioscientific change, all scholars who were born between 1930 and 1950 have been taken into account. To identify “critical” scholars, the basic principles of “critical communication studies” have been defined by analyzing media-related texts from scholars of the first generation of critical theory: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer, Leo Löwenthal, and Herbert Marcuse. These principles served as guidelines to analyze publications, reviews of publications in journals, and textbooks of communication studies in order to decide whether or not a specific scholar belongs to “critical communication studies.” These basic principles are:

1. the aim of changing society according to ideas of enlightenment;
2. the opposition to (mainly quantitative) research traditions influenced by “critical rationalism” (Popper, 1959);
3. the refusal to provide decisionmakers in politics or media with applicable results—instead, theory itself was meant to expose the social status quo and thereby change society; and
4. an understanding of mass communication that distinguishes between harmful media that are instruments of suppression and beneficial media that promote ideas of enlightenment.
The second criterion was the scholar’s belonging to the field of communication studies. This included scholars who are institutionally anchored in the field as well as scholars who are only intellectually committed to communication studies because of their field of research.

Although the “ideas” of “critical communication studies” could be described by analyzing the scholars’ publications, their “biographies” have been reconstructed using (auto-)biographical texts and interviews with “critical” scholars themselves and with contemporary witnesses. Important “institutions” for “critical communication studies” have been identified using the above-mentioned autobiographical and biographical sources. The history of such institutions has been reconstructed using existing studies and self-portrayals of institutions. Finally, influences from other disciplines (sociology, education, political science, and communication studies in the United States) and from nonscientific fields of society (politics, media, and economy) have been identified and described considering all the sources mentioned before.

To carry out the in-depth analysis of interactions suggested by the model, the study also contained five case studies of “critical” scholars. Such interactions result from the assumed inner triangle between biographies, ideas, and institutions (i.e., the influence of existing institutional structures on the development of ideas) or from the connections between contexts like external fields or neighboring disciplines and the development of “critical communication studies” (i.e., the influence of political developments on the acceptance of “critical” ideas).

Finally, the combination of the model and the theoretical background—in this example the theory of Bourdieu—offers an interpretive framework to analyze and explain the history of “critical communication studies.” As the core of our model consists of the mentioned triangle between biographies, ideas, and institutions, the marginality of “critical communication studies” in Germany can be illustrated in regard to all the three elements of this triangle.

Firstly, only few scholars conducted “critical communication studies.” During the course of the study, it became clear that only four scholars can be related to a core of “critical communication studies” in Germany—Jörg Aufermann (*1940), Franz Dröge (1937–2002), Hanno Hardt (*1934), and Manfred Knoche (*1941). This core consists of scholars who position themselves explicitly in the tradition of critical theory and in the field of German communication studies. Other scholars either softened their “critical” heritage and oriented themselves toward the socioscientific tradition—Hans Bohrmann (*1940), Hans Kleinsteuber (*1943), Gerd Kopper (*1941), Horst Pöttker (*1944), Jürgen Prott, Franz Stuke (*1944), Jan Tonnemacher (*1940), Siegfried Weischenberg (*1948), and Axel Zerdick (1941–2003)—or they cannot be clearly positioned in the field of communication studies because they work in neighboring disciplines such as sociology, political science, or education—Dieter Baacke (1934–1999), Horst Holzer (1935–2000), Wulf D. Hundt (*1946), Dieter Prokop (*1941), and Jürgen Prott (*1942).

Secondly, regarding the element “ideas,” it can be stated that those few “critical” scholars rather distanced themselves from other colleagues and from established
perspectives and especially from social-scientific methodology. Opposition toward established perspectives seems to be part of the self-conception of “critical communication studies.” Franz Dröge, for example, as a 1960s research assistant in Munster, criticized his colleagues and their work sharply, accused them of being “ideologists that legitimate the status quo” (Dröge, 1972, p. 21), and broke off his relations with them after he got appointed as a professor in Bremen in 1971.

And thirdly, there is only one university that can be described as a center of “critical communication studies” in Germany—nearly all “critical” scholars were tied to the West Berlin University (Freie Universität Berlin) that became a center of the student movement in the 1960s. The “critical” scholars of communication studies have studied or worked as junior scholars and professors at this university. The fact that there was only one institutional center of “critical communication studies” had consequences regarding both the education and the chances the junior researchers got as the case of Manfred Knoche demonstrates. He started to study in 1967 in Mainz but soon was forced to continue his studies in Berlin. His professor, Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann in Mainz, no longer accepted his “critical” perspective and his political involvement in the student protests and refused to let him graduate.

As described in the model, the history of “critical communication studies” is embedded in the history of the discipline. The analysis of the textbooks of German communication studies shows that the majority of German communication scholars followed critical rationalism and a socioscientific conception of science (Wendelin, 2008). In addition, the majority of those professors who were appointed during the 1960s were conservative in their political thought (Hardt, 2002). Thus, the political climate within the discipline was hindering rather than congenial for “critical” approaches. Many contemporary witnesses and scholars of “critical communication studies” remember, for instance, Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann’s influence on German communication studies (Meyen & Löblich, 2007).

Moreover, the discipline was on the verge of being disestablished in the first decades after 1945 (Kutsch & Pöttker, 1997). The increased relevance of mass communication perceived in politics seems not only to have secured the discipline (Meyen & Wendelin, 2008) but also led to a “boom” of German communication studies from the 1970s onward. New institutes and chairs were established. Although the social-scientific research following critical rationalism benefited from the enlargement of the discipline, “critical communication studies” was left empty-handed. This indicates that the social-scientific tradition could better adapt to contemporary needs and expectations coming from society than the “critical” tradition.

Going on to the next level of the model, the “constellation of disciplines” has to be regarded, too. German communication studies struggled for legitimacy within the university during the 1960s and 1970s (Meyen, 2007). To improve its academic reputation, communication scholars imported socioscientific methodology that was already being applied in the United States (Meyen & Löblich, 2007). The U.S. socioscientific research tradition of communication studies became one of the most important influences on German communication studies in this time. The case
of the above-mentioned “critical” scholar Franz Dröge illustrates this influence. At the end of the 1960s, Dröge was one of the first German researchers to discuss and adapt U.S. literature in his studies. He was regarded as the new “shooting star” of communication studies until he radically changed his perspective and started to argue from a “critical” perspective and to devalue social-scientific methodology and the orientation toward U.S. research.

As we suggest in our model, the context of nonscientific fields of society also influences the historical development of academic disciplines. One such influence on the development of German communication studies and the “critical” tradition can be seen in media developments that led to increased demands for information about media and media effects coming from politics, media, and economy. However, in the case of “critical communication studies,” the political influence on the development of the discipline seems to be even more important. At the beginning of the 1970s, the German government adopted the so-called Radikalenerlass (decree against radicals) that should protect democracy against left-wing extremists (Zoll, 2006). One of the “critical” scholars analyzed has been directly affected by this: Horst Holzer, a sociologist who conducted media research throughout his life. He had been appointed as a professor four times during the 1970s but each time he had been rejected because of his commitment for the “Deutsche Kommunistische Partei” (German communist party) (Scheu & Wiedemann, 2008). Other “critical” scholars claimed that the decree against radicals has had indirect effects, too. Manfred Knoche said in an interview that it led to a “cautious and conservative personnel policy” at universities. This kind of personnel policy was also supported by party political interferences concerning appointment procedures of professors (Meyen, 2007). The West Berlin institute of communication science is a good example for this. In the middle of the 1980s, the former center of “critical communication studies” was restructured under the patronage of Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann after the CDU (Christian Democratic Party) had won the elections against the SPD (Social Democratic Party) (Meyen & Löblich, 2007).

At the end of our example of use, we can summarize briefly that applying the model has led to the conclusion that the “critical” scholars themselves, the established power structures within the discipline, and a lack of autonomy from the political field combined with the need for legitimization contributed to a marginalization of “critical communication studies” in Germany.

**Conclusion: Theoretical and methodological contributions**

The aim of this study was to provide a model for the historiography of communication studies. The model was developed from a discussion of the state of the art of German and U.S. historiography of communication studies and from the sociology of science. As the discussion has shown, each of the traditional approaches to the history of communication studies—biographical, intellectual, and institutional—provides its own perspective and cannot be replaced by one of the others. But with regard to the
influence both social and cognitive factors exert on the development of a discipline, it seemed to be most promising to link these perspectives with each other.

The model proposed by us combines and integrates biographical, intellectual, and institutional approaches within the concept of the academic discipline and thus extends the focus and overcomes the deficits of just using one single approach. Moreover, the model provides a more refined theoretical lens as it also considers the constellation of disciplines as well as the different fields of society surrounding a discipline such as politics, economy, and media system.

As the model implies a more complex view of the history of communication studies, we believe that it can fulfill a heuristic function. The model highlights subject matters and the interrelations between them on different theoretical levels (individual scholar, scholarly institutions, and nonscientific fields of society). Concerning its heuristic function, on a meta-level, it could be used as a tool for analyzing the state of the historiography of communication studies. This way, for instance, contradictory findings could be explained with reference to different approaches that were applied in the research on the discipline’s history.

With regard to its heuristic function, the model could also serve as a theoretical lens for scholars to comparatively investigate the history of communication studies. Both comparisons of communication studies in different nations (a) and comparisons of communication studies with neighboring disciplines (b) could apply the model. (a) Although there is a precedent for single-country studies in the history of the discipline, historical comparative research into communication studies is still neglected (Averbeck, 2008; Malmberg, 2005). A comparative review of national histories would reveal, on the one hand, the cultural specificity and difference, country by country, in the developments of communication studies, and, at the same time, their common patterns. Because the categories in the model are abstract enough they can be applied to the specific conditions in different cultures and societies, thus they can be the common ground for comparison. (b) As mentioned above, the development of the discipline has always been shaped by the constellation of surrounding disciplines. The model can guide comparisons between neighboring disciplines. The advantage of interdisciplinary comparison is that by finding commonalities and differences, characteristics of communication studies become discernible. Such studies could, for instance, ask why political science and sociology in West Germany have grown much faster than communication studies since 1945 with regard to departments and professorships (Löblich, 2010).

Beyond comparison, the model can serve as a guide to systematically conduct a study about the history of communication studies including biographies, the development of university departments, central concepts, and relations to other disciplines and milieus and to nonscientific fields. It provides categories that help to decide on important methodological questions during the research process such as the choice of sources or the development of an interview guide. Moreover, by using the model, underlying assumptions and the steps of procedure can be made transparent. Thus, our model increases the intersubjectivity of a study. Fulfilling this quality standard
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seems to be important whenever historiography has to legitimize itself within a dominant social-scientific context.

Our approach also demonstrates the diverse interrelations between the different aspects and contexts of a discipline without yet asserting a direction for interpretation and explanation. If one regards theories as useful tools for historical explanation, the model still offers space to include theory as our example of use has shown.

Proceeding from a social-scientific understanding of historiography, the model aims to open up an alternative way of thinking about the history of the discipline compared with many studies carried out so far following a narrative history. As the model is based on the sociology of science, it focuses on disruptions as well as on the progression of science. It also considers social factors as important as cognitive factors for disciplinary development. Thus, the model is suited for research questions that go beyond putting theories and biographies in a chronological order but look into the reasons for and interrelations behind a certain disciplinary development.

Notes

1 The main categories are “space of possibles,” “agent,” and “influences from the scientific and from nonscientific fields.” The subcategories for “space of possibles” are “social structure,” “intellectual structure,” and “institutional structure.” The category “agent” can be subdivided in habitus as opus operatum (family background, socialization), habitus as modus operandi, by which we mean the “categories of perception” (idea of society, idea of human, behavioral norms), the “idea of science/idea of communication studies” (aims, theories, methodology), and the “research interest” (fields of research, subject matters, results) and the subcategory “capital” that integrates “scientific capital” (reputation, professional position), “cultural capital” (theoretical, methodological, and cultural competences), as well as “social capital” (social networks). The “influences from the scientific and from nonscientific fields” have been analyzed for “politics,” “economy,” “media,” and “science.”


References


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